

Millers Point Community Resident Action Group

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George Street closure and implications for Millers Point, Walsh Bay and Dawes Point

Millers Point, Walsh Bay, Dawes Point and The Rocks have a shared history and a shared role in the early development of Sydney. We are essentially one family – one entity. Today, The Rocks, largely commercial, is balanced by Millers Point, Dawes Point and Walsh Bay – providing 3,900 residents as patrons of the shops and restaurants at The Rocks.

For MPCRAG, the current discussion regarding the partial closure of George St North has three components to it:

1. Community consultation
2. Traffic implications for Millers Point, Dawes Point and Walsh Bay
3. Creating a more walkable neighbourhood

1. Community consultation

The MPCRAG has appreciated the increased consultation and dialogue with Place Management NSW in recent months – particularly regarding the update to the Rocks Heritage POM and continuing information on the George St temporary closure. We would like this to continue, as currently we are the only community organisation representing the residents of The Rocks.

2. Traffic implications for MP, DP and WB

While some information regarding traffic implications for our area have been forthcoming, it is of course hard to define the changes to traffic in the area during this unusual time of Covid-19. Subsequent data collection of vehicular traffic movements is of little utility as there was no base line upon which to compare, nor has there been any measurement of impact on 'downstream' retail precincts, particularly Walsh Bay.

The traffic concerns expressed by the MPCRAG are closely tied with the tourism activities occurring in the Rocks; - apart from the issues generated by the recent George Street closure, longer term traffic issues caused by coach parking and heavy vehicles (particularly refrigerated trucks) servicing of cruise ships, have not been adequately addressed, or solved. Although a coach parking area exists at King Street Wharf, most coaches find it more convenient to lay-over in Millers Point. Servicing of cruise ships at night makes for noisy evenings in Millers Point, and large walking tours emanating from The Rocks cause safety issues at traffic intersections in Millers Point. Walsh Bay residents sometimes feel hemmed in, with few routes out of their area, and many of these such as Hickson Road West, under constant change and closure due to infrastructure activities.

3. Creating a more walkable neighbourhood

The MPCRAG has as a strategic goal to produce a more walkable neighbourhood in Millers Point, Dawes Point and Walsh Bay. This will involve considerably less vehicular traffic, better managed traffic requirements for service vehicles (particularly for the Cruise Ship industry when it reopens) and greater encouragement of transport options beyond cars. Our focus is on walkability, pedestrian safety and improved amenity of reclaimed streets from traffic.

Specific ideas from MPCRAG concerning the walkability of the Rocks at its intersection with Millers Point, Dawes Point and Walsh Bay include:

- That Place Management NSW cease the partial closure of the “Fortune of War” section of George St and return it to two-way traffic. The parking lane along the western side of George Street could be widened to allow for extra footpath dining, leaving that section of George Street available for through traffic to Walsh Bay.
- That the George St North section (‘the Mercantile section’) between Lower Fort Street and the Hickson Rd intersection be permanently closed to traffic and become fully pedestrianised. This will allow for expanded footpath dining/drinking while also allowing additional space to be creatively used in other ways. This does not adversely impact Walsh Bay residents or retailers as access to the CBD via George St and Hickson Rd remains. Dawes Point residents are relieved of unnecessary traffic activity (particularly heavy vehicles).
- The closure of The Mercantile Section fits in seamlessly with the proposal to make the intersection of George Street and Lower Fort Street into an ‘Archway’ leading to Dawes Point, as demonstrated in our recent submission for the Public Space Ideas Competition.
- That the speed limit for the whole stretch of George St from Alfred St Circular Quay to Hickson Rd (at the Holiday Inn) be dropped to say 20kmh; - improving footpath dining ambience if traffic is not speeding past.

Conclusion

- MPCRAG would like to continue discussions with Place Management regarding traffic and pedestrian management in our joint area.
- That a more comprehensive traffic planning study covering the wider issues discussed above, be conducted by the NSW Government and City of Sydney in consultation with local residential and business communities including the MPCRAG and Walsh Bay Residents Association.
- That Place Management work with MPCRAG on a plan for a more walkable neighbourhood in Millers Point, Dawes Point and Walsh Bay and The Rocks.

I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,



Anne Warr
President
Millers Point Community Resident Action Group Inc
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Cc: Walsh Bay Precinct Association; Alex Greenwich MP: Cr Philip Thalys; Rocks Police.