

Hi Everyone,

Happy New Year. Hope you all had a joyful and restful holiday season.

Just wanted to give you a brief update on Council and state government issues either under consideration or on our radar in early 2022.

- **[Draft 20-year Strickland Estate Nielsen Park Master Plan on public exhibition until Wednesday 15 February 2023.](#)** Click on the link to visit the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) website. If you would like to hear more about what's being proposed, you can attend a drop-in at the Strickland Estate on Sunday 5 February from 9 am to 1 pm. To provide feedback, either complete the short 5-10 minute survey on the website or send a submission to [npws.sydneysouth@environment.nsw.gov.au](mailto:npws.sydneysouth@environment.nsw.gov.au). A few of my impressions on aspects of the draft Master Plan are highlighted below. If you would also like to share your feedback with me, please email [Merrill.Witt@woollahra.nsw.gov.au](mailto:Merrill.Witt@woollahra.nsw.gov.au).
- **[Watsons Bay Wharf Upgrade.](#)** On 7 December 2022, the Watsons Bay community came together for a lively and very productive discussion about the two options Transport for NSW has put forward for the upgrading of the Watsons Bay Wharf. The meeting was very timely as the next day Woollahra Councillors had a Zoom meeting with the project team at Transport for NSW. Mayor Susan Wynne, Councillor Mary-Lou Jarvis and I provided a detailed briefing of the community's reaction to the proposed two options (not favourable), hopefully sending the team back to the drawing board to work on a much-needed third option. Thank you to the 100+ community members who took the time to attend the meeting at such a busy time of year. Your contribution will undoubtedly ensure a better outcome.
- **[Forum on Overdevelopment in the Eastern Suburbs.](#)** On Tuesday 7 February 2023, the Independent Candidate for the Vaucluse electorate, Karen Freyer, is holding a forum on overdevelopment in the eastern suburbs at the Diamond Bay Bowling Club, 6 - 9 pm. Click on the link to RSVP. You may recall that my last two newsletters have depressingly highlighted how the state government has knocked back Council planning proposals designed to stop overdevelopment and enhance protections for local character, heritage and amenity. These types of moves and others will likely make overdevelopment a hot-button issue at the [upcoming state election on Saturday 25 March 2023](#). Please come along and share your views.

#### **Brief Update on matters highlighted in previous newsletters**

- **The Sydney Eastern City Planning Panel recommended a Gateway determination for an unsolicited planning proposal for [136 - 148 New South Head Road, Edgecliff](#)** despite both the Council and the Woollahra Local Planning Panel recommending refusal. The developer plans to demolish the inter-war apartment building "Knightsbridge" and the 1897 Queen Anne style Federation commercial building (currently used for doctor's offices) for a 12-storey tower that will overhang the heritage-listed building on the corner of Darling Point Road. The planning proposal will go on public exhibition sometime this year, so fortunately you'll be given another opportunity to have your say.
- **The Council approved moving forward with its application to the Heritage Council for a new Youth Recreation Facility (skate park) in the state heritage-listed Rushcutters Bay Park.** [The Heritage Council](#) is likely to recommend that the plans go on public exhibition for comment later this year.
- **Council abandons plans to pedestrianise Knox Street.** An anticipated budget blowout was the main reason why Council voted not to proceed with the project. Based on the numerous emails that hit my inbox and the overwhelming volume of

Late Correspondence against pedestrianisation tabled at Council meetings, I think this decision will be welcomed by most. The outcome is a great example of how voicing your concerns can make a difference!

### **Draft Strickland Estate Nielsen Park Master Plan**

I encourage you to look closely at the NPWS's [draft Strickland Estate Nielsen Park Master Plan](#). Big changes are planned. Here are a few aspects of the proposed 20-year vision for the parklands that caught my attention:

- Carrara House on the Strickland Estate will be renovated and repurposed as a museum, and the surrounding grounds, including the tennis and croquet courts, will be revitalised.
- A new public entrance to the parklands on Vaucluse Road is proposed with off-street parking for 40+ cars on Steele Point Road. Additional sites next to buildings within the Strickland Estate are also flagged for potential parking areas.
- Several of the buildings on the Strickland Estate and in Nielsen Park will be repurposed for a variety of short-term accommodation options catering for around 100 people.
- The Women's Ward on the Strickland Estate will be partly demolished and redesigned as an amenities block servicing the Strickland Estate parklands and Milk Beach.
- A new non-commuter wharf at Shark Beach is proposed to improve boat access. Schematic diagrams for the wharf suggest a prominent structure but little information is provided about its size or the types of watercraft that will be allowed to dock.
- Whilst the draft Master Plan notes that Nielsen Park and the Strickland Estate represent the "largest area of foreshore bushland south of Sydney," it acknowledges that few recent records exist for many of the 65 fauna species. Unfortunately, scant information is provided about plans to conduct more studies of the precious flora and fauna.

I know many residents are very disappointed about the delays experienced to date with the [rebuilding of the seawall in Nielsen Park](#). The Master Plan recommends a major upgrade of the main entry on Greycliffe Avenue to address problems with "conflicting and unsafe access and limited sense of arrival." Hopefully, these plans won't further delay the reopening of the park or lead to additional disruptions after the new seawall is completed and the beach is finally re-opened.

Thanks again for your feedback. Look forward to working with many of you this year.

Regards,

Merrill Witt

Residents First Councillor for Vaucluse

[Merrill.Witt@woollahra.nsw.gov.au](mailto:Merrill.Witt@woollahra.nsw.gov.au)