



4th July 2020

NEWSLETTER

Dear Members and Supporters,

Here at last is the long-promised newsletter and we are pleased to say there is much GOOD news to report! So, starting with the good news:

REPORT ON THE HARBOUR TRUST REVIEW

The report is now published and the Minister for the Environment has undertaken to begin consultation on legislation to enshrine the Trust's ongoing role. The minister will release an initial \$9 million for urgent maintenance that will boost jobs and economic activity.

Members responded to the review magnificently and can be very pleased with the result. The report recognizes the national significance of the sites and their natural, indigenous and military heritage.

Community recommendations to the reviewers, including this Association's, have largely been met.

An ongoing entity protected by its own Act

The report recommends the continuation of the Harbour Trust in its entirety as an ongoing entity in Commonwealth hands, and that the objects of the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust Act remain appropriate.

Funding

The Review also recommends government funding for the Trust - \$50 million immediately for capital works, noting that private sector investment would not ultimately benefit the Trust's finances as much as government funded investment. Private sector investment would result in that sector reaping the rewards of its investment rather than the Trust.

Long term government funding is not guaranteed and remains a concern.

Leasing

The report recommended against leasing a whole site (such as the proposal for Cockatoo Island which aroused such community concern last year.)

However, the recommendation to allow an increase in the length of leases for individual assets from a maximum of 25 years to 35 years *is* a concern. Long leases have the potential to privatise an asset and reduce public access. Properly funded by government, long leases should not be necessary.

At this point I would like to acknowledge the investigative efforts of Linda Bergin (her opinion pieces in the Sydney Morning Herald have been excellent) and of course, the ongoing work of the Headland Preservation Group.

We shall be consulting further on the Report and its recommendations.

MORE COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT NEWS: The EPBC Act - Review and Discussion Paper

Staying with the Commonwealth, the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Act 1999 (EPBC) is under review. The Act's particular relevance to the Harbour Trust is that the heritage of the Trust sites and assets come under Commonwealth jurisdiction and the terms of this Act.

However, the Act has a much wider relevance, its fundamental objective being the preservation and conservation of Australia's environment. This should form the basis of all decisions made under the Act.

The Association's submission in response to the Discussion Paper expressed our disappointment. The tenor of the discussion seemed to say that agriculture, development, forestry and mining are being hampered by the requirements of the Act, and that the Act must make it easier for their operations by cutting "green tape".

The outcomes we would like to see achieved by the EPBC Act are meeting emission targets, the prevention of extinctions and the recovery of threatened species.

At the Committee's request I wrote a short piece for publication. I shall attach it with this Newsletter for your interest.

BRIEF NSW NEWS— good news though somewhat beyond the Association's scope

The Powerhouse Museum to stay (will the Green Bans save the threatened heritage buildings in Parramatta?)

Old Growth Forests: Plans to log mapped old growth forests have been abandoned. These forests will remain protected.

The NSW Koala Inquiry Report: There is support across the political spectrum for urgent action by all levels of government to save koalas from extinction. Protection of koala habitat and mitigating fire and climate risk are key.

Perhaps both of these results have followed our appalling bushfire summer and the NSW Inquiry into the Bushfire Season. (We made a submission to that Inquiry.)

Recognition of the value of Green Spaces: Covid-19 has demonstrated the need, and the draft Greener Places Policy proposes parks within reach of apartments, schools and workplaces, more tree lined streets, and nurturing native habitats.

MOSMAN NEWS

Our submissions have included the Plan of Management for Reid Park, Sirius Cove Reserve, Harnett Park and Curraghbeena Park and most recently the Road Reserves Sale, Leasing and Consent Policy.

The Road Reserves policy will be discussed at Council's meeting this week and we are gratified that our suggestions for changes have largely been agreed and made. Members will remember that Unmade Roads often contribute to Mosman's valuable green space and that we have sought to ensure that they are protected.

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Also on the agenda this week is Council's Climate Strategy and Action Plans following the Declaration of Climate Emergency in November last year.

Council Staff: Covid-19 has resulted in some staff being laid off, some taking long service leave, some working for fewer days. It is to their credit that Council appears to be operating efficiently while maintaining contact with residents.

BUSH REGENERATION (Last but not least)

Hearty and heartfelt thanks to all who volunteered for the great planting effort on the slope from Rawson Oval to Alexander Avenue. Most of us had a lot of fun though knees and backs were stretched. If you have read your newsletter from Zali Steggall, you may have noticed our photograph. The grant for this work came through us to Mosman Council. Council terraced, mulched and prepared the slopes which volunteers then planted. Special thanks to members of the Mosman Public School Sustainability Group who got news of the initiative and joined us. The result hoped for is a lovely bush corridor linking the Bradley Bushland Reserve with Rawson Park. Thanks also to Hugh Wyllie, Council's Bushcare Officer who has steered the project.

I wonder if members read the SMH article about soil microbes in urban bushland being good for people. The article fell short on explaining the science, but I have interpreted it to mean "Come bush regenerating! It's good for you!"

Bringing Back the Bush by Joan Bradley: Copies of this formerly out-of-print work are available from us at \$20.

AGM: We will not hold an AGM in this year of Covid, but we shall send out a Notice in lieu shortly. Copies of the book for those who would like one, could be purchased when you pay your subscriptions.

With best wishes,

Kate Eccles, President.