

Report of Meeting

HYAMS BEACH COMMUNITY CONSULTATION PUBLIC MEETING

Vincentia Public School

8 December 2018

Present: Refer Attachment 1

Meeting commenced at 2.00pm

Introduction – Amanda Findley, Mayor

- Advised that the meeting was being recorded and media were present – microphone required and people to speak individually
- Acknowledged traditional owners of the land
- Provided an overview of the meeting

1. Opening Comments – Mark Crowther – Hyams Beach Villagers Association

Mark Crowther welcomed all those in attendance and gave special thanks to the Mayor, Councillors and Senior Staff for attending.

Acknowledgment was made of Hyams Beach Residents Keith Brown and Muriel Spinks who recently passed away – both of these residents had made significant contributions to the local community.

The purpose of the meeting was as follows:

- To receive feedback from Council on options and results of the survey
- To allow Council to be transparent to community on the actions required to be taken following the motions of the Council over the past 12 months to address the issues in the village during holiday periods.
- To allow the Council to hear directly from ratepayers on the issues.

He spoke to correct a misconception that had arisen over the past 12 months of stakeholder sessions. The HBVA is not a closed group – all ratepayers are members – all that is needed to be involved needed to provide contact details – 70% of property owners are members.

Mr Crowther's address then covered the following points:

- Council wrote the survey and HBVA did not have access. The contents were not shared prior to its release. The meeting today is what the group have been working for – an opportunity for everyone to have a voice.
- The HBVA Executive were surprised at some of the proposals that were included in the survey, e.g. the roundabout at Illowra Lane.
- The HBVA did not support bus parking on Rose Street.
- Now it is time to focus on permanent solutions to manage the motor vehicle traffic volume in the village.
- Over the last 12 months Council will have sensed the building frustration within the Hyams Beach Community:

- frustration of the community – it has been led to believe that resolution of traffic congestion and safety is a priority for Council, when it is not
- frustration with the consultation process and the recent survey document;
- frustration with piecemeal enhancements (e.g. the widening/resurfacing of Booderee Avenue)
- frustration with band-aid solutions (such as the temporary one-way traffic flow over holiday weekends)
- frustration that the same issues have been raised with the Council for years, but the situation is now worse rather than better
- bewilderment over the lack of investment in Hyams Beach despite significant rate increases. Hyams Beach contributed around \$600,000 in rate revenue last financial year and over the last 4 years rates have increased by 42 per cent;
- disappointment in the decline in village amenity and quality of life
- anger when Hyams Beach is promoted as an idyllic coastal retreat but in reality, it is a congested carpark
- incredulous at the announcement made 2 days before this meeting that there will be more traffic surveys. Council has traffic data for number of years plus the ability to access 'big data' on traffic and visitor numbers. This is delaying the inevitable.
- It all comes down to geography. The village has one road in, has narrow roads, and is surrounded by national parks and steep topography. Creating a few new car spaces will not solve the problem.
- Promoting Hyams Beach as the focus of the tourism strategy but without adequate planning for infrastructure has allowed the environment to be degraded. Council have failed Shoalhaven ratepayers as the focus on more tourism numbers has led to increased costs and no revenue to Council. Shoalhaven ratepayers are bearing the cost of the tourism infrastructure build and maintenance.
- The consultation process employed by Council was intended to address residents' concerns and put in place solutions. Attendees will have many comments, questions and proposals to share.
- At the end of the day the issues are straightforward –
 - what is going to be done to limit the number of cars entering the village to match the number of legal car spaces?
 - how does Council propose to get visitors into the village once the available car spaces are full?
- It is about ensuring a safe, relaxed and pristine environment for all.
- A focus on tourist numbers is short sighted.
- How will Council explain to tourists and ratepayers the failure to act when a natural disaster or medical emergency leads to death?
- What is the strategy to get people out from Hyams Beach in a bush fire?
- What is the strategy to ensure emergency vehicles have unimpeded access to the village?
- Are any of these questions addressed in Council's tourism strategy?
 - A brief analysis of the survey results has reinforced the issues that the HBVA has been raising with Council over a number of years. People want the traffic congestion in the village addressed. There is general consensus for fixing the problem at the top of the village. There is also strong support for paid parking. What is clear is that people do not want more parking in the village or a permanent one-way system in the north of the village. Bus parking on Rose Street was overwhelmingly rejected.

