

Double Bay Residents' Association

Protecting Sydney's Stylish Bayside Village

October 2021

Dear Member

As we explained at the Annual General Meeting in April, one of your committee's aims is to strengthen the association's relationship with the Council and encourage greater consultation with residents before plans are 'set in stone'. While the Council has lost control of significant development applications (DAs) to the planning panels and the Land & Environment Court, its evaluation of DAs still has a major influence and it is responsible for many other issues which affect residents' lives.

We have been delighted to be able to arrange meetings with the General Manager, Craig Swift-McNair, and the Mayor, and in September we held a third meeting. At this, Craig Swift-McNair introduced us to two key additions to his team: Scott Pedder, Director, Planning and Place; and Patricia Occelli, Director, Community Services and Customer Experience. This gave us the opportunity to explain issues which concern Double Bay residents, some of which are mentioned below, including the proposed redevelopment of the Cross Street car park on which the Council remains reluctant to consult us.

Development applications

Double Bay remains a 'honey pot' for property developers. We continue to represent residents' interests at Council, planning panel and court hearings on the torrent of DAs which have been lodged, but we ask all residents affected by a particular DA to take action themselves as well and to persuade their neighbours to do the same. Rob Stokes' letter (see the section on planning panels below) makes it clear that the association's submissions have limited impact on their own and that ten separate submissions are usually required to ensure residents' views are heard.

Following is a summary of the status of some current DAs. We are very grateful to Malcolm Young for continuing to represent the association at key hearings. In addition to these, submissions were lodged objecting to DAs in Clarence Place and Glendon Road.

294-298 New South Head Road/2-10 Bay Street: Malcolm has agreed to represent the association at a S.34 conference on 11 October.

53 Cross Street: Malcolm represented the association and a S.34 conference on 30 September.

14 Cross Street: Michelle Palmer spoke on our behalf at a S.34 conference on 28 September.

357-359 New South Head Road (corner of Manning Road): Council reports awaited.

351-353 New South Head Road: Merrill Witt represented the association at a S.34 conference and a decision is awaited.

21-27 Bay Street: Malcolm represented the association at a S.34 conference on 13 September.

2a Cooper Street: Merrill Witt represented the association at a S.34 conference on 22 September.

55 Bay Street: Malcolm represented the association at a S.34 conference on 23 September.

10 Cross Street: Michelle Palmer spoke on behalf of the association at a S.34 conference on 18 August which was adjourned until November.

Knox Street pedestrianisation

The Council has developed a plan, helped by a state government grant, to pedestrianize Knox Street between Bay Street and Goldman Lane and create an attractive plaza. If designed well, this could enhance Double Bay's village ambience but a number of concerns have been raised, especially by residents of the Cosmopolitan Centre whose access is via Knox Street. As well as access for emergency vehicles and deliveries, these concerns include noise control, especially on Friday and Saturday nights when there have been regular disturbances outside bars and restaurants in Bay Street; relocation of the taxi rank; invasive lighting; and further traffic congestion at the corner of Kiaora and New South Head Roads.

We are preparing a submission raising these and other concerns and advise members who will be affected by the pedestrianisation to complete the survey on the Council's website and send the Council a personal submission. Feedback on the plan is requested by Friday 8 October, but we understand later correspondence will be accepted.

Bronwyn Berman sculpture

Many residents are unaware of the fine sculpture by Bronwyn Berman which is hidden at the bottom of Bellevue Road behind the Post Office. Entitled ‘Renewal of Spirit’, it depicts the rushes and reeds which used to grow on Double Bay’s wetlands. Michele Wearn has proposed to the Council that it be moved to a prominent position, perhaps as the centrepiece of the new Knox Street plaza. Any members who support this move are encouraged to contact Caitlin Moffat, the Council’s project manager for the plaza.

Rose Bay promenade

Before the Covid-19 lockdown, the Council agreed to install a cycleway from Double Bay to Rose Bay, along the pavement from William Street to the Rose Bay promenade and along the promenade walkway. Construction, initially planned for winter months, was postponed to allow walkers and runners to enjoy the promenade during the lockdown, but then was scheduled to begin this October.

As pedestrian traffic on the promenade remains high, the Council resolved to postpone construction until April 2022, after the end of daylight saving. Some councillors disagreed with this decision and launched a rescission motion with the aim of overturning the postponement, but this was unsuccessful and work will now begin in April unless the Council comes up with an alternative plan.

Many of our members wrote letters supporting the postponement and some also proposed that the present plan should be abandoned so pedestrians can continue to enjoy walking or running on the promenade indefinitely without worrying about bicycle traffic.

As the Council is committed to building a cycleway between Double Bay and Rose Bay, the promenade will only be retained in its present state if residents apply sufficient pressure on councillors to come up with an alternative plan for a dedicated cycleway. The same applies to the route from William Street eastwards, which will potentially become very dangerous with bicycles and pedestrians competing for space on a narrow pavement.

If you feel strongly about this, we suggest you write to the Council and also to individual councillors, whose email addresses are on the Woollahra Council website. There may be an article on the issue in the Sydney Morning Herald this weekend.

Edgecliff Commercial Centre Planning and Design Strategy

The Council has proposed an ambitious plan to redevelop the Edgecliff commercial centre with buildings of up to 26 storeys. This would have a major impact on Double Bay – both during and after construction – creating a traffic bottleneck and increasing the population using Double Bay’s infrastructure and facilities.

Our submission on the strategy was written in consultation with other residents' associations. Please email us if you would like a copy.

Planning panels

Two months after we wrote to Rob Stokes, NSW Minister for Planning and Public Spaces, complaining about the panel system which led to the building approval on the corner of Transvaal Avenue, we have received a reply. He has defended the present system – which favours developers and disadvantages residents – and rejected our concerns. He has reiterated that public meetings will only be held when there are ten or more unique objections and that ‘a single submission, signed by ten people, would count as one unique submission’. Extraordinarily, he goes on to say: ‘One individual or one household could potentially submit multiple unique submissions.’ It seems from this that one person could submit ten objections and secure a public meeting. Whether or not this is correct, it emphasises the importance of submitting at least ten separate objections. If you would like to receive a copy of Rob Stokes’ letter, please let us know.

Anthony Tregoning
President