

## Public Wharf Upgrade - History

Hornsby Shire Council (HSC) has made a commitment to upgrade the Dangar Island ferry wharf to provide for disability access consistent with the requirements of the Commonwealth Government's Disability Discrimination Act 1992, the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002.

In 2013, HSC had a 'concept plan' drawn up (by the Snowy Mountains Engineering Corporation, SMEC), which provided for an extended wharf and pontoon, a community mooring facility for up to 40 berths, and some casual visitor berths. This concept plan was provided to the DIL, which sought the views of members. At the DIL 2013 AGM, the majority of members (135 to 105) voted in favour of this integrated solution, including a mooring facility with a longer public jetty.

At the 2014 DIL AGM there was significant community concern that the proposed design had not taken into account some basic disability/invalid/elderly access issues eg. Excessive length of jetty, stability & security of structure, lack of protection from elements, possible curtailing of ferry operations in bad weather, lighting.....etc

Following these discussions, Bronek Karcz (the then President) confirmed that he would on behalf of the residents push hard to ensure that HSC keep its verbal promise to hold a community meeting to further discuss the proposal. It was also suggested that a 'Ferry Users' Group get a case together for the meeting to highlight some fundamental missing elements.

On 10 Nov 2014 Bronek was contacted by Council engineer Alan Boyd who proposed an initial meeting with a limited number of DI community attendees and the wharf designer to discuss issues that had been raised with Council. He was of the view that such a meeting might iron out issues and identifies possible compromises with the design, prior to Council holding a public meeting with all interested islanders to discuss their upgrade proposal.

Bronek referred the request to the League, and the DIL Committee agreed at its meeting of 15 Nov to attend the meeting and suggest to Council a small group to represent interested parties/concerns.

A meeting was held on 20th November 2014 at HSC with the following islanders: Terry Dorrough (representing residents, in particular the disabled and frail ferry passengers), Rick Stockley (ferry owner/operator), Cybele Shorter (RFS Captain), Peter Wolfe (DIL), and Ant Schinckel (DIMC).

At the meeting Council tabled a revised design with a shorter jetty (18m shorter) for discussion. At that meeting Council agreed to:

- Undertake additional studies into the wave, wind and current forces and impacts on ferry operations;
- Ensure unimpeded access for the fire boat at low tide;
- Further explore surfacing and other safety options, and;
- Consider amending the design to incorporate a wind break on the western side of the pontoon

Council then asked those in attendance to consider the proposal and get back to them with their views.

The island group met again soon thereafter to discuss further and prepare a consolidated response, which was sent to HSC in the form of a letter on 23 Dec 2014, and endorsed by Rick, Terry, Cybele, Peter and Vanessa. In brief, the letter:

- Recognised and supported the efforts of HSC to provide 'triple benefits' to the community through the design of a jetty with disability access, casual berthing and small boat mooring objectives in mind, recognising the 2013 majority decision of DIL members in favour of an 'integrated' solution.
  - Sought clarification from HSC on the relationship between HSC's disability access work and that of the proposed mooring cooperative, in particular: The details of the DIMC development application process in terms of steps and likely timing; the risks associated with having an extended ramp and pontoon structure in the absence of the proposed mooring facility, and; the availability of HSC funding for disability access at a later date if, to avoid the risk of compromising disability access in the event of the mooring facility not proceeding, HSC construction was delayed until a determination is made on the DIMC DA.
  - Strongly encourage direct engagement by Council with the broader island community prior to any final decision being made, and
  - Offered to meet again with HSC, NSW Roads and Maritime, and RFS district management to further explore and refine the options and issues prior to any public meeting.
- Council replied in a letter dated 15 January 2015, included an updated "Wave Climate Report" from the engineers SMEC (both tabled at today's meeting), and agreed to another small group meeting prior to an open community forum. In brief, their reply stated that:
- The proposed layout is only a 'concept plan' and can be modified to ensure unimpeded RFS access, and to incorporate design modifications to provide the highest quality facility for public pontoon users.
  - The DIMC would need to submit a planning proposal for 'rezoning' of the river at that location. This would be considered under the State Government 'Gateway' process. If the rezoning is successful, a DA would then need to be lodged and 'determined' by Council. This process is likely to take 12-18 months.
  - No such re-zoning or DA process is required for the public wharf upgrade.
  - The pontoon has been designed to operate as either an integrated solution or stand alone (partial build), and to be fully stable without support or protection from the mooring facility.
  - There would be no compromise on disability access if a 'partial build' solution were constructed, and that disability users should be adequately catered for and generally should have a better level of service than is provided by the existing stepped wharf.

