

Hello Neighbours – an attempt at being reasonably brief from our MPCRAG meeting last Tuesday evening. It was well attended with 30 residents.

NSW Police Attendance

We invited the NSW Police to attend the meeting due to the neighbourhood-wide concerns of speeding vehicles, loud vehicles (cars and bikes), general hooning and pedestrian safety factors as the numbers of visitors increase with the easing of Covid restrictions and the nice weather.

Attending our meeting were A/Superintendent Paul Dunstan from the Sydney LAC and Leading Constables Brad Groves (Traffic) and Darren Struthers (Licensing) – both from The Rocks Police Station. Brad, particularly knows our area well from many years at The Rocks station.

They listened intently to our concerns and I think it is fair to say that those residents in attendance at the meeting were confident that there would be positive change. In reply to my “thank you” email, Superintendent Paul Dunstan noted that *“I will meet with Brad and James Mihos (Traffic Sergeant at The Rocks Station) in the coming days to discuss proactive measures regarding noise etc in your area. The gents will keep you posted.”*

City of Sydney – Future Planning Engagement

As you know we have been in discussions with Councillor Philip Thalys since October last year to discuss pedestrian safety and traffic calming measures – most of these issues have been raised in past years. Councillor Thalys attended the February 2021 RAG meeting, whilst Councillor Linda Scott (ALP) attended Tuesday’s meeting. And of course, Rebecca and Marc Lucas were able to obtain a Windmill St-specific Notice of Motion at the February Council meeting for investigations by Council staff into traffic calming measures in Windmill St. This was sponsored by Councillor Christine Forster (Lib). Well done again Rebecca and Marc.

Taking the lead from Windmill St, we proposed a Precinct-wide Notice of Motion (sent to Philip Thalys in late March) to pursue on behalf of the whole neighbourhood. This is attached (please note the reference to speed humps was in the original Councillor Forster Notice – we wanted to keep the wording similar – if people don’t like speed humps they won’t be getting speed humps.... or chicanes). Councillor Linda Scott is also now aware of our traffic calming and pedestrian safety priorities.

We will continue to agitate/advocate for the right measures in the right streets with full community consultation on eventual outcomes.

Heritage Council Review of Millers Point and Dawes Point Heritage Precinct

This is a biggie.

Leaving aside any cynicism people may have on why this is happening now, this is a great opportunity for the owners of Millers Point properties and for residents generally to put forward our views on how our heritage homes (the ones we restored and renovated when no else was bothering) should be “managed”. It will also include (certainly in our view) the broader precinct assets including roads, footpaths, gardens, parks, etc.

The review is “open book” – The NSW Heritage Council letter we all received has not put any limits on how this discussion will occur.

We need your input to gather the right information, data and views. We are developing an online survey (thank you volunteers Anne Crabb and Kate Cade, with technical input from Margaret Wright). We hope to have this out by the end of April (a separate notice will follow). So when the face-to-face consultation starts we are fully armed and ready.

We will also be engaging with other stakeholders interested in Millers Point. A key stakeholder group that can tell many stories about how DAs are handled in the precinct are our Architects and Heritage Consultants. We want to include them in our survey process. Please email to me the contact details of the Architect (firm and principal) and Heritage Consultant you used on your project so we can invite them to participate in our survey.

What can you do now:

- Go on the NSW Heritage website (the NSW Government department coordinating this) to understand what is going on - <https://www.heritage.nsw.gov.au/what-we-do/heritage-council-of-nsw/community-consultation/>
- Send an email to register your attendance at the Heritage NSW May workshop (date to be advised) – this is critical – high resident numbers showing interest is essential.
- Complete the brief survey on their website.
- There is also a map pinning tool on their website which looks like both fun and useful – give it a go.

I also invite general comments from residents on their own restoration/renovation experience (vent that spleen). It will also help to design our survey. Responses will be kept anonymous.

Fort St Public School – final update on the cycleway

Hopefully this is the last time I write on this subject. NSW Education gave Yasmina and I their final briefing the week before last and you would have received a letterbox drop with a four-pager explaining some changes to the school itself as well as the final cycleway design. Instead of the Kent Street diversion with its associated disruptions, School Infrastructure has resolved to keep the cyclists on the Hill (as requested by our community). Their solution includes relocating the Cahill Expressway vent (at the pinch point on Upper Fort St) underground as well as taking up the grass verge adjacent to the white fence on the Bridge side to allow for a combined cycle and footway and two-way vehicular traffic. This is a three week project by Lendlease commencing in late April. Cyclists will have to use an alternate route – they get to choose, it won't necessarily be down Kent St (I'm not even mentioning the new traffic lights). NSW Education will do a letterbox drop when this construction is imminent. Once this is complete, cyclists will again be able to use Observatory Hill to access the CBD (south-bound) and the Sydney Harbour Bridge (north-bound).

Harry Jensen Centre “outsourcing”

As you know, the HJC has been unstaffed since Covid hit – well over 12 months. The City of Sydney is proposing some big changes to two of the three buildings that comprise the “Community Centre”.

The Abe Mott Community Space (behind the Abe Mott Hall) will be leased on a longer term arrangement for cultural/performing arts based activities. This tender will be announced soonish but no specific date.

The Abe Mott Hall will continue to be available for hire to anyone who wishes to hire it – no change there.

HJC will also be put out to tender for external management. What that will look like is not known at this stage, however, the approach used in the Community Space process may provide us with useful insight about how the HJC process may be managed. I should make clear, the Council wants the holder of the lease for HJC to have strong Millers Point community connections. The HJC is now open again as a venue for hire subject to normal hiring conditions.

There were some opinions expressed at the meeting that the Council should just reopen HJC and staff it as normal. For budgetary reasons, I am not confident that will happen, but I have been wrong many times before. A working group will develop a potential campaign to oppose this “outsourcing” by Council.

Barangaroo Central Update

This process is moving a little slower than anticipated. We are firmly on the Aqualand “call list” for when they can start releasing the details of their concept design. We will keep you posted.

Dawes Point Park CMP Review

Many of you would be aware of this process being conducted by Property NSW. Just prior to Easter, many local residents as well as the MPC RAG made submissions to Property NSW on how the park should be sensitively used and managed (none of which is happening at the moment). The key themes were the connectedness of the Milton Terrace and the general residential area of Lower Fort St to the park, the inappropriate use of the park as a Bridge construction site or as a commercial noise making music venue and the importance of recognising the park as the first site of dialogue between the Indigenous peoples and Lt Dawes on behalf of the First Fleet. We will advise of any further developments.

Short-Term Rental NSW Government Regulations

No sooner was a date set (31 July) for when this menace could return to residential neighbourhoods than it was extended after push-back by the Local Government Association – now 31 October. This still gives the NSW Government time to reconsider this approach (I’m an optimist), leave the regulation of short-term rental arrangements in the hands of the local government and let us live our lives in peace.

Thank you for reading this far, any questions, comments, advice, criticisms, please send them through.

Regards,

Bernard