- There are clear messages arising from this survey process. We cannot wait another two years for implementation as a result of unnecessary traffic and parking surveys.
- The traffic problem has to be addressed now to ensure that the amenity and safety for visitors and residents is maintained.

2. Presentation of Survey Results – Micromex Research – Mark Mitchell

Council's Director – Finance, Corporate and Community Services, Stephen Dunshea introduced Mark Mitchell, General Manager of Micromex Research who had been engaged to undertake an analysis of the survey.

Mr Dunshea spoke to the survey and acknowledged that there were some valid points made about the quality of the survey, as it has been recognised that some of the questions were ambiguous. He advised that this is in part due to strict time limits and demands that the CCB had placed on Council to have it released before they held their AGM. Given those criticisms it was decided to not undertake internal analysis and both the survey and email responses were sent to Micromex Research to analyse. The Micromex report on the survey is on Council's website and Mark Mitchell would be giving an overview of the report in his presentation.

Mark Mitchell spoke to his presentation noting the following:

- 95 respondents participated in the survey and 45 respondents submitted written responses. Of the survey responses 67 were residents of Hyams, and of the 45 free responses at least 40 were Hyams residents.

Short Term Options

- 26% of those surveyed had a positive first reaction to short term options, whilst 67% had a negative first reaction. Comments were received about the Short-term options being expensive, having a negative impact on residents and not addressing the key issue of overcrowding.
- Residents of Hyams Beach were marginally more positive than non-residents.
- Increasing toilet and shower facilities in Seamans Carpark was high in the options, with 74% of respondents stating that it is an okay idea/they love it.
- The three short term options rated the lowest all related to bus drop offs/parking.
- Residents were significantly less likely to rate increased 90-degree parking on Cyrus Street highly.
- Full-time residents rated a bus drop off point on Rose street significantly higher than part-time/non-residents, however written submissions to Council (see next section) suggest that these are not full-time residents of Rose Street.
- Increased toilet and shower facilities in Seamans Carpark was the highest rated short-term option across residents and non-residents of Hyams Beach.

Long Term Options

- 37% of respondents had a positive first reaction to long term options. Negative responses (53%) still dominated. Whilst some comments discussed the long-term options being beneficial, others suggested that they will just increase congestion and fail to address the issue of excess visitor numbers.
- Part-time residents of Hyams Beach were marginally more positive than full-time residents.

- Opinions were highest for the long-term options of ‘undertake foreshore masterplan and reserve improvements’ and ‘investigate a carpark out of the village with walking track into the village’.
- Both ‘investigate a carpark out of the village...’ options generated the most positive responses – although the walking track back to the village generated fewer negatives than did the shuttle bus.
- Residents of Hyams Beach (particularly full-time residents) were significantly less likely to rate ‘investigate roundabout option for intersection of Illowra Lane and Booderee Avenue’ highly.
- Part-time residents of Hyams Beach were significantly more likely to rate ‘investigate a carpark out of the village with walking track into the village’ highly, whilst full-time residents were significantly less likely.
- Undertaking a foreshore masterplan and reserve improvements appeared in the top 3 rated long term options for both residents and non-residents of Hyams Beach.
- Full-time Hyams Beach residents rated investigations into parking restrictions (paying/time) as the top two long term options.