The second meeting took place on 17 February 2015, with representatives from the original interests and RFS district command. At that meeting, the interested parties expressed their ongoing concerns, particularly with respect to the updated wave climate report and its implications for ferry operations, and the RFS boat access. HSC said they can envisage the 3 options (below), and agreed that further consideration by island residents would probably be required in an attempt to resolve which option to proceed with.

HSC indicated that although a tender has been called to construct the pontoon no action to construct it would be taken until all substantive issues raised were resolved.

- 1) Minimal solution with the pontoon close to end of existing wharf.
- 2) Proceed with current concept design
- 3) Do nothing

As a result of the meeting, HSC undertook to:

- Have SMEC prepare a response to the concerns about the wave climate report
- Consider the RFS concerns in the next concept design review
- Have SMEC source additional costing information for options
- Undertake broader community consultation

Activities/exchanges since this February meeting:

- Email from Council 20 March stating:
  - o The facility is designed to stand up and be available over a wide range of climatic conditions and whether a vessel can operate at the proposed pontoon is a decision solely for the ship's master.
  - o (The SMEC) report does not define 'operating conditions' for the facility and therefore has not placed any limitations on its use for ferry operations.
  - o Outstanding issues would be 'best left to a future residents' forum', 'to enable further discussion of all substantive matters of concern'. This is proposed to be through a facilitated community meeting with Dangar Island residents.
- Email DIL to Council on 7 May asking for an update, including steps Council is taking to better inform outstanding concerns, and on nature and timing of consultation.
- Email from Council 8 May again only stating that there would be facilitated meeting at a future date.
- Email from DIL to Council 8 May suggesting that prior to the meeting up to date information was required, including:
  - o The most up-to-date design resolving previous issues particularly with respect to RFS access, and details of disability access features - proposed surfaces, hand rails, wind protection etc
  - o Status of wave climate report and peer review thereof
  - o Views from a professional in the field re disability access considerations and extent to which these are catered for in the design
  - o Views of NSW Roads and Maritime and Transport NSW (both of whom have statutory interests in the structure)
  - o Legal liability of ferry boat operators
  - o Views of Riverboat Postman
- Email from Council 2 June again stating only that there would be a facilitated meeting at a future date.
- Letter from DIL to Council dated 11 July following up on disability access standards and consultation issues.
- Email from Council dated 7/9/15 stating they:
  - o Are in the process of engaging a consultant for an independent peer review of the SMEC report.
  - o Have engaged Elton Consulting to carry out a series of stakeholder meetings, followed by a combined meeting of stakeholder representatives, then two drop in information sessions on the island. 'Stakeholders' identified by Council include DIL, DIMC, Rick Stockley and Justin Pigneguy (ferry services), Rural Fire Service, and perhaps a couple of individual community members representing those with access issues.
- Several emails from DIL to Council between December 2015 and February 2016 requesting an update on the peer review and an indication of the timing of both its release, and of the community consultation.
- Email from Council dated 22/1/16 stating that the peer review was being finalised and that the consultation was scheduled for February 2016.

- Meeting with Elton Consulting re Dangar Island Ferry Wharf Upgrade – 14 April 2016.  
Notes of meeting available [here](#)