

# Newcastle Voice We Love Our Coast



May 2010

## Table of Contents

Executive Summary .....	2
Introduction .....	3
Scope of Consultation .....	5
Methodology.....	6
Survey Findings .....	9
Northern Sector: Stockton .....	9
Stockton Beach North (Corroba Reserve) .....	10
Stockton Beach.....	11
Stockton East.....	13
Griffith Park .....	15
Additional suggestions received for Stockton .....	16
Central Sector: City Beaches .....	18
Nobbys Beach.....	18
Newcastle Ocean Baths.....	21
Newcastle Beach .....	24
King Edward Park and Bogey Hole.....	27
Additional suggestions received for City Beaches .....	28
Southern Sector: Suburban Beaches .....	30
Bar Beach/Empire Park .....	30
Dixon Park .....	36
Merewether Beach.....	40
Additional suggestions for Suburban Beaches .....	42
Final comments about the draft Masterplan .....	43
Urgency for Action .....	43
Environmental considerations.....	44
Dog areas .....	44
Paid parking .....	44
Surf Club Upgrades .....	45
Funding Sources.....	45
Adequacy of the plan .....	46
Appendix I	Survey Tool
Appendix II	Demographics
Appendix III	Quantitative Results - Topline Reports
Appendix IV	Qualitative Results - Open-Ended Questions
Appendix V	Media and Promotional Material Used

**Prepared for:** The City of Newcastle, Land and Property Management Authority and Hunter Surf Lifesaving

**Prepared by:** Newcastle Voice, The City of Newcastle

## Executive Summary

Consultation was conducted with the community to gather opinion on the proposed recommendations from the draft Newcastle Coastal Revitalisation Masterplan – with a survey and a public exhibition period.

This report summarises the results of the *We Love Our Coast* survey which was conducted within the Newcastle LGA, through the Newcastle Voice community reference panel and the wider community.

A survey was sent to 2073 Newcastle Voice members and was distributed at public locations. A brochure was distributed to all households in the local government area containing a summary of the Masterplan, and information about how to complete the survey. The survey was open from 12 April to 24 May 2010. A total number of 1072 responses were received. The report centres around three sectors: Stockton, City Beaches and Suburban Beaches.

Respondents were asked to prioritise proposals for each section. The top ten proposals gaining most community support, as received during this consultation, were as follows – in order:

1. Stockton Beach North - provision of pathways for walking, jogging and cycling
2. King Edward Park & Bogey Hole - upgrade the pedestrian and cycle paths
3. Dixon Park - additional shade, seating and vegetation
4. King Edward Park & Bogey Hole - restaurant/function centre (old bowling club site)
5. Bar Beach/Empire Park - improved shade, seating
6. Nobbys Beach - additional shade and seating
7. King Edward Park & Bogey Hole - investigate safety and access upgrades for the Bogey Hole
8. Nobbys Beach - allow public access to light house and provide kiosk facilities
9. Newcastle Beach - additional shade and seating
10. Bar Beach/Empire Park - stabilise and revegetate cliff

Comments received reveal that there is a sense of works being long overdue – as a reason for prioritising possible proposals over others. There is a strong rally behind the need to improve the existing assets, rather than constructing new ones. This is reflected in the comments received regarding buildings such as the Newcastle and Merewether Ocean Baths, the derelict bowling club at King Edward Park and Nobby's Lighthouse.

While there is resistance to paid parking, sale of public land and commercialisation of the coastline, there is also a realisation by some that assets must be able to generate income to support diminishing public funds - from all levels of government. As in previous consultations conducted across the city, a strong local preference for the natural environment prevails over a built environment.

This consultation report will inform and guide the finalisation the draft Newcastle Coastal Revitalisation Masterplan undertaken by Urbis, the external consulting agency. The revised Masterplan will go back to the commissioning agencies for adoption by normal public process.

## Introduction

### Background

Newcastle's beaches and coastline are some of the city's greatest assets. It is an area that is increasingly being recognised at local, national and international levels for its beauty, environmental values, recreational opportunities and diverse range of activities.

Our beaches receive in excess of two million visits per year and are a hub of community activities and the venue for a range of experiences. Newcastle's beaches and coastal facilities are a vital part of the city's culture.

The experiences people are seeking from the beach are many and varied. As the community's experience of the beach changes and becomes more diverse, Newcastle's coastal facilities, buildings, and service provision need to change.

The City of Newcastle, the Land and Property Management Authority and Hunter Surf Lifesaving all have roles and responsibilities in maintaining, using and promoting coastal assets. In December 2008, these three parties signed a Memorandum of Understanding to develop a long term strategy for managing the coast, as many assets had become dilapidated and ad-hoc development is not seen as beneficial to gaining a variety of funding sources.

Consultants Urbis were engaged to develop a Masterplan for the Newcastle coast. The Masterplan will guide future decisions and community consultation will continue as more detailed projects and plans are developed. The draft plan focuses on three sectors – northern, central and southern – and outlines different opportunities available in each precinct. The purpose of developing each proposal is to create a starting point for discussions in the community. The proposals were developed after meetings with local groups to discuss broad concepts and show potential opportunities.

The We Love Our Coast survey was supplemented by a call for written submissions. The content of these submissions is being analysed separately by Urbis Pty Ltd.

A masterplan will allow Newcastle City Council to manage coastal assets and work with stakeholders for the benefit of the community over the next 10 to 20 years.

## Report Purpose

The intent of this community consultation is to obtain public feedback regarding the draft proposals in each precinct of the Newcastle Coastal Revitalisation Masterplan and to ensure relevant stakeholders are fully informed as to the process and opportunities for input.

This community consultation will help Council:

- Find out what is important to the community in the short and long-term
- Ensure information is disseminated about the Masterplan
- Enable Council to manage coastal assets and work with stakeholders for the benefit of the community over the next 20 years.

The survey presented community members with the opportunity to prioritise the proposals in the draft Newcastle Coastal Revitalisation Masterplan.

## Scope of Consultation

A number of communication tools and engagement methods were implemented as part of the Draft Coastal Revitalisation Masterplan consultation. Activities were undertaken to engage all residents, which includes the Newcastle Voice community reference panel.

## Information Provided

A colour A3 brochure was prepared and distributed to 65,000 households in the local government area at a cost of \$8,500. This brochure summarised the key proposals from the draft Coastal Revitalisation Masterplan.

The brochure and survey were distributed to the local libraries, surf clubs, Minmi general store, Maryland Multipurpose Centre and the The City of Newcastle Administration building. In addition, all information and survey were available online at The City of Newcastle website.

## Media

Throughout the consultation program, local media provided coverage of the draft Masterplan – including information about how citizens could view it at surf clubs and in council offices.

Paid advertising was placed in both the Herald and the Star throughout the consultation advising residents of the time remaining to provide input and the ways they could send in their feedback.

Appendix IV contains all media and promotional material.

## Survey

A questionnaire was developed to test the proposals contained in the draft Newcastle Coastal Revitalisation Masterplan seeking the degree of agreement with each item, by sector of the coast. The survey was administered in several ways:

1. Newcastle Voice members – online
2. Newcastle Voice members – print
3. Broad community through Council's website – online
4. Broad community - print

A large number of comments (2026) were received in response to the four open-ended questions, indicating a high level of community engagement.

## Methodology

### Data Collection

Data collection took place from 12 April to 24 May 2010. The survey was divided into three primary sections corresponding to the Masterplan: Stockton (northern sector), City Beaches (central sector) and Suburban Beaches (southern sector). It presented the respondents with the opportunity to prioritise proposals. To control order bias, certain questions were randomised as they were delivered to respondents. An open-ended question at the end of each section, as well as at the end, offered the opportunity to address concerns not covered in closed survey questions. A copy of the survey is provided in Appendix I.

The 15-question survey was sent to all active Newcastle Voice members, in print or online, depending on their selected mode of consultation. A survey invitation and link to the online survey was sent on 19 April 2010. An electronic reminder to online members was sent on 28 April 2010 and 5 May 2010. The survey closed at midnight on 24 May 2010.

Further, a link was provided off Council's website for any interested members of the community who are not already members of Newcastle Voice's community reference panel. This link was open from 12 April to 24 May 2010.

### Consultation Area

The consultation encompassed the whole Newcastle City Council local government area (LGA). The entire Newcastle Voice panel was invited and promotional activities were aimed at the entire LGA.

The breakdown of the demographics by suburb is provided in Appendix II. These include the demographics of those in the Newcastle Voice sample, as well as the actual respondents. No marked differences are found between the demographics of the Newcastle Voice sample and the actual respondents.

It should be noted that being a Newcastle Voice member is voluntary, and therefore participation in its activities is also voluntary.

A number of demographics were captured from respondents from the broad community, even though they completed the survey as an anonymous community member.