Written Submissions

- Council received 45 written submissions in response to the Hyams Beach short and long-term options survey
- 98% of written submissions to Council discussed roads, parking and transport, clearly highlighting that these are key issues that respondents would like to see Council address.
- Over two thirds of written submissions also voiced concerns/opinions on community safety (71%) and the character/atmosphere of the village (69%).
- A strong theme across the written submissions and comments added to the survey was the need to restrict the number of vehicles that enter the village when it is full/all parking spaces are occupied.
- There were 8 key topics in the written submissions:
 1. Reduce/restrict the number of vehicles permitted in the village
 2. Safety/bushfire risks
 3. Prevent large vehicles/buses from entering the area
 4. Advertise/promote other local areas in the short term
 5. The environmental impact on the local area
 6. Protect the character/atmosphere of the village
 7. The impact of day trippers vs overnight tourists
 8. Validity/distribution of the survey

Key findings

The key findings and suggested potential actions for the Council to consider are:

- Investigate a carpark out of the village with a walking track and/or shuttle bus into the village
- Set up temporary one-way roads within the village during peak periods, with Council staff monitoring/enforcing the systems
- Explore community opinions on paid parking, or trial paid parking during peak periods only
 1. Set up bus drop off points close to the beach/places of high tourist interest, rather than establishing bus parking stations within the village

- 2. Trial the use of temporary Portaloos to meet the increased demand for toilet facilities during peak periods
- 3. Continue to engage with the community about changes/plans to Hyams Beach, ensuring that all residents are included in correspondence and that opinions represent the whole community
- Although not in the presentation or directly questioned via the survey, the themes of preservation of character of the village and environmental concerns came through strongly in the responses.

3. Questions / Comments from the Floor

Comments: Craig Mackintosh - Owner of Holidays Collection, renting 80 to 90 houses in the village

- Ambience/character of Hyams Beach should be front of mind
- Opportunity to monetise the day trippers into Hyams – including paid parking
- People would pay more attention to social media alerts than rangers – social media could be used to help regulate the traffic flows
- Temporary infrastructure would be more expensive than permanent and aesthetically not great.
- Next step critical – want to get on with action plans and master plan
- We need to solve inner village issues as phase 1 and out of village for phase 2
- An external consultant – translate to action plan – pledged \$5000 towards that process – suggest that other residents should consider put hands in pockets.

Comments: Marie Gunderson Smith - Property Owner

- Holiday rental owners are a large group that deserve a big voice and considered in this as they bring financial income to the community.
- People are not coming to visit the village – they want to access the beach – why can't we have another access to the beach via another road or access point?

Response: Stephen Dunshea

- Council is happy to look at options if alternate access routes have been identified

Response: Amanda Findley

- Advised that Dean Hargreaves, a holiday rental owner, has been providing input to Council meetings
- Some of the limitation is that possible access points to beach are subject to Aboriginal land claims and are National Park. The Council does not own land that could be used as an alternate pathway.

Comment/ Question: Chris Alison – Hyams Beach store and Café

- The process came to a bit of a head in February/March this year – large meetings were held and followed by smaller meetings but nothing has happened except for survey – what is different now than 9-10 months ago or 2 to 3 years ago?
- What has to happen is:
- Paid parking is needed within the village and paid time limited
- footpath on Booderee Avenue for pedestrian access
- Parking either side Booderee Avenue (200 to 300 cars).
- Issue is critical on 20 or so days each year. It is crazy to spend significant amounts of money.

Response: Stephen Dunshea

- Since May, when he came on board, Council has taken the following actions:
 - Council resolved to employ a dedicated project officer to manage – recruited Sharon Neradil in August 2018
 - Council has put in for a significant grant application for funding of \$6.8M in tourism infrastructure across the Shoalhaven with \$1.3M of that specifically for Hyams - members of the CCB, Mark, Morgan and David reviewed the grant application at a recent meeting in my office
 - The timeframe to submit the grant was extremely tight so there was no opportunity to consult on the projects submitted in the application
 - Subject to how the grant application progresses – Council will work with the community to determine what projects can and should proceed to implementation
 - In the meantime, Sharon Neradil has been reviewing the results of the survey and working on a number of short term actions proposed for the Christmas/New Year period – which will be outlined in her presentation.

Response: Russ Pigg

- Council's Manager – Tourism and himself met with Minister for Tourism - asked them to take on board the need to address impact of tourism on local areas.

Response: Colin Wood

- Staff and traffic are working on systems to be responsive when required and have staff on the ground very quickly to move traffic around and into the village.

