



NORTHBRIDGE
PROGRESS ASSOCIATION

Working for the advancement of Northbridge since 1919

ABN 733 956 702

PO Box 357 Northbridge 2063

May 20 2011

Mr Nick Tobin
General Manager
Willoughby City Council
PO Box 57
CHATSWOOD NSW 2057

Dear Mr Tobin

Re: Operational Plan and Budget 2011/2012

The Association's committee has reviewed the above 5 year Plan and Budget and offers the following comments.

NPA commends Council on the detail and scope of the plan and budget and take no exception to most of the plans outlined in the document.

We note that Council is proposing to increase minimum rates by 12.8% but to maintain the overall 2.8% pegged increase and total revenue yield by reducing ad valorem rates. We take no exception with this approach provided that no residents suffer hardship through the increase in minimum rates.

We do have some concerns, as follows:

Council's borrowing costs in 2011/12 are now budgeted to be \$3.1 million mainly because Council's loans for The Concourse project have increased from \$30 million to \$55 million.

Council's projected deficit is \$5.1 million in 2011/2012. The deficit is mainly caused by borrowing costs for The Concourse. In addition, Council's budgeted Priority Improvement Program (PIP) expenditure on The Concourse is \$2.2 million.

We note that total PIP spending in 2011/2012 is budgeted to be \$15.7 million and \$77.8 million over the 5 year period. **We are disappointed that so little PIP work has been specifically allocated to Northbridge, when the suburb has so many needs.**

The only PIP expenditures identified for Northbridge are:

- \$410k for kerb and gutters in Narooma, Dalmeny and Laguna Rds spread over the final four years of the plan. We note that these expenditures appear to roll forward in each year's Plan so that the work is never carried out. (Although we see that the planned Laguna Rd kerbing has already been completed but adjoining Wollombi Rd has not.) In the past, we have questioned whether residents in those streets would choose to replace the rustic sandstone kerbing for concrete, or whether the substantial funds could be better spent elsewhere in Northbridge.
- \$30k for improvements to Harden Park;
- An additional \$29k for Northbridge Oval; and
- \$10k for sporting facilities and \$8k for a barbecue in Northbridge Park opposite Bonds Corner.

The total PIP expenditure identified for Northbridge is \$487k over five years, equivalent to **less than 1% of total PIP expenditure** over the period.

We are disappointed that there are no identified programs in Northbridge over the five years for the following **matters of real importance to the community**:

- Improvements in Northbridge Town Centre, which were approved by Council in 2004 as part of the Town Centre Masterplan. (The only improvement in the Masterplan ever completed by Council was the Euroka St roundabout.)
- Improvements to Northbridge Early Childhood Health Centre, which is badly in need of refurbishment.
- Work to improve the general safety of pedestrians in Council's car park at Northbridge Plaza (though we note that Council is proposing an improvement to the Harden Ave entry);
- Improvements to Northbridge Baths, which we understand include major repairs for concrete cancer.
- Further works under the Northbridge Park Masterplan (other than noted above), specifically:
 - The bushland pathways in Northbridge Park, which are in need of significant upgrading work;
 - Upgrading and sealing the car park for Northbridge Golf Club and the Men's Shed;
 - Expansion of The Men's Shed; and
 - Demolishing the former Branch Library building as foreshadowed in the Masterplan.
- Renovation (or demolishing) of the still vacant former church hall behind the new Branch Library at 258 Sailors Bay Rd.
- Funds for a Northbridge Traffic Study, as agreed in correspondence between NPA and Council officers.
- Improvements to laneways in Northbridge (such as the laneway running east from Coolawin Rd and the laneway between Minnamurra and Minimbah Rds, both of which are virtually impassable)

By comparison, we note some examples of other PIP expenditures planned during the 5 year period include:

- \$2.2 million expenditure on The Concourse in 2011/12;
- \$486k for Zenith Theatre (despite The Concourse having major new performance venues available);
- \$200k for bicycle facilities;
- \$60k for reserves in Castlecrag; and
- \$50k for CBD Christmas decorations in 2011/2012.

Yours sincerely



Peter McNair
President

Copy: Sailors Bay Ward Councillors

*Northbridge Progress Association has been operating continuously since 1919.
At June 30 2010, the Association had 511 members.*