## Participants

The breakdown of the demographics by gender, age and employment status is provided for the Newcastle Voice sample as well as for the Newcastle Voice respondents in Appendix II. Please note that a limited amount of demographic information was captured for other community members.

In brief, Newcastle Voice results (674 responses) show that:

- 12.82% of respondents live in Merewether, 6.26% in New Lambton, 5.07% in Newcastle (CBD), and 5.07% live in Cooks Hill.
- 40.95% of respondents were 40-69 years old
- 65.47% of respondents live in Ward 1 and Ward 2
- 66.67% of respondents are employed full or part-time
- 66.76% of respondents have lived in the Newcastle LGA for more than 10 years
- The gender split was 48% male and 52% female

In brief, broader community member results (398 responses) show that:

- 84.67% live in the Newcastle LGA and 6.03% live in the Hunter.
- 60.55% of respondents were 40-69 years old
- 64.32% of respondents are employed full or part-time
- The gender split was 47% male and 51% female (with 2% unassigned)

## Representation

The views collected in this report can not be said to be statistically valid however, they represent the views of major stakeholder groups and community members.

Although sampling 2073 Newcastle Voice panel members represents over 1.5% of the Newcastle LGA population, the sampling frame for this survey was not statistically representative of the population.

Consistent themes presented in this report are derived from contributions and the reliability and validity of the interpretations can be assessed.

Furthermore, there is a possibility that anonymous community members completed the survey multiple times. The panel management system cannot detect duplicate entries from anonymous respondents, deterring individuals who may have wished to 'stack' the survey results.

## Data Handling and Analysis

The data handling and analysis was carried out by Council staff from the Customer Service, Communication and Consultation Service unit. To determine the top ranking priorities among the proposals, the combined percentages of respondents who 'completely' and 'somewhat' agree with proposals were calculated. The strength of response can be read from the charts at each section.

All responses are treated in confidence to ensure the anonymity of respondents. All are included whole, as they were received, in Appendix V. Where a comment has been included in the body of the report, comments have been edited for spelling and grammar. No identifying information is included with any responses selected for this report. All comments received are included in Appendix IV.

## Response Rate and Survey Design

The survey had 1072 responses from two groups:

- 33% response rate from Newcastle Voice (674 out of 2073)
  - 39% response rate (102 out of 260 ) from off-line Newcastle Voice
  - 32% response rate (572 out of 1813) from on-line Newcastle Voice
- 0.6% response rate from broad community (398 out of 65,000 households)
  - 0.2% response rate (192 out of 65000) from off-line anonymous
  - 0.3% response rate (206 out of 65000) from on-line anonymous

This survey had a high on-line drop-out rate. Although 1072 residents completed the survey (778 on-line and 294 off-line surveys), 1609 participated. This means that 537 individuals started the on-line survey but chose not to complete it. Looking at stop points, individuals dropped out throughout the survey. Having over 40% of on-line respondents drop out during the survey may be attributed to the perceived complexity of the questions and the length of the overall survey. Furthermore Newcastle Voice members have been requested to complete surveys continuously since February 2010 and this may account for panel fatigue.

Below are some direct quotes from respondents which shed light on some of the possible reasons for the drop-out rate:

- "It's good that the Master Plan is on show, but why are you asking us what we think of things the Council is/had already done like the playground at Empire Park and the skate park. Be genuine about getting public feedback!"
- "This survey question encourages bias in the results! Why can't I nominate the top three I disagree with! Where is the room for additional proposals and priorities? How can one community club with a pretty narrow set of objectives represent the wide range of community users of the coastline?"
- "This would be one of the worst survey forms yet produced by Voice. Repeated forced answers, steered responses and distance from the realities of the document were common."
- "This survey needed a map with all the proposed locations highlighted - on the SAME MAP."

## Survey Findings

The survey results from the Newcastle Voice community reference panel and from anonymous community members are being reported in combined form. Combined results will allow the findings to be actioned more directly and provide the most integrated picture of current community expectation.

The survey was divided into three key sectors as follows, which mirrors the draft Coastal Revitalisation Plan delivered by urban planners Urbis Pty Ltd:

1. Stockton (Northern) Sector
2. City Beaches (Central) Sector
3. Suburban Beaches (Southern) Sector

The survey was designed to test the proposals outlined in the draft plan for each precinct.

### Northern Sector: Stockton

The northern sector includes Stockton Beach North (Corroba Reserve), Stockton Beach, Stockton East and Griffith Park. The theme for this area is based around sport, recreation and education as well as history, heritage and tourism. The following objectives had been defined for this area:

- Improve access to existing and upgraded sporting and recreation facilities
- Ensure new development is protected from coastal recession and erosion
- Enhance landscape character within the Stockton peninsula
- Connect Griffith Park with Stockton Beach
- Encourage educational facilities and heritage interpretation sites
- Attract new and previous visitors to Stockton Beach
- Improve the type, quantity and quality of public domain elements.

Over 42% of respondents indicated that they have visited the Stockton Beaches within the last 12 months, with another 9.7% indicating that they had not visited that area within the last 12 months but wanted to complete the questions about the area.

A comprehensive number of priorities, and reasons for them, are addressed in 298 comments received at the open-ended question for this section.

## Stockton Beach North (Corroba Reserve)

Respondents were asked to state the extent with which they agreed with the draft proposal for this precinct, as outlined in the draft Newcastle Coastal Revitalisation Masterplan (page 22, figure 8). The table below lists the ten proposals:

Table 1: Draft proposals for Stockton Beach North (Corroba Reserve) precinct

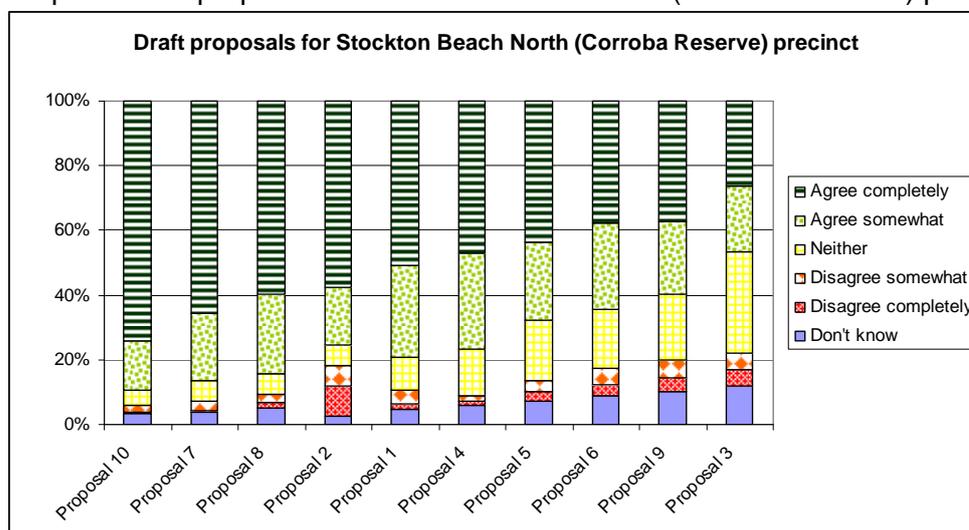
Proposal number	Draft proposal
Proposal 1	Formalise safe vehicle access and parking for reserve
Proposal 2	Formalise and regulate 4WD access to beach
Proposal 3	Extend playing fields 20 metres north
Proposal 4	Upgrade playing fields
Proposal 5	Include floodlighting on playing fields
Proposal 6	Formalise parking at Corroba Park
Proposal 7	Provide trees around edge of Reserve
Proposal 8	Manage access points to beach in commonly used locations
Proposal 9	Replacing existing playground
Proposal 10	Provision of pathways for walking, jogging and cycling

In order, the top three draft proposals which received the most support from respondents were as follows:

1. Provision of pathways for walking, jogging and cycling (89.3% agree somewhat or completely)
2. Provide trees around edge of Reserve (86.5% agree somewhat or completely)
3. Manage access points to beach in commonly used locations (84.2% agree somewhat or completely)

On balance, respondents lean more towards agreement than disagreement with the draft proposals for this area. There are no marked differences between Newcastle Voice members and the responses from other community members.

Graph 1: Draft proposals for Stockton Beach North (Corroba Reserve) precinct



The strength of agreement (as shown in the chart above) is reflected in respondents' open-ended comments. The reasons for the priorities emerge throughout the open-ended questions. Individuals commented on the activities which would create the most benefit for the current users of Stockton Beach, as well as increasing the visitor potential of the area. An overall desire for more organised interactions between pedestrians, cyclists and cars is expressed.

Comments about the need for improved pathways recur for every section of Stockton with people indicated that they would willingly catch the ferry and then cycle around the Stockton foreshore.

Plantings were seen as providing shade and increased comfort for all, as well as reducing parking on reserves and reducing soil erosion which is of particular interest due to Stockton's low-lying geography.