Comment : Wendy Church – Resident

- We are loving Hyams Beach to death
- We need to limit cars for safety and local Shoalhaven residents have just as much of a right to come down and use the beach – Shoalhaven sticker on the vehicles and should not have to pay
- Expensive parking should be put in place - whether timed or not.
- You will destroy the whole area if you allow more and more people coming.
- Carparks will ruin the natural environment. Council is meant to be green.

Response: Amanda Findley

- She is only a member of Greens – one of 3 elected to the Council – The Council is made up of a diverse group of people trying to address the issues at hand.
- Shoalhaven residents shouldn't have to pay to access our beaches.

Comments: Mark Bode

- Council is only interested in changing arrangements with state government – has done nothing for 20 years
- Last 3 to 4 weeks pollution from PFAS in area has been reported and this will impact traffic numbers. Council needs to use the traffic information it already has.

Comments/ Questions: Sheila McGregor

- Is the Council looking at overnight campervans? Can we do something about that?
- We should be employing CCTV cameras rather than rangers.

Response: Colin Wood

- Council will have Rangers early morning and late in the evening
- There is an issue with sleeping in vehicles that Council is getting legal advice on.
- There could be no parking instituted between 7pm and 7am but that may have an impact on residents.

Response: Stephen Dunshea

- Council has already funded \$120k in 2018/19 for measures to manage traffic in high visitation areas across the Shoalhaven – including Hyams Beach. This is in addition to funding the Project Officer – Sharon Neradil

Comment: Vicky Fortescue – Resident

- Invited those present to have a look at environmental services / surveys of the beach
- Need to preserve the natural environment – Hyams has a very active Bushcare group and an environmental group.
- Strategic plan was presented to Council late last year – still hasn't been given to Council yet, which is very disappointing.
- There are a lot of things happening in the village - daily we pick up rubbish and are dealing with issues – what we are doing is not visible but makes a difference.
- We are not seeing the ongoing commitment from the Council.
- Why are there no Gross Pollution traps to catch all the litter before it gets washed into the waters of the Marine Park?
- Why is new development being approved with inadequate soft surfaces to ensure infiltration of storm water?
- The new toilets and showers must be designed so that pollutants such as soaps, shampoos and toilet paper no longer get washed down into the creek.
- Has the water quality of the creek in which small children play been tested?

Response: Amanda Findley

- Those questions will be taken on notice and a response will be provided to the HBVA.

Questions: Theo Van Veenendal

- What is the action plan and what is Council's commitment to action for long term?

Response: Stephen Dunshea.

- Today is a part of addressing issues – Sharon Neradil will address short term actions to be in place this coming holiday period
- From today we will be working on an action plan and will continue to liaise with the CCB on the long-term options.

Question: Ken Renwick

- The survey raised an important point – fire safety for Hyams Beach.
- Does the Council have an evacuation plan for the village? The whole village is an impact zone and the road out is a radian zone.

Response: Russ Pigg

- At one of the earlier meetings Mark Williams from RFS, who are responsible for the bushfire plan, advised that they are aware of the issues and have their plans - he didn't seem too concerned with the issue.

Comments: Morgan Sant

- When he became aware of the meeting today he circulated members the opportunity to forward comments in writing.
- He tabled comments and questions and asked they be responded to via the Executive.
- The majority of points raised within the tabled comments have been covered off today.
- One issue flagged but not discussed is the perceived misfit between development of large houses with many bedrooms and few parking spots.
- Should there be a parking scheme there should be a limited number of cars per residence allowed.
- Paid parking is a real opportunity.

Comments: Megan Brophy

- In short term and long term and signage is poor - Council should advertise other areas and increase visibility of signage in the village outlining the rules.

Presentation – Morgan Sant

- Tourism should be best and worst thing for the Shoalhaven but needs to be done right or overall impact a lot of frustrated people.
- Thanked Micromex for report which has confirmed our ideas.
- What is different than 4 years ago? Statistics – the volume of traffic is different – higher.
- Statistics from Micromex in its report are from surveys not written submissions. If they were converted into statistics and put into tables it would shift the results.
- We feel a lot of disappointment with the actions at the key findings section of the report as not fully in-line with survey and submissions and don't move the process forward. A lot of it is recipe for complacency – one study after the other.
- The following is proposed as a revised action list:
 - Begin work on out-of-village solutions.

