

## **Suspension Bridge Safety Barrier**

### **Minutes of a meeting held at Willoughby City Council at 8.30am on August 31 2009**

**Attendees:** Cr Gail Giles-Gidney (chair), Gladys Berejiklian MP, Mayor Pat Reilly, Willoughby Crs John Hooper, Adrian Cox and Rob Wilson, North Sydney Cr Veronique Marchandau, WCC officers Greg Woodhams, Steven Head and Linda McLure, NSC officer Cathy Edwards-Davis, Peter McNair and Malcolm Lye (Northbridge), Kevin Fitzpatrick (Naremburn), Kate Westoby (Castlecrag), Peter O'Carroll (Tunks Park), Gillian Tomlinson (Bridgeview), Chris Levy (Cammeray).

**Apologies:** North Sydney Mayor Genia McCaffery and Cr Barbour, Willoughby Crs Coppock, Saville, Stevens, Norton and Lamb and Rutherford.

#### **Objective of the meeting**

Cr Giles-Gidney stated that the objective is to determine what combined actions the attendees could take to ensure that the RTA resumed communication and consultation with both Councils and community groups about the Suspension Bridge safety barrier.

#### **Update from Willoughby City Council (WCC)**

Greg Woodhams tabled a briefing paper summarizing the RTA's principles and options for the bridge safety barrier. He noted that WCC does not have a formal position on the Suspension Bridge safety barrier.

Greg said that he suspected that RTA was proceeding with its Option 1 and that speed is now of the essence if RTA is to be persuaded to look at a competition for other options and to extend the process. He tabled proposed Options 7 and 8, drafted by WCC as possible alternate solutions. Greg said that WCC had retained a firm of heritage architects to obtain independent advice.

Greg proposed a two-prong approach:

1. A "bureaucratic approach", whereby WCC and North Sydney Council would directly contact RTA with a proposed plan and timeline; and
2. A "community approach" whereby community groups would contact the Minister, media, etc.

#### **Update from North Sydney Council (NSC)**

Cathy Edwards-Davis said that NSC has not formally voted on a position about the Suspension Bridge safety barriers. NSC supports the competition route for a preferred option.

#### **The way forward**

Peter O'Carroll stated that none of the RTA options was acceptable. He agreed that RTA probably felt that sufficient community consultation had been held and was proceeding with its Option 1. He noted that the RTA schedule called for the design to be finalised in August.

An attendee noted that a security guard had prevented a suicide attempt on the bridge the previous week.

Cr Hooper said that he had received 300 emails in 10 days. They overwhelmingly favoured a design competition.

### **The Parliamentary perspective**

Gladys Berejiklian said that the Minister for Roads had still not responded to her letter sent after July 23. The Minister must be made aware of the issue. She will contact him this week, when Parliament resumes. She would like to present him with an alternative timetable that includes a competition and is tight but realistic. At some time, the State Coroner's Office should be involved.

### **Listing on the State Heritage Register**

Peter McNair said that such a listing would be a long term effort. Linda McLure noted that RTA still needs to obtain Heritage Office approval despite the bridge not being listed on the NSW register.

### **Agreed actions:**

In regard to the bureaucratic approach, it was **agreed** that:

- A joint WCC/NSC approach will be made to RTA, emphasizing that the need to prevent suicides is accepted but that the RTA's process and options are unacceptable.
- Greg Woodhams will contact RTA in the next two days to arrange a meeting.
- Greg Woodhams will draft a proposed timeline within the next week for presentation by WCC/NSC to RTA as soon as possible. He will liaise with NSC and Gladys Berejiklian.
- Gladys Berejiklian will speak on the issue in Parliament in the coming week and present the Minister with the proposed new timeline.
- In view of the aim to achieve a competition, options 7 and 8 prepared by WCC will not be tabled with RTA.
- Cr Hooper will provide Greg Woodhams with an outline of the proposed design competition, as discussed at the July 23 meeting.
- The timeline will include a 10 week competition period, with a decision on a preferred option being decided by mid-December. The Mayor noted that the competition should be advertised early.
- A joint committee should be established to endorse a plan and timeline for the competition and to approve a design, in a professional and non-emotive way.
- The Suspension Bridge issue will be on the agendas of forthcoming WCC and NSC Council meetings.
- At an appropriate time, WCC and NSC would make media releases noting that the views of Council and community "are not being heard by Government". The releases would emphasise that the bridge problems should have been solved a long time ago and that the community wants action by Christmas. In the meantime, the security guards should continue.
- Gladys Berejiklian will contact the State Coroner's Office at an appropriate time after the timeline is developed and agreed.

In regard to the community approach, it was **agreed** that:

- Community groups will contact their members to write letters or send emails to the Minister. The letters should preferably be individualised rather than form letters.

- Northbridge PA will draft a list of guidelines for a reasonable and focussed letter and will forward to other community groups. The draft will emphasise that the community takes mental health very seriously and wants suicides prevented. However, it feels strongly that the bridge heritage value should not be impaired.
- Kate Westoby will contact Jack Munday to determine whether he could be interested in being involved in the issue.
- Banners and demonstrations would not be appropriate, and petitions will not be raised at this time.

The meeting closed at 9.40am.

<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>Contact RTA for Meeting</b>	Greg Woodhams	3/9/9
<b>Decide Time Line</b>	GW, NSC & Gladys B	7/9/9
<b>Design Competition Specs</b>	Clr John Hooper	7/9/9
<b>Follow up Minister</b>	Gladys Berejiklian	10/9/9
<b>Follow up State Coroner</b>	Gladys Berejiklian	When appropriate
<b>Media Liaison</b>	WCC/NSC/GB	After RTA meeting
<b>Formalise Council Policy</b>	GW/CE-D	7/9/9
<b>Community Letter</b>	Northbridge PA	7/9/9
<b>Contact Jack Munday</b>	Kate Westoby	10/9/9