The following comments illustrate respondents' rationale for the top three priorities in this area:

- “The extension of the playing fields and development of shared path cycleways should have dominance. Small capital investments can improve the visual aspects and offer pedestrian/cyclists safe all weather travel paths. Stockton has large parcels of land with little or no facilities or access paths.”
- “The Corroba Oval refurbishment should not be included here as it has been planned along time before with money from Orica as well as council/state and should have been started months ago.”
- “Improvement to Corroba Oval area first. That end of Stockton appears to have had the least amount of money spent on it. It is utilised frequently by the residents of Stockton, so they will benefit the most.”
- “4WD use of beach, when uncontrolled, is a significant environmental threat.”
- “Proper entry and exit 4wd access due to the amount of traffic using Stockton beach for safety as well as coastal preservation.”

## Stockton Beach

Respondents were asked to state the extent with which they agreed with the draft proposal for this precinct, as outlined in the draft Newcastle Coastal Revitalisation Masterplan (page 25, figure 11). The table below lists the seven proposals:

Table 2: Draft proposals for Stockton Beach precinct

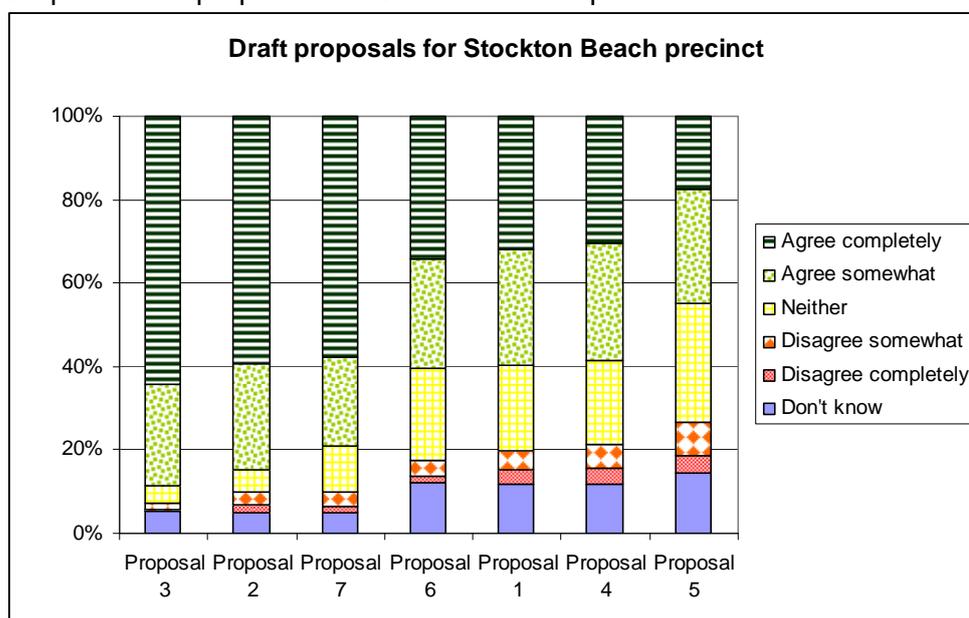
Proposal number	Draft proposal
Proposal 1	Relocate/install new play equipment north of tennis courts
Proposal 2	Shared pedestrian and cycle plan
Proposal 3	Establish shade, seating and vegetation in Dalby Park
Proposal 4	Create a combined Stockton Sports Club incorporating the Surf Life Saving Club
Proposal 5	Relocate existing parking to new parking bays around Lynn Oval
Proposal 6	Retain existing Lifeguard facilities building
Proposal 7	Plant trees along Mitchell Street

In order, the top three draft proposals which received the most support from respondents were recorded as follows:

1. Establish shade, seating and vegetation in Dalby Park (88.2% agree somewhat or completely)
2. Shared pedestrian and cycle plan (84.7% agree somewhat or completely)
3. Plant trees along Mitchell Street (78.9% agree somewhat or completely)

On balance, respondents lean more towards agreement than disagreement with the draft proposals for this precinct. There are no marked differences between Newcastle Voice members and the responses from anonymous community members.

Graph 2: Draft proposals for Stockton Beach precinct



Again, the importance of plantings and cycle/pedestrian paths are reflected in respondents' comments, with a clear sense that some revitalisation of Mitchell Street is past overdue. The following comments illustrate:

- "Links with plantings along Mitchell Street (to Griffith Park) would draw the eye beyond the immediate area of the ferry terminal towards the village, beach access and beyond."
- "Establish shade, seating at Dalby Park - this area is used year-round for activities yet there is no shade around the oval."
- "Cycle ways a great tourist attraction and community health advantage."
- "Tree planting landscaping and shared paths immediately because these can be done with the least cost and planning."
- "Tree planting, improved cycle and pedestrian access, and cafe at terminal. Reasons: enhance attractiveness for foot traffic including children."

## Stockton East

Respondents were asked to state the extent with which they agreed with the draft proposal for this precinct, as outlined in the draft Newcastle Coastal Revitalisation Masterplan (page 28, figure 14). The table below lists the five proposals:

Table 3: Draft proposals for Stockton East precinct

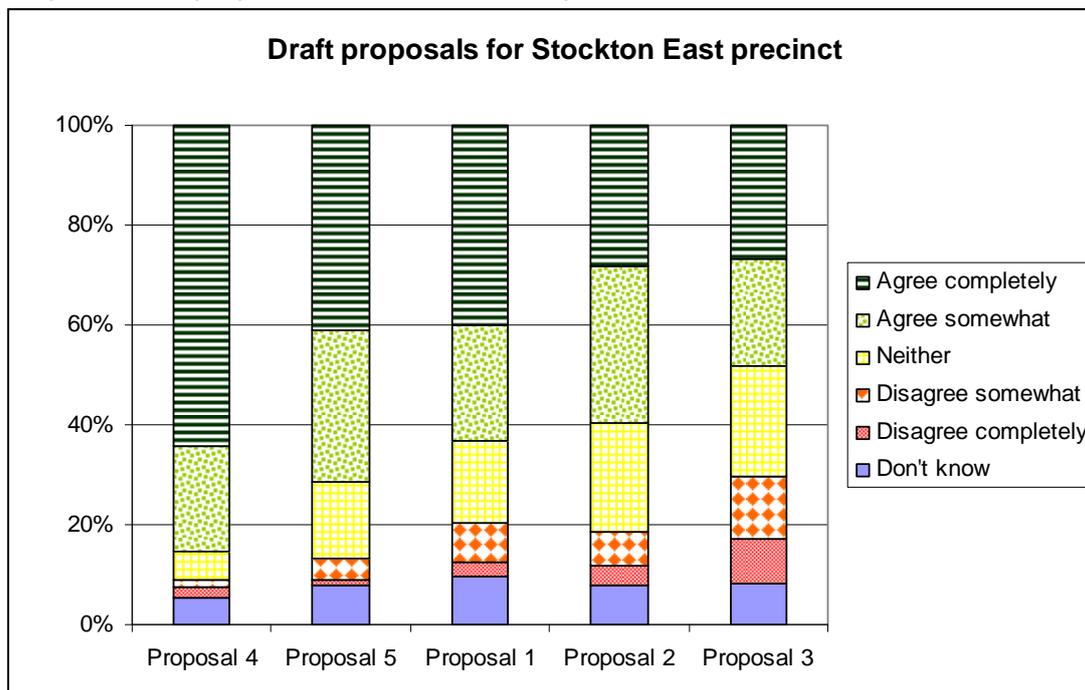
Proposal number	Draft proposal
Proposal 1	Plant vegetation across Pitt St. Reserve to limit car access
Proposal 2	Outdoor education facility near the swimming centre and skate park
Proposal 3	Tourist park expansion
Proposal 4	Extend cycleway from Griffith Park north to form shared pedestrian/cycle loop around Stockton peninsula
Proposal 5	Establish historical tracks in Pitt St. Reserve

In order, the top three draft proposals which received the most support from respondents were recorded as follows:

1. Extend cycleway from Griffith Park north to form shared pedestrian/cycle loop around Stockton peninsula (85.1% agree somewhat or completely)
2. Establish historical tracks in Pitt St. Reserve (71.2% agree somewhat or completely)
3. Plant vegetation across Pitt St. Reserve to limit car access (63.1% agree somewhat or completely)

On balance, respondents lean more towards agreement than disagreement with the draft proposals for this precinct. There are no marked differences between Newcastle Voice members and the responses from other community members.

