



Willoughby City Council

ORDINARY COUNCIL

MINUTES

12 October 2009

commenced at 7:05pm

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9.2 ANTI SUICIDE FENCING - SUSPENSION BRIDGE

The Roads and Traffic Authority (RTA) has announced its decision to proceed with the erection of fencing on the Long Gully Bridge (Suspension Bridge) at Northbridge Bridge.

The proposed fencing design is either a straight or curved palisade style fence. The project cost is \$1.5Million, with construction scheduled to commence in December 2009. The proposal is on "display" for 3 weeks, with comments received by 14 October 2009 before a final design is selected.

I have discussed the matter with the Mayor of North Sydney Council and agreed that joint action in opposing the fencing and proposing alternative solutions is needed.

Both the Willoughby and North Sydney communities have expressed their concern about the proposals being put forward by the RTA, in response to the Coroner's recommendations to install anti-suicide fencing at the Suspension Bridge.

This is a serious issue that needs to be addressed in several ways.

Primarily, I believe that the issue involving the bridge is a wider community health problem that must be urgently addressed by community health workers and by State Government action on mental health. Our community has fought for several years to retain and expand community health services particularly community based mental health services at the Hercules Street facilities in Chatswood.

The circumstances of the Suspension Bridge reinforce the need for strong and permanent community based health care services especially for sufferers of mental health problems. Instead of funding the fencing, the funds earmarked for the project should be directed at mental health support and suicide prevention services.

The RTA has determined a fencing option that has not had wide community consultation nor is there community support for the proposal. There are heritage, pedestrian amenity and design issues with the 2 fencing options proposed by the RTA.

The RTA is able to undertake the work without the Council's approval under the State Infrastructure SEPP. Notwithstanding this, the RTA is required to undertake an Environmental Assessment and obtain prior approval under Part 5 of the EPA Act.

Council must draw the RTA's attention to the requirement for prior approval including the necessity to give both Councils adequate time to make a submission on a Part 5 Application proposal.

A Submission to the RTA has been prepared highlighting the key issues concerning the proposal which are:

1. The design of the fencing and its impact on the heritage and aesthetic values of the Bridge.
2. Lack of proper community/stakeholder consultation.
3. Necessity to address this issue through greater support for mental health and suicide prevention, and
4. Compliance with approval processes under the NSW Heritage Act 1977 and Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979.

It is recommended that Council make a submission to the RTA as contained in Attachment 1 and issue a Joint Press Release with North Sydney Council setting out the two Councils' concerns.

RESOLUTION

That:

- a) **Council make a submission to the RTA concerning the proposal for anti-suicide fencing on Long Gully (Suspension) Bridge, Northbridge as contained in the Attachment to the Mayoral Minute.**
- b) **The Mayors of Willoughby and North Sydney issue a joint Press Release on the two Councils' concerns on the matter.**
- c) **Council advise all parties involved with Council in the consultation to date, (including the Northbridge Progress Association) of Council's action.**
- d) **Council endorse approaches being made to social welfare associations seeking their advice and support to assist the RTA to minimise the potential for any further incidents on the Suspension Bridge.**
- e) **Representations be made to the Minister for Health seeking a commitment to expanding community based health services, especially mental health services at the Hercules Street Community Health Centre, having regard to the circumstances of the Suspension Bridge and giving particular attention to suicide prevention strategies.**

MOVED COUNCILLOR REILLY

SECONDED COUNCILLOR HOOPER

CARRIED

Voting

For the Resolution: Councillors Reilly, Hooper, Lamb, Norton, Saville, Stevens, Rutherford, Thompson and Wilson.

Against the Resolution: Nil.