- Continue and increase the use of all methods of diverting day visitors to other beaches in Shoalhaven.
- Continue as an interim measure the use of peak period one-way roads.
- Implement smart options for paid parking and other traffic control methods.
- Implement a size limit on tourist vehicles at peak times.
- Fast track the construction of permanent toilets at Chinamans Beach.
- Carry out actions that protect and enhance the environment and the quality of visitor experience (dune protection, improved beach access routes).
- Strengthen ranger presence to deal with camping and fires as well as illegal parking.
- Continue to engage with the Hyams Beach community through its elected body, HBVA.

4. Plans for Christmas and new year – Sharon Neradil

Sharon Neradil provided a presentation outlining the action to be taken for the upcoming Christmas holiday period:

Traffic

- External Traffic Control company contracted to conduct traffic control Services - under a Traffic Management Plan – 7am to 7pm
- 5 traffic control staff – roundabout operation and village traffic management
- One-way traffic system in North of Village – as per Christmas, Easter & Oct Long Weekend
- 3x VMS boards at the following locations:
 - Jervis Bay Rd before Huskisson turnoff
 - After Vincentia marketplace before roundabout
 - On Naval College Road – advising temporary roundabout in operation
- Temporary roundabout Naval College & Booderee Ave
- Under Traffic Control and Traffic Management Plan – 7am to 7pm
- RMS Live Traffic Site – Notice of change of conditions in the village and approaching

Amenities:

- 2x Portaloos Chinamans Beach
- 2x Portaloos Seamans Carpark
- Extra large waste bins – Extra services

Ranger Services will be provided in the village

Further information:

- Refer to the Council's 'Get Involved' webpage for all info re: Hyams Beach
- Traffic & Parking Surveys will be starting over Christmas
- Line marking being reapplied next week weather permitting – Booderee Ave and within the village

Further Questions:

Question: Craig Bishop

- How will residents and their visitors be able to access the village once the road is closed?

Response: Stephen Dunshea

- Technically the road will not be closed but there will be vetting of traffic by traffic controllers – residents will be able to get.

Question: Unidentified resident

- What is the parking capacity in the village?

Response: Morgan Sant

- 450 cars

Response: Sharon Neradil

- Traffic Management staff will monitor parking and when it reaches 60% full there will be a change to the VMS board/ website – and 80 % closed

Question/Comment: Unidentified resident

- Does Council have the authority to close the road?
- If the road is closed congestion on Naval College Road will be a nightmare.

Question: Unidentified resident

- Who do we contact when we can't get into our own driveways because they are blocked?

Response: Stephen Dunshea

- Council rangers and if necessary – the Police

Question/Comment: Marie Ellis

- I have spoken and written to the Council about problems backing into my driveway – I have not had this resolved.

Response: Amanda Findley

- Council's Director Assets and Works, Paul Keech will discuss this with you after the meeting

Question/Comment: Lesley Hoskins

- The Temporary one-way system must have traffic going down to the ocean along Anemone Street or the system would become chaotic.

Response: Stephen Dunshea

- This will be covered in a meeting with the CCB Executive next week

5. Way forward and closing comments – Mayor Amanda Findley

It is acknowledged that the intersection of Jervis Bay Road and the Princes highway remains an issue. There was a public meeting 3 weeks ago. The Mayor has written to the RMS urging them to deal with traffic at the intersection. No response has been received. It is noted that the RMS do have counters out.

As all can see, the traffic to Hyams beach in holiday periods is a vexed issue. Council hears the message that residents want action, but we need to make the right responses to protect the environment and achieve the best outcome for all.

Together with the CCB we will manage the village the best way we can within the controls we have.

This is an emotional issue. Turning people away who have invested time to come and enjoy a slice of what we enjoy permanently will be as emotional for them as it is for you. You are not alone.

The 100 Beach Challenge campaign is doing the best it can, as quickly as it can by utilising other levels of government.

The meeting participants were thanked for their attendance and patience.

Meeting Closed: 4.00pm