Graph 3: Draft proposals for Stockton East precinct



Comments reported earlier reflect the strength of opinion about cycle paths and improved pedestrian paths across Stockton. In addition, at this section, current activity at Pitt Street Reserve is identified for improvement, with mention of its historical significance. The following comments illustrate the range of comments received against the top three priorities for this section:

- “Do something about the cars driving on the Pitt St Reserve area. Last weekend (Anzac), when my wife and I cycled around Stockton, when we passed the lookout point, we noticed that one of the bollards had been pulled out and there was a 4WD parked beside the gazebo. I think it is sad that people cannot walk a few metres and leave this area for pedestrians and cyclists.”
- “The upgrade to sporting fields and recreational areas, especially the cycle/pathways because it is long overdue. It creates a healthy lifestyle for locals and is an attraction for visitors.”
- “Plant vegetation across Pitt St reserve - first step in rejuvenation and protection of this strategic asset.”
- “Extend cycleway and walking path right around Stockton.”
- “I strongly support the improvement of and addition to shared cycleways/pathways. Not only will that improve access for people to experience the views but it also promotes a healthy lifestyle. This is in direct contrast to the plethora of proposals for establishing cafes in every bathing pavillion/surf house/park etc that seems to form a significant section of the draft revitalisation plan. People should be encouraged to 'be' in a place, not obtain some pseudo-experience from behind plate glass.”

## Griffith Park

Respondents were asked to state the extent with which they agreed with the draft proposal for this precinct, as outlined in the draft Coastal Revitalisation Masterplan (page 31, figure 16). The table below lists the five proposals:

Table 4: Five draft proposals for Griffith Park precinct

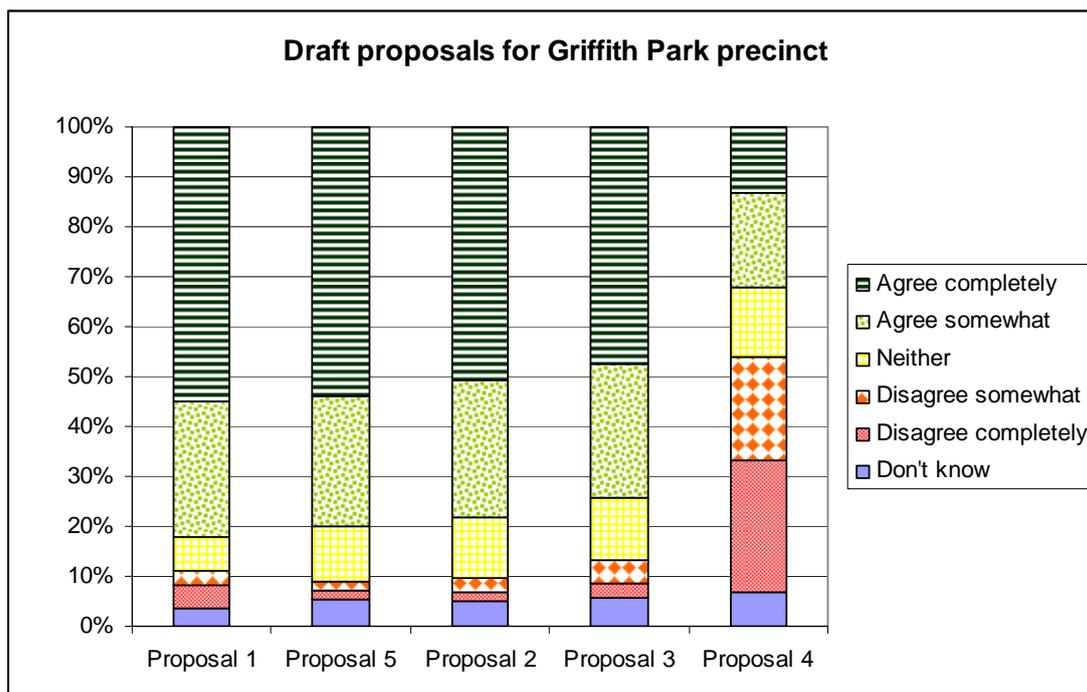
Proposal number	Draft proposal
Proposal 1	Investigate developing a café/restaurant near the ferry terminal
Proposal 2	Formalise oval with tree planting
Proposal 3	New formalised harbour lookout
Proposal 4	Manage car parking with timed maximum stay in prime locations
Proposal 5	Disability access fishing platform/lookout

In order, the top three draft proposals which received the most support from respondents were recorded as follows:

1. Investigate developing a café/restaurant near the ferry terminal (82.3% agree somewhat or completely)
2. Disability access fishing platform/lookout (79.9% agree somewhat or completely)
3. Formalise oval with tree planting (78.4% agree somewhat or completely)

There are no noteworthy differences between Newcastle Voice members and the responses from other community members.

Graph 4: Draft proposals for Griffith Park precinct



The main proposal outlined for Griffith Park was to develop a café or restaurant at the ferry terminal and this option gained considerable media attention during the consultation period. It is therefore not surprising that many comments address this option with overall support.

The current community preference is to support a café restaurant and disability fishing access and the formalisation of the oval with tree plantings in Griffith Park, as the following direct quotes illustrate:

- “Focus on the Harbour area and headland this is a focal point from the Newcastle side. Also the cafe at the Ferry wharf would make day trippers from the Newcastle side want to use the ferry and wander around the harbour and beach area of Stockton.”
- “I am not a Stockton resident and when I visit there I would like to see a cafe/restaurant near the ferry terminal, expansion of the tourist park and more tree planting in the main street - Mitchell Street.”
- “Griffith Park because it is more central to the hub of Newcastle activities. If it becomes an attractive option for Newcastle people it will become a linkage between Newcastle city and Stockton. I can't see any value in developing the outer reaches of Stockton at this stage.”
- “Cafe/restaurant, lookout and restricting car access to public reserves. I can't split these three because they are all important and closely linked.”

### Least supported proposal

On balance, respondents agree with most of the draft proposals for all of Stockton – including combining the sports club to ensure their futures - with the exception of formalised, paid parking:

1. Manage car parking with timed maximum stay in prime locations (47.2% of respondents somewhat or completely disagree)

This proposal has long been objected to across Newcastle, at all beaches. The following comments provide some insight as to why this is resisted.

- “I disagree with metered parking as the area is not that busy and it will tend to discourage visitors from staying too long. Formalised access will lower expenses and destruction but it needs to be easy to access and adequate to handle predicted flows.”

### Additional suggestions received for Stockton

A theme consistent across the open-ended remarks but especially prevalent in this first section is the need for action, with a few provisions: costs and impacts on residents and the environment are to be assessed and communicated.

Several respondents lament the lack of foresight about dog facilities in Stockton, with comments suggesting that Stockton beach should be made a leash-free dog area.

Requirements to look after the natural environment are not sufficiently addressed in the draft plan according to some respondents. The following comments illustrate the span of comments about additional suggestions for Stockton:

- “You want to focus on the ones which bring more people into the area - tourism, leisure, recreation, etc - although also find ways to deal with the increase of people with parking, transport coming to the area.”
- “All should be a priority. Stockton needs urgent upgrades and maintenance before it becomes another Hunter Street.”
- “Overall I'm concerned with the denialism in building new infrastructure in the zone of rising seas. I'm also concerned with the lack of mention of coastal protection in environmental terms. It's all about built infrastructure. Realistically, perhaps there should be some mention of sea walls?”
- “I have to admit that I don't know Stockton well as I can't take my dog on a walk there without driving all the way round, which I am certainly not going to do. If I could take my dog on the ferry I would regularly go across for walks at the weekend. I think it's an important part of community access to the area and there is no conceivable reason why dogs should not be allowed.”
- “I can not see the justification of spending large amounts of money - what is there is quite good and not properly maintained at the moment.”
- “None should be given any priority before the community has been briefed on the risks, benefits, costs of any changes.”
- “Greenery is needed. Why no mention of coastal erosion?”

## Central Sector: City Beaches

The central sector includes Nobbys Beach, Newcastle Ocean Baths, Newcastle Beach, King Edward Park and the Bogey Hole. The theme for this sector is the gateway to the city and providing an urban beach experience. The objectives for the City Beaches are as follows:

- Enhance pedestrian and cycle connectivity to the Newcastle CBD and other parts of the coastline
- Increase activity and vitality along the coastline that is in close proximity to the CBD
- Improve the type, quantity and quality of public domain elements.

Over 87% of respondents indicated that they had visited the City Beaches within the last 12 months, with another 2.9% indicating that they had not visited that area within the last 12 months but wanted to complete the questions all the same. This sector drew strong qualitative response, with 596 constructive and strongly-worded comments received.

