

Double Bay Residents' Association

Protecting Sydney's Stylish Bayside Village

DRAFT WOOLLAHRA INTEGRATED TRANSPORT STRATEGY

We congratulate the Council on this detailed and comprehensive document. Transport, traffic and especially parking are among the key concerns of Double Bay Residents' Association's members.

While we agree with, and support, most of the strategy's conclusions and recommendations, we list below some fundamental points on which we disagree. The fact that most of these relate to parking indicates that parking is the strategy's main deficiency from the point of view of Double Bay residents.

1. The transport and parking needs of residents in the Double Bay centre and surrounding areas are very different from other parts of Woollahra – eg Vaucluse – where most homes have off-street parking and there are less people driving into the area to work and competing for on-street parking, as is the case in Double Bay. We recommend a separate study of the needs of Double Bay residents. We also recommend that on-street parking in Double Bay should be limited to residents, who also would receive vouchers allowing people providing services to them (eg doctors, carers, home deliveries, gardeners) and tradespeople working at their properties to park nearby. At present, these service providers often have to park a long way away, adding to traffic congestion as they search for parking spots. We strongly believe that residents' on-street parking needs should be prioritised over the increasing number of people driving to Double Bay to work in buildings without off-street parking.
2. We believe it is unrealistic to assume that the use of private cars will decline significantly during the next 20 years. Unless Sydney's transport infrastructure is upgraded substantially, the flexibility of car travel is likely to maintain its attraction, resulting in greater congestion as the population increases. We recommend that any proposals based on the assumption that car use will decline should be reconsidered.
3. The strategy mentions that the proportion of Woollahra residents aged 70 and over is higher than in neighbouring areas and is likely to increase, but ignores the fact that some of these drive cars because they are unable to walk to and from public transport and shops, however close these may be. The strategy discriminates against elderly residents who don't use their car because they can't park near their homes, and without home support and social connectivity may be forced to move elsewhere or into nursing homes. The current pressure on on-street parking by people who drive to Double Bay to work exacerbates the problem for these elderly residents. It also discourages visits by carers and friends who are important for the social connectivity and mental well-being of the elderly who cannot leave their homes.

4. The strategy ignores the specific problems of residents in streets that increasingly are becoming 'rat runs' to avoid congestion. Two examples are William Street and Carlotta Road, Double Bay where on-street parking for residents is increasingly under pressure and commercial deliveries sometimes require dangerous double parking. In many streets – eg Carlotta Road – all unrestricted parking is occupied throughout the day by workers in Double Bay, and residents are in danger when driving from their garages due to limited vision caused by tightly parked cars.
5. The strategy also ignores the additional pressure on parking that will be caused by the opening of new restaurants patronised by customers from outside Double Bay. They will be competing with residents for on-street parking, and the pedestrianisation of Knox street and Transvaal Avenue will reduce the number of parking spots in the village centre by some 55 spaces plus five taxis.
6. We are surprised that the report does not mention the potential of the Cross Street car park to reduce on-street parking, thus improving traffic flow. The Council's original plan to rebuild the car park with some 80 apartments would have increased congestion materially in an area which already is congested. We recommend that the site is dedicated to parking only, alleviating Double Bay's parking shortage which otherwise will become worse as planned residential and office developments are completed.
7. There was no mention of the benefits of mandating a minimum of on-site car spaces in new developments. Five hundred Double Bay residents signed a petition requesting that a minimum number of car spaces be mandated, but this was ignored by the Council. We recommend that the Council reconsider this. More car spaces in new developments would reduce demand for on-street parking, providing opportunities to improve traffic flow.
8. The Northern Beaches traffic plan recommends that steps be taken to prohibit on-street parking of non-residents' boats, trailers and caravans, but there is no such mention in the Woollahra strategy. We recommend that similar steps are taken in Woollahra to free up parking for residents which in turn could improve traffic flow on major roads.
9. We are surprised that Manning Road is not mentioned in the list of streets that are congested during peak periods when sometimes traffic is stationary from Wallaroy Crescent. This will be exacerbated by the recent decision (opposed by the Council) to open a childcare centre at 16 Manning Road. We are also surprised that the strategy does not mention the congestion at the junction of New South Head, Kia-ora and Bellevue Roads and Cross Street, Double Bay where pedestrian safety is a major issue.
10. The strategy recommends the need for separated cycleways, which we support, but does not mention the need to separate footpaths from cycleways. As more people cycle and walk, there will be an increased risk of accidents on any shared footpaths. We recommend that cycleways and footpaths should always be separated.

11. The strategy does not address the growing colonisation of footpaths by restaurants; an example is Bay Street's eastern footpath where often it is impossible to proceed without walking on the road. The main blockages are in the area of 29 Bay Street. We recommend employment of rangers on Fridays and Saturdays to ensure that restaurants are adhering to regulations.

In summary, we support most of the report's recommendations, but strongly recommend and request that:

- Any decisions take into account the reality that car use is unlikely to decline in the immediate future and any attempt to 'engineer' a change in residents' travel behaviour is likely to fail;
- Council initiates a separate report on traffic and parking problems in Double Bay, where the issues are different from most other parts of Woollahra municipality;
- Council considers the problems in this submission that relate to parking in Double Bay and takes action to alleviate them; and
- A public meeting is arranged so residents' concerns about the strategy (and especially parking) can be discussed openly.

Double Bay Residents' Association
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