

Double Bay Residents' Association

Protecting Sydney's Stylish Bayside Village

21st August 2023

Dear Member,

At the DBRA's annual general meeting on 23rd May, we questioned why the report on the Council's **draft Double Bay Centre Planning and Urban Design Strategy**, which proposed six-storey development throughout the centre, had not been released a year after a survey of residents' comments. This was despite several broken promises on when we'd hear the survey's results.

We understood then that councillors would be briefed on the survey results in secret at the end of May, and assumed they would be released to residents soon afterwards. Later, we were told we would be able to read the report before a Council committee meeting on 17th July. In the event, this was not on the agenda for the 17th July meeting and we've now been told we'll be allowed to read the report during the second half of 2023. This is despite councillors already knowing its content.

We have been told on several occasions, most recently last month, that the strategy was likely to influence developers' success in securing additional height for their developments. The survey's results, therefore, will have a significant impact on Double Bay's ambience and we await them with great interest and apprehension. We raised this during a meeting at the end of last month with Kellie Sloane, our new state MP, and she kindly has raised it with the Craig Swift-McNair, the Council's general manager. Meanwhile, we – who have most to lose from the strategy – remain in the dark after more than 14 months, while developers tear apart Double Bay's commercial centre.

If you share your committee's concern about this lack of transparency, you may like to write to the Mayor.

Also at the AGM, we summarised your association's activities during the past year, including a list of submissions to the Council. For those who weren't able to attend, our report on the year is attached at the end of this newsletter. If there are other issues which concern you, please let us know.

Excavation

Excavation is one of the biggest development issues affecting residents throughout the Woollahra municipality, and especially Double Bay. The current Piper development opposite Cranbrook is one example, affecting traffic on New South Head Road as well as neighbours.

The second attachment to this newsletter is an advisory note entitled 'Spoil excavation in Woollahra DAs' which the Woollahra Local Planning Panel (WLPP) sent to the Council in June and which was discussed by the Council's Environmental Planning Committee earlier this month. This lists numerous adverse impacts of excessive excavation and names two recent development applications which sought excavation substantially above the DCP control. The WLPP recommended that the Council consider amending controls to lessen these impacts and the committee has requested a report on this.

The issue is that the Council invariably allows developers to exceed the maximum excavation limit and frequently allows an exceedance of many times the maximum limit. This can result in the negative impacts described in the WLPP's note, including damage to surrounding properties. We

have argued against this in objections to development applications over several years, but to no avail. There is no point in having a maximum excavation volume if developers regularly are allowed to exceed it, and we hope councillors will agree to amend the relevant clause (B.3.4 C4) of the development controls. The Council's discretion to allow additional excavation should be curtailed.

We also believe that the Council should examine developers' hydrotech and geotech reports with far more rigour to identify deficiencies likely to result in damage to surrounding properties. Ideally, there should be an independent expert review of the Council's assessment of these reports for large developments in recent years - but this may be wishful thinking!

Bicycles and scooters on footpaths

We were represented at a Community Safety Precinct Committee meeting on 3rd August at which the dangers of bicycles and scooters on footpaths were discussed. Electric bikes and scooters, which can travel at 25kph (and potentially much faster), increasingly are using pavements to avoid traffic – providing a hazard for pedestrians. Food delivery cyclists regularly travel at speed along New South Head Road pavements in Double Bay and elsewhere; we understand this is not permitted, but no one tries to stop them.

According to the police attending the meeting, it is up to the NSW Government to control this. We'll raise the issue with Kellie Sloane and we encourage anyone who is concerned about it to email her too at vaucluse@parliament.nsw.gov.au.

Another issue raised by our members is the number of green Lime bikes abandoned on nature strips, etc. We understand these should be reported to the Council, which will ask the bike company to remove them.

Council feedback

You will have received with your recent rate notice a flyer inviting comments on the **Council's services**. This is an opportunity to say what you like and don't like, and we encourage you to complete the survey. If you no longer have the flyer, you can respond to the survey through the Council's website: on the home page, click on 'Have your say on our current projects' and then on 'Customer experience at Woollahra Council'. The survey closes on 17th September.

Another survey on the Council's website is seeking feedback on the Council's **draft Urban Forest Strategy**. As a result of maturity and private development, Woollahra's tree canopy cover is forecast to decline from the current 27.4% to 23.8% by 2050. The strategy aims to reverse this decline and increase tree canopy cover to 30% by 2050. Feedback is required by 31st August.

Double Bay heritage walk

On **Thursday 9th November**, the DBRA and the Woollahra History and Heritage Society jointly are organising a walk around Double Bay, highlighting buildings and other sites of historical interest. A similar walk around Point Piper at the end of May, led by Peter King, was well attended and a great success. Please make a note of this date; the walk will start at 11am and further details will be circulated nearer the time.

Margaret Merten talk at Woollahra Library

The Woollahra History and Heritage Society is inviting DBRA members to a talk by Margaret Merten about the legacy of her great-grandfather, the Hon. Louis Trefle and the importance of preserving Nielsen Park as a community space and heritage-listed site, park and nature reserve. Mount Trefle was named after her great-grandfather, who was Minister for Agriculture and Lands in the NSW Government in 1910.

The talk will be at Woollahra Library on Monday, 4th September at 5.45pm for a 6.00pm start. There will be no charge, but donations to the society will be welcome. RSVP to Peter King at pking@gsc.com.au or SMS 0488 040 040 by 1st September.

DBRA committee/subscriptions

We are pleased to welcome Miranda Marshall to our committee. She has been appointed treasurer, succeeding Jennifer Dewar to whom we are very grateful for her efficient financial management for several years.

If you or anyone you know would be prepared to assist our committee with the many issues with which we are concerned, please let us know. We need all the help we can get. In particular, we are looking for someone with planning or relevant experience who can help us with assessing development applications and drafting Council submissions.

Meanwhile, subscriptions for the 2023/2024 year are now due. We thank members who have already paid.

Best wishes,
Anthony Tregoning
President