### Nobbys Beach

Respondents were asked to state the extent with which they agreed with the draft proposal for this precinct as outlined in the draft Newcastle Coastal Revitalisation Masterplan (pages 37-39, figures 20 & 22). The table below lists the 13 proposals for Nobby's Beach:

Table 5: Draft proposals for Nobbys Beach

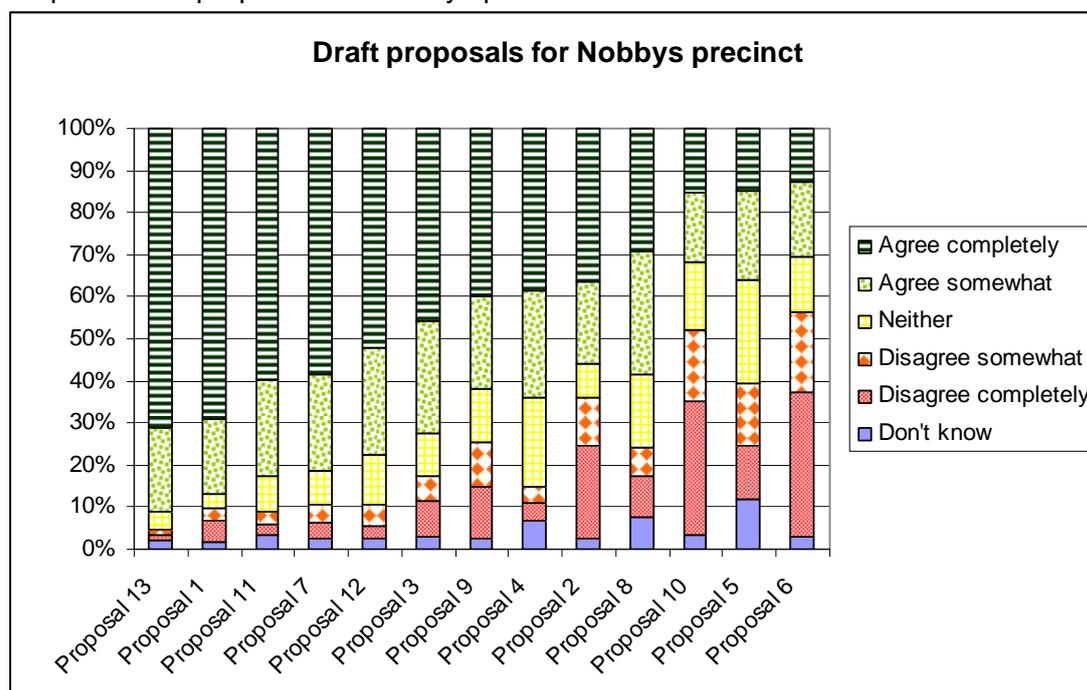
Proposal number	Draft proposal
Proposal 1	Allow public access to light house and provide kiosk facilities
Proposal 2	Allow appropriate scale, short term accommodation at lighthouse
Proposal 3	Convert vacated clubhouse into a restaurant
Proposal 4	Coal River Heritage precinct entry signage and markers
Proposal 5	Relocate existing parking to loop road
Proposal 6	Enforce time-limited parking
Proposal 7	New boardwalk and increase width of the Bathers Way
Proposal 8	Establish a parkland loop road with parking bays
Proposal 9	Establish water feature/play area near the beach
Proposal 10	Establish markets along the Bathers Way Route to Newcastle Baths
Proposal 11	New public facilities
Proposal 12	New picnic area
Proposal 13	Additional shade and seating

In order, the top three draft proposals which received the most support from respondents for Nobby's Beach were as follows:

1. Additional shade and seating (91.3% agree somewhat or completely)
2. Allow public access to light house and provide kiosk facilities (86.8% agree somewhat or completely)
3. New public facilities (82.7% agree somewhat or completely)

There are no marked differences between Newcastle Voice members and the responses from anonymous community members.

Graph 5: Draft proposals for Nobbys precinct



The chart above illustrates the strength of support for the lighthouse development, with access and kiosk facilities supported more than the accommodation options. Shade and seating, as well as improved public facilities are supported for Nobby's Beach due to the large numbers of people using this location.

Increased width and continuity of the Bathers Way also gains strong support – as it does in every section of the draft Masterplan, demonstrating that this work is a high priority for respondents across the city.

The following comments illustrate the focus of priorities for Nobby's, with understandable support for the lighthouse proposal due to the extensive media coverage late in 2009:

- “Additional shade and seating is a low cost way to improve facilities along the coast for all to enjoy.”
- “Allow short term accommodation in the light house. I am for using old buildings, but not building new ones. Just use what is already there, don't add more constructions.”

- “Shade and seating improvements. The Newcastle coast is harsh and lacks appropriate shade, seating and amenity improvements, such as those provided along the balance of the NSW coastline.”
- “New public facilities - the toilets / change rooms do not need to be replaced by new buildings. The existing facilities just need to be fixed up to an acceptable standard.”

### Least supported proposals

On balance, respondents agree with the draft proposals for this area, with the notable exception of the following two proposals:

1. 53.15% of respondents somewhat or completely *disagreed* with the proposed to enforce time-limited parking.
2. 49.02% of respondents somewhat or completely *disagreed* with the proposed to establish markets along the Bathers Way route to Newcastle Baths.

Few comments address why these ideas are considered unworkable or undesirable, but a sample serves to illustrate the span of respondent opinion:

- “There should be no parking meters placed along the Nobbys Beach, Newcastle Baths and beach as traffic moves away frequently enough. It will lead to increased vandalism and cost more for the council to chase those who refuse to pay fines. There should be some free spaces for one and all to enjoy without a monetary value attached.”
- “Please no more markets! Bathers Way has been a fantastic initiative. Keep the access to the beaches, pool, Bogey Hole and King Edward Park free to everyone.”
- “Open up the road to the Bogey Hole and have time limited (not metered) parking.”

## Newcastle Ocean Baths

Respondents were asked to state the extent with which they agreed with the draft proposal for this precinct, as outlined in the draft Newcastle Coastal Revitalisation Masterplan (page 45, figure 33). The table below lists the seven proposals:

Table 6: Draft proposals for Newcastle Ocean Baths precinct

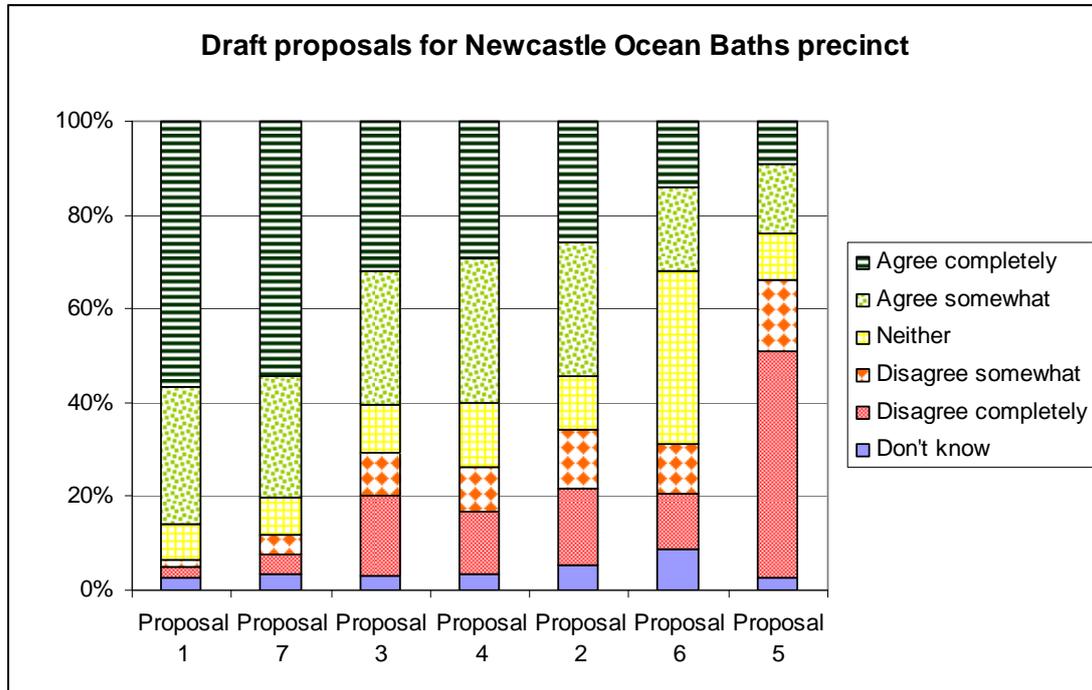
Proposal number	Draft proposal
Proposal 1	Maintain and improve pedestrian access to Bathers Way from Scott St.
Proposal 2	Shortland Esplanade converted to one-way with angled parking bays
Proposal 3	Allow development of a function centre in the Newcastle Baths Pavilion
Proposal 4	Permit the use of the upper levels of the Newcastle Baths Pavilion for community organisation offices
Proposal 5	New low rise accommodation set into hill side opposite Ocean Baths
Proposal 6	Relocate public facilities to northern end of the baths
Proposal 7	New boardwalk and increase width of Bathers Way

In order, the top three draft proposals which received the most support from respondents are as follows:

1. Maintain and improve pedestrian access to Bathers Way from Scott St (86.4% agree)
2. New boardwalk and increase width of Bathers Way (82.7% agree)
3. Allow development of a function centre in the Newcastle Baths Pavilion (60.5% agree)

There are no marked differences between Newcastle Voice members and the responses from anonymous community members.

Graph 6: Draft proposals for Newcastle Ocean Baths precinct



The strength of agreement about pedestrian access from Scott Street can be related to the overall rejection of the proposal to build low-rise accommodation onto Tramway Reserve – as this is the same parcel of land, and shown as Proposal 5, the least supported proposal in the chart above.

Again, enhancements to the Bathers’ Way are accepted as palatable recommendations, and the potential for revenue-raising is acknowledged with support for the development of the Ocean Baths pavilion into a function centre.

The following comments illustrate the span of opinion about the current top three priorities as identified:

- “Allow development of a function centre in the Newcastle Baths Pavilion - Newcastle Baths. Restaurant/function centre (old bowling club site) - King Edward Park. These should be top priorities because Newcastle is 50 years behind, get moving, we need development!!”
- “New boardwalk and increase width of the Bathers Way. Yes good idea. Newcastle should have a walk way /bike path from Nobbies to Merewether. It would be easy just link up present walk ways. The only new path would be along the back of Newcastle Beach.”
- “Restaurants/Function Centres/ Cafes at ocean baths, Bowling Club, King Edward Park. Prime position for all to enjoy but we can't once the sun goes down! Give people a reason to visit the city at night. People love dining/relaxing near the waters edge!”
- “The ocean baths - because after all of the time during and since renovation it is STILL unfinished: just another building site / council equipment site - but behind walls; however the unfinished space is still on show for all who enter the baths... accommodate decent food and coffee and a decent sitting area. There is NO water fountain within the baths - I find this unbelievable; there were 2 before they ‘renovated. Let’s finish one thing before we start creating another endless building site close by - at Newcastle &/or Nobby's.”
- “Upgrade of Bathers Way - Bathers Way is a great asset that is under valued. Not only does the infrastructure need upgrading, so does the signage.”

### Least supported proposal

On balance, respondents tend to agree with the proposals for the area surrounding the Ocean Baths. A noteworthy exception is the following proposal:

1. 63.50% of respondents somewhat or completely *disagreed* with the proposed for new low rise accommodation set into hill side opposite the Ocean Baths.

The following comments illustrate the nature and reasons for the rejection – which illustrate the relationship between this rejection and the support for the continued pedestrian access up to Scott Street:

- “The proposal to develop low rise apartments in the parkland above the Ocean Baths would remove yet another amenity from the city centre. The council should realise that visitors do NOT visit Newcastle to admire the uninspiring modern architecture with which it is proposed to line the coastal developments. The removal of the wall where young people could indulge their artistic practices is another example. It would be wise for the council to remember that these young people are the voters that will elect them in the future (or not).”
- “New boardwalk and increase width of Bathers Way and Shortland Esplanade. Maintain and improve pedestrian access for Scott Street. No to accommodation into Park opposite Ocean Baths.”

## Newcastle Beach

Respondents were asked to state the extent with which they agreed with the draft proposal for this precinct, as outlined in the draft Newcastle Coastal Revitalisation Masterplan (page 49, figure 36). The table below lists the eight proposals:

Table 7: Draft proposals for Newcastle Beach precinct

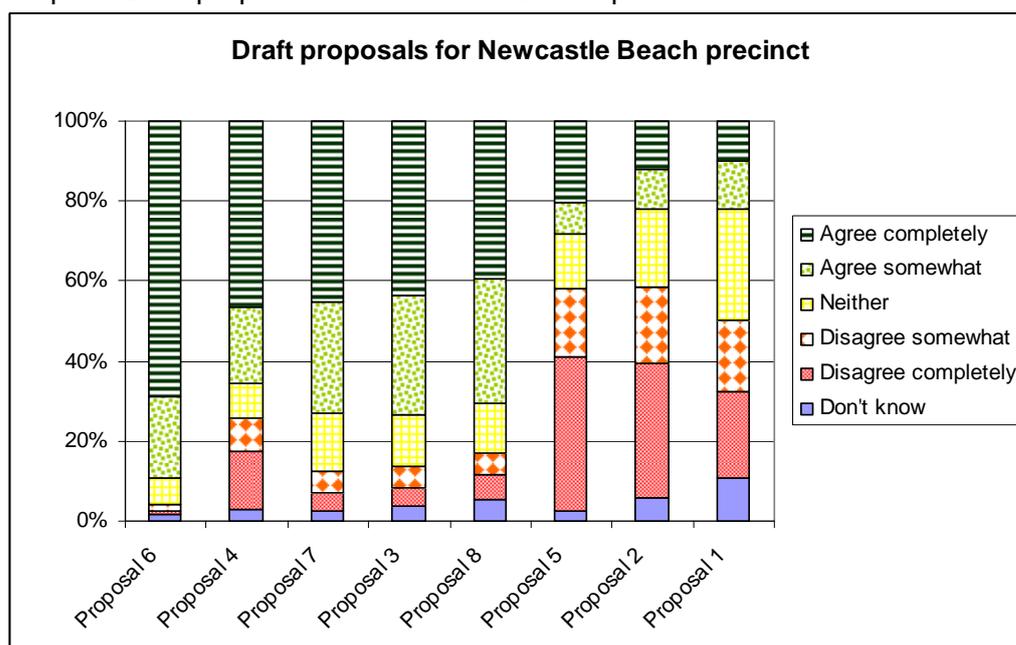
Proposal number	Draft proposal
Proposal 1	Relocate surf club
Proposal 2	Remove underpass under Shortland Esplanade
Proposal 3	Reinstate a grassed amphitheatre for public access
Proposal 4	Reopen Shortland Esplanade to traffic through King Edward Park
Proposal 5	Remove the skate facility
Proposal 6	Additional shade and seating
Proposal 7	Additional play area
Proposal 8	Lookout locations above cafés and restaurants

In order, the top three proposals which received the most support from respondents were as follows:

1. Additional shade and seating (89% agree completely or somewhat)
2. Additional play area *tied with* Reinstate a grassed amphitheatre for public access (73.5% agree completely or somewhat)
3. Lookout locations above cafés and restaurants (70.5% agree completely or somewhat)

There are no marked differences between Newcastle Voice members and the responses from anonymous community members.

Graph 7: Draft proposals for Newcastle Beach precinct



This chart shows that opinion is divided in this area – with the bars in the chart above showing a greater range of responses. The most uniform agreement is reached about proposals such as shade, seating and playgrounds – as seen by the percentages who agree either completely or somewhat with a proposal. The following comments illustrate some of the opinion surrounding these priorities:

- “I think themes are more important than choosing just one aspect. I think improved pedestrian walkways along bather's way should be first along with improved parking. Shade and tables are fine but I do not believe more buildings are needed at Newcastle Beach, upgrade what is there.”
- “I am unsure, but I think priorities should be given to beautification work including gardens, shade areas, playgrounds etc, footpaths. In doing so, each area would benefit straightaway.”
- “More shade and play equipment. However the play equipment must be intelligently located and not next to a road with considerable traffic as is the case in King Edward. How this location, without fencing, is less of a safety hazard than the Bogey Hole is a mystery to me.”
- “Improving amenity to the public, via dual use of commercial opportunities, i.e. lookouts above kiosks and cafe's.”
- “Whichever one involves fixing up the old surf clubs!”

The reopening of Shortland Esplanade to traffic appears second on the chart above and drew 60 comments in open-ended questions, evidence that it draws some strong emotion. However, when the ‘agree completely’ responses are added to the ‘agree somewhat’ responses, the proposal to re-open Shortland Esplanade is in fifth position. The following sample of comments illustrates the span of current opinion:

- “Shortland Esplanade converted to one way with angled parking bays- would provide better traffic flow and parking. Suggest traffic calming devices.”
- “Reopen Shortland esplanade to traffic, a simple way to increase passive surveillance of the skate park. This would enable the skate park to be upgraded and fit in to a city beach precinct.”
- “The suggestion of reopening of the Shortland Esplanade between King Edwards Park and Newcastle to car traffic is quite simply a scandal. It is the only stretch along the beach which is not totally overcrowded by cars, in the evening I can only think of how young people in cars will use it.”
- “Making Shortland Esp one way with angled parking and wider footpath. It will benefit pedestrians and increase parking.”
- “Reopening Shortland Esplanade from south Newcastle Beach to the Bogey Hole will create significant increased 'points of conflict' between pedestrians, cyclists and hoons. It would also require significant investment in road maintenance AND significant investment in gross pollutant control - take a look at the rubbish car drivers leave behind at the Esplanade on the harbour side. There are already PLENTY of opportunities to drive around the coastline.”
- “Reopen Shortland Espl to traffic through King Edward Park - I think that will help get rid of a lot of the anti-social behaviour in that area by making it less isolated.”

