



**INVITATION TO CHRISTMAS DRINKS
And a brief NEWS UPDATE**

Christmas is coming and your Committee would be pleased if you could join them for a glass of wine, nibbles and Christmas Talks.

On TUESDAY, 24TH NOVEMBER 2015

**At the SOLDIERS' INSTITUTE, NATIONAL PARKS & WILDLIFE,
MIDDLE HEAD**

(Directions: Drive to the very end of Middle Head Road - past HMAS Penguin, continue straight on to the National Parks Gate. It will be open. Take the road to the Left. The Soldiers' Institute is the building on the right and there is plenty of space to park.)

Come at 5 pm for a walk to the Middle Fort if you would like to see the progress with the excavations.

Or join us at 5.30 pm, following the walk, for a glass of wine and nibbles.

At 6 pm - Christmas Talks

- **Find out more about the Little Penguin colony**

NPWS Ranger Mel Tyas and the Penguin Wardens will join us to tell us all about the hard work this year on keeping the little penguin colonies on North Head safe. They are a wonderful group of people with in depth knowledge of the penguin colonies and how far they roam around Sydney Harbour including all the beaches of Mosman. Find out how to become a Little Penguin Warden and help protect the colony. You may have family and friends who would like to be involved. The Little Penguin Book will be on sale which will be a delight to put in the children's Christmas stockings.

- **Do we need a marine park in Sydney?**

Justin Field (Marine Campaigner, Nature Conservation Council) will talk about the community campaign for a marine park for Sydney, what it would mean for those who live on and use the harbour and Sydney's coastline. How can we protect Sydney's iconic marine species like the weedy sea dragon, support sustainable recreational fishing and ensure a resilient and healthy marine environment.

Please note that **the AGM** is likely to be held in March next year.

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NEWS

Patricia Harvey OAM: A former Mayor of Mosman, she was committed to preserving bushland and improving coastal management. Her obituary appeared in the SMH on 8th November and a public memorial service will be held at 10 am on Tuesday, 24th November in the Grand Hall, Mosman Art Gallery.

Council Amalgamations: Despite promises of no forced amalgamations, the state government is seeking to achieve amalgamations, by fair or foul means, it would seem. Mosman residents are currently being telephone surveyed by the state government to discover which group of councils they would like to join. The survey does not allow an answer of "No amalgamation".

Our submission to the IPART argued that success in preserving Mosman's local character and landscape was the result of **local** residents winning over the hearts and minds of their **local** representatives. Can it honestly be expected that representatives or administrators in Ryde would take the same care and responsibility for the parks & bushland of Mosman or for the volunteers who put in the effort and hours of their time.

The 10/50 Rural Fire Service Vegetation Clearing Code: Introduced in August 2014, the code allowed property owners within 350 metres of a high risk zone to cut down or prune any tree with a trunk within 10 metres of their residence. It also allowed owners to cut down or prune trees on other peoples' properties if the owners of those properties agreed. It also allowed owners to clear all the undergrowth within 50 metres of their residences. The code overrode state and local environmental legislation.

The code was shockingly misused. In Mosman during the operation of this code, more than 140 mature trees have been lost and the damage in other areas has been far worse. Very few of the trees lost were lost because of a fear of bushfire. It was all about views and increasing the development potential of the property.

We wrote submissions, we wrote letters, we waved placards and we delivered a stump to our State MP.

Finally in August 2015 the zone within which the code applied was reduced to 100 m from high risk vegetation areas, and land within 100 metres of the coastline and key areas such as koala habitats were excluded. Urban bushland and its wildlife in the "chop zone" remain at risk however.

Synthetic Turf for Sports Fields:

Council conducted a survey into the use of synthetic turf on Middle Head and George's Heights playing fields. The use of synthetic turf would give sporting groups the possibility of more intensive and more reliable use of the facilities in wet weather.

We are opposing its use:

- on environmental grounds such as the effect on the ecosystem including birdlife; the problem of safe disposal of the old turf when it needs to be renewed; the cooling effect of grass v. the heat emitted by synthetic grass.
- because its use will alienate parkland that is for the use and enjoyment of the wider community especially when it is not being used for sport.

Significantly more of the anonymous on-line survey responses were in favour of the use of synthetic turf than against. The written responses, however, were only 52% in favour.

Council officers are recommending that Council proceeds to discussing the next steps with the Harbour Trust. The matter comes before Council on Tuesday 10th November.

National Parks & Wildlife Service (NPWS) and Sydney Harbour Federation Trust (SHFT):

Members of the committee attended an NPWS community consultation about the development of a master plan for the Middle Head and George's Heights Precinct of Sydney Harbour National Park. A problem with the planning was very obvious - there was no joint planning with the SHFT. **Hats off to the Headland Preservation Group (HPG)** for getting the two organisations together at high levels. The result is a commitment by both organisations to work cooperatively in planning for their respective responsibilities. Planning will recommence in mid 2016.

Another concern is that NPWS is being required to use some of its assets to produce funds. We would not like to see heritage buildings on Middle Head adapted and reused in ways that do not respect their heritage.

Good news for unmade roads:

With so much bad news for the environment at state and federal levels, it's a real pleasure to be reporting some good local news. Council has

submitted a proposal to rezone 15 unmade roads from RE1 (Public Recreation) to E2 (Environmental Conservation) to the Department of

Planning and Environment. The proposal has received "Gateway" approval and is likely to be on display for public comment later this month. We have been actively advocating this measure that will give greater protection to these corridors of bushland, so important for biodiversity in an urban environment.

Bush regeneration:

Finally, a huge thank you to the loyal and hard working Bradley Bushland and Wyargine teams for their wonderful work at these sites. Progress is very pleasing, but it could always progress faster with more volunteers! Anyone out there?

Kate Eccles
President
9.11.2015