## Least supported proposals

On balance, respondents tend to agree with the draft proposals for this area. The exceptions are for the following proposals:

1. 55.5% of respondents somewhat or completely *disagreed* with the proposal to remove the skate facility
2. 52.6% of respondents somewhat or completely *disagreed* with the proposed removal of the underpass under Shortland Esplanade

The skate park at South Newcastle gained media coverage along with the skate park at Empire Park during the consultation period and strong responses in relation to this subject were received as a result. The following comments demonstrate that support for this regional facility remains strong:

- “I witnessed the legend Tony Hawke skate there in the early 2000's and one day hope for him to return there so my 4yr old son can see him.”
- “Why remove skate park at Newie South when we have just paid for it to be cleaned up? It's much nicer now and the kids love it - leave it be!”
- “Re-open Shortland Esplanade to traffic, a simple way to increase passive surveillance of the skate park. This would enable the skate park to be upgraded and fit in to a city beach precinct.”
- “Don't remove skate park - my kids absolutely love it. How else can western suburbs kids go skating?”
- “I am completely opposed to the removal of the Newcastle Beach skate park facility and believe it should be upgraded rather than closed. A city should be a vibrant mix of activities and I believe that skaters and an excellent skate facility contribute enormously to the vibrancy of Newcastle. Newcastle Council is slowly sterilising the exciting aspects of this city including the closure of the legal walls at Newcastle beach. Go and visit edgy cities like Berlin and Melbourne even and take note of the eclectic nature of the cities.”

Shortland Esplanade has a public access underpass linking the beach and the city. The proposal tested was to recommend the removal of this – and received mixed reactions, with a majority rejecting its removal. The following comments illustrate:

- “Don't remove the underpass under Shortland Esplanade the road is too busy the underpass should stay.”
- “Move Newcastle Surf Club and underpass. The facilities are inadequate and create a barrier the city and the beach.”

## King Edward Park and Bogey Hole

Respondents were asked to state the extent with which they agreed with the draft proposal for this precinct, as outlined in the draft Newcastle Coastal Revitalisation Masterplan (page 52, figure 39). The table below lists the six proposals:

Table 8: Draft proposals for King Edward Park & Bogey Hole precinct

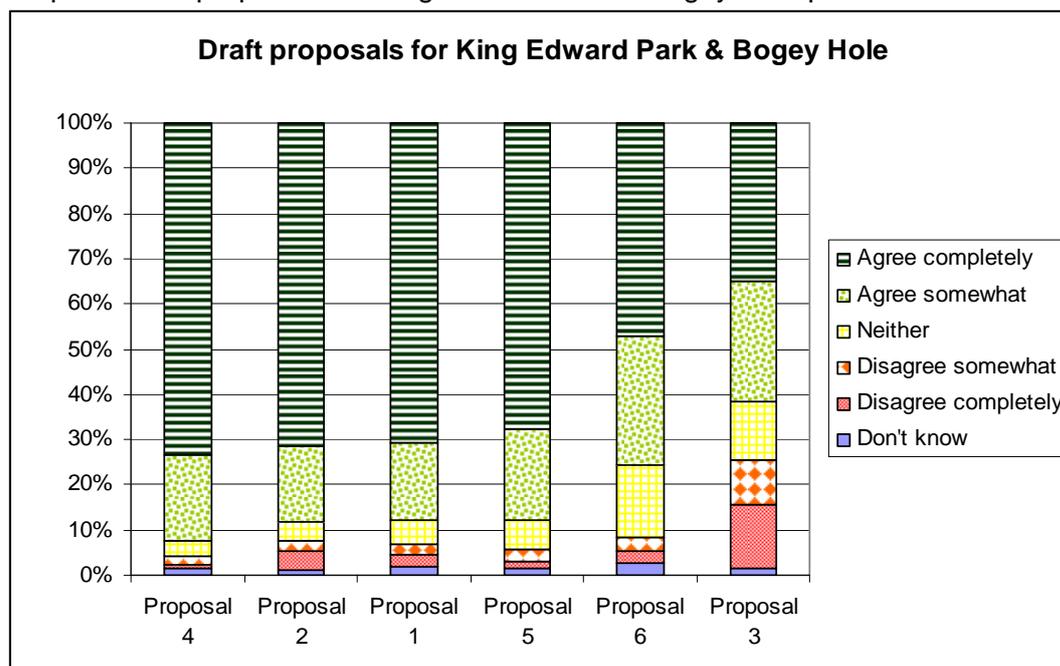
Proposal number	Draft proposal
Proposal 1	Investigate safety and access upgrades for the Bogey Hole
Proposal 2	Restaurant/function centre (old bowling club site)
Proposal 3	Kiosk in King Edward Park
Proposal 4	Upgrade the pedestrian and cycle paths
Proposal 5	Additional shade, seating and lighting
Proposal 6	Provide interpretation sites for heritage items

In order, the top three draft proposals which received the most support from respondents about King Edward Park and the Bogey Hole were as follows:

1. Upgrade the pedestrian and cycle paths (92.4% agree completely or somewhat)
2. Restaurant/function centre (old bowling club site) (88.3%) *tied with* Investigate safety and access upgrades for the Bogey Hole (88.0%)
3. Provide interpretation sites for heritage items (87.9%)

On balance, respondents agree with the draft proposals for this precinct. There are no marked differences between Newcastle Voice members and the responses from anonymous community members.

Graph 8: Draft proposals for King Edward Park & Bogey Hole precinct



Two major sites are in this section of the coast: the old bowling club site at the top of King Edward Park and the Bogey Hole ocean pool. Reactions are uniform, as the consistency of agreement in the chart above illustrates. Comments suggest that these sites should be retained, with repairs undertaken as soon as possible. The interest in cycle and pedestrian paths identified at other sections of the draft Masterplan continues in this section. The following verbatim responses highlight these sites as the highest priority for this area:

- “The old bowling club needs to be a priority. it is such a dreadful scar on the landscape. The building needs to have public access to the wonderful views so the grounds should be created to marry in with the parkland it overlooks and this would be a wonderful discovery for visitors to wander the grounds have a light lunch or coffee and take in the marvellous views.”
- “The top priority area should be the King Edward Park and Bogey Hole area as it would be a shame to let such unique places such as the Bogey Hole become inaccessible to the public. The old bowling club site is a disgrace and would be a perfect location for a restaurant/function centre unlike other areas ear marked for such changes (eg old surf club Merewether) - there is plenty of parking in the parking lot and it is away from residential properties.”
- “Fix the steps to Bogey Hole and no way should it cost \$265,000. The last quote obtained by Council 4 years ago was \$14,000. Costs haven't gone up that much.”
- “Coal River heritage signs: because I like history and want to know more about the local area.”
- “Balancing different user needs - skate parks, cafe options, walker / cyclists, swimmers, picnic groups. We need to recognise that young people, families, ageing people and children all use these facilities and what we do should not alienate any of these community groups.”

### **Additional suggestions received for City Beaches**

Some respondents made suggestions for additional priorities, or identify areas missing from the current draft Masterplan. As with the northern sector at Stockton, dog facilities are identified as needing retention in any future plans. Funding sources to enable developments are identified by some, and rejected by others. Although the proposal to reopen Shortland Parade to King Edward Park did not make the top three priority listing in its section, there is clearly more support for this proposal than some others.

The following comments illustrate the span of issues missing from the City Beaches section of the draft Masterplan.

- “What is happening with Horseshoe Beach?? It is not mentioned at all.”
- “Reopen Shortland Esplanade to traffic because it's a unique drive-through a beautiful park. Perhaps add obstacles to discourage idiotic behaviour and speeding!”
- “If heritage is appropriately preserved some commercial activity significantly assists upkeep, allows renewal and prevents vandalism and regression into dilapidation. As a general note there are numerous public buildings in existence that will serve this purpose without having to build new retail areas.”
- “The suggestion of reopening of the Shortland esplanade between King Edwards Park and Newcastle to car traffic is quite simply a scandal. It is the only stretch along the beach which is not totally overcrowded by cars.”
- “Reopen Shortland Esplanade to traffic through K.E. Park - tourism, cruise ships tours. If we can get a proper terminal on the south side of the harbour and a couple more “famous trams” or vintage buses to do this loop, our future for tourism is assured.”
- “Restore World Map Pool - not on your list but this means your list is wrong.”

## Southern Sector: Suburban Beaches

The southern sector includes Bar Beach and Empire Park, Dixon Park Beach and Merewether Beach. The theme for this sector is a suburban beach experience for visitors and locals of all ages. The objectives for this area, as defined in the draft Masterplan are:

- Enhance connectivity along the coastline
- Improve the type, quantity and quality of public domain elements
- Ensure the passive and active recreation opportunities are located to minimise conflict and to enhance safety
- Ensure prime coastal position are best utilised by rationalising car parking to accommodate other uses such as open space
- Allow new build form on under-utilised land to assist with casual surveillance and to support existing facilities.

Over 83.77% of respondents indicated that they have visited the Southern Sector (Suburb Beaches) within the last 12 months, with another 2.89% indicating that they had not visited that area within the last 12 months but wanted to complete the questions about the area. This area too, drew strong qualitative responses, with 568 comments about a variety of the proposals and additional suggestions for this portion of the coastline.

### Bar Beach/Empire Park

Respondents were asked to state the extent with which they agreed with the draft proposal for this precinct, as outlined in the draft Newcastle Coastal Revitalisation Masterplan (page 58, figure 42). The table below lists the fifteen proposals:

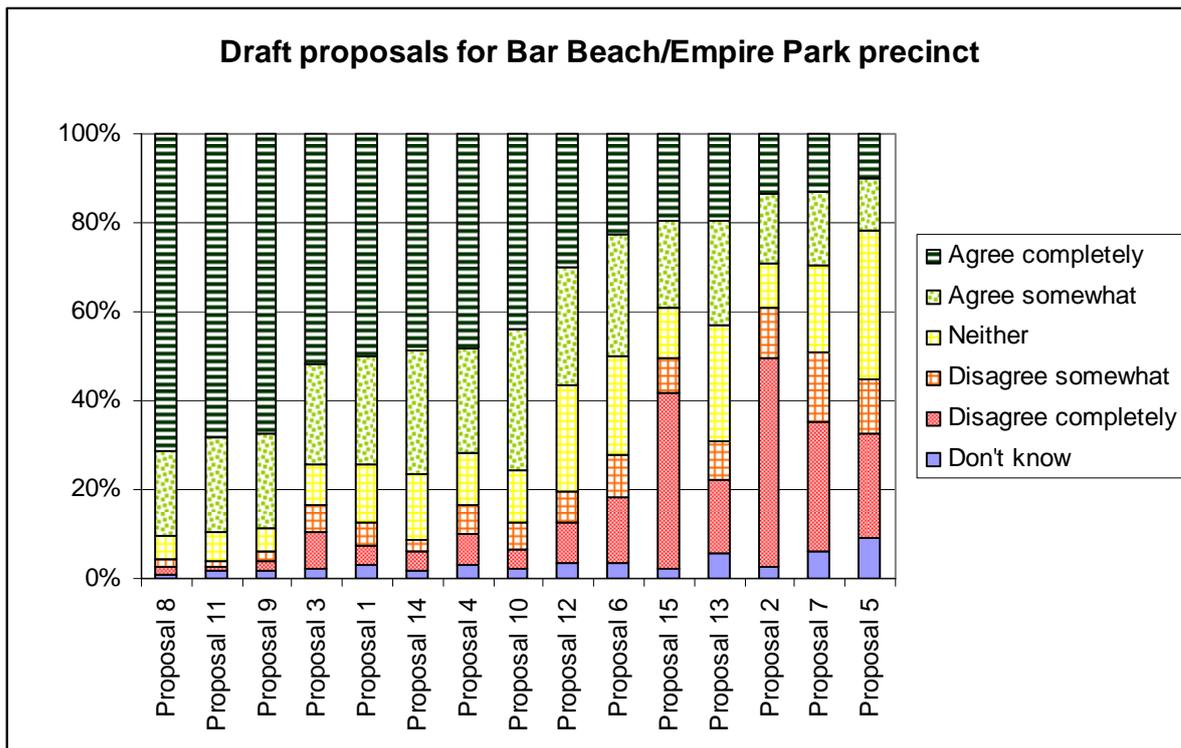
Table 9: Draft proposals for Bar Beach/Empire Park precinct

Proposal number	Draft proposal
Proposal 1	Increase width of Bathers Way
Proposal 2	New small-scale built form for new retail opportunities
Proposal 3	Plant trees along Memorial Drive
Proposal 4	Plant trees in Empire Park west of the hand glider landing area
Proposal 5	Relocate the heritage war memorial to eastern side of Memorial Drive
Proposal 6	Gym facility to compliment Surf Club
Proposal 7	Change nature of road with on-road parking on Memorial Drive
Proposal 8	Improved shade, seating
Proposal 9	Reinstate shade structure and improve promenade on beachfront
Proposal 10	Provide new/enhanced pathways with Empire Park
Proposal 11	Stabilise and revegetate cliff
Proposal 12	Consider second bat/ball courts for Empire Park
Proposal 13	Reconfigure playing fields to accommodate two football fields with cricket pitch located between the two
Proposal 14	Install new play equipment
Proposal 15	Install an upgraded skate park

In order, the top three draft proposals which received the most support from respondents were recorded as follows:

1. Improved shade, seating (90.5% somewhat or completely agree)
2. Stabilise and revegetate cliff (89.4%)
3. Reinstate shade structure and improve promenade on beachfront (88.5%)

Graph 9: Draft proposals for Bar Beach/Empire Park precinct



Shade, seating and paving improvements are of most interest, and strongly supported by all respondents – both on land, at street level, above the beach and on the promenade at Bar Beach. This area is well used by a range of residents throughout the year and attracts visitors from outside the local government area.

The cliff stabilisation project has been the subject of an earlier Newcastle Voice consultation in September 2009, gaining some media coverage at the time, and is therefore understandably supported by a strong majority of respondents.

The following comments demonstrate the current community rationale for the priority allocation to these proposals:

- “Stabilise cliff and plant vegetation and shade trees along all areas of the beaches. To increase the attractiveness, usage and viability of the area - and other uses.”
- “Bar Beach...it is the beach most family friendly due to the enormous car park - which SHOULD NOT be used by NCC as a revenue raiser.”
- “Reinstate shade structure - more seating - improve beach front promenade so an area becomes more family friendly meeting place - picnics or high teas.”
- “Bar Beach is a family orientated area because of the swimming conditions for small children: why this is an obstacle course for families to get to the beach, is beyond me.”
- “By all means improve the place - Newcastle has been allowed to be run down and is a disgrace and the Council have been responsible for that. Add more facilities to make it nice for families but do not over commercialise - it should not become like Nelson Bay.”

### Least supported proposals

On balance, respondents agree with most proposals for this section, however in this case four proposals receive a divided response between Newcastle Voice members and anonymous community members responding to the survey, as follows:

1. New small-scale built form for new retail opportunities
2. Relocate the heritage war memorial to eastern side of Memorial Drive
3. Change nature of road with on-road parking on Memorial Drive
4. Install an upgraded skate park

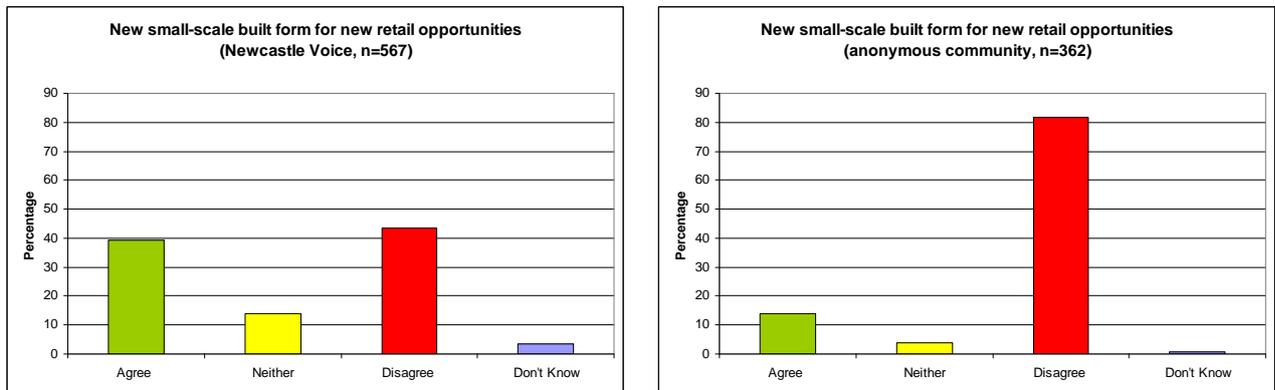
### **New small-scale built form for new retail opportunities**

On balance, Newcastle Voice respondents are divided in terms of the draft proposal for a new small-scale built form for new retail opportunities at Empire Park, Respondents are split 39%-43% between those who agree and those who disagreed.

Comparatively, over 82% of the anonymous community members disagreed somewhat or completely with the proposal for a new small-scale built form for new retail opportunities at Empire Park, with 13.81% agreeing completely or somewhat with this proposal.

Please note that this proposal is the one of four whereby the broad community had differing views compared to members of Newcastle Voice. This may due to a substantial amount of anonymous responses representing a particular community interest group.

Graph 10 & 11: New small-scale built form for new retail opportunities



A sample of comments illustrates the broad span of community opinion and sense of priority behind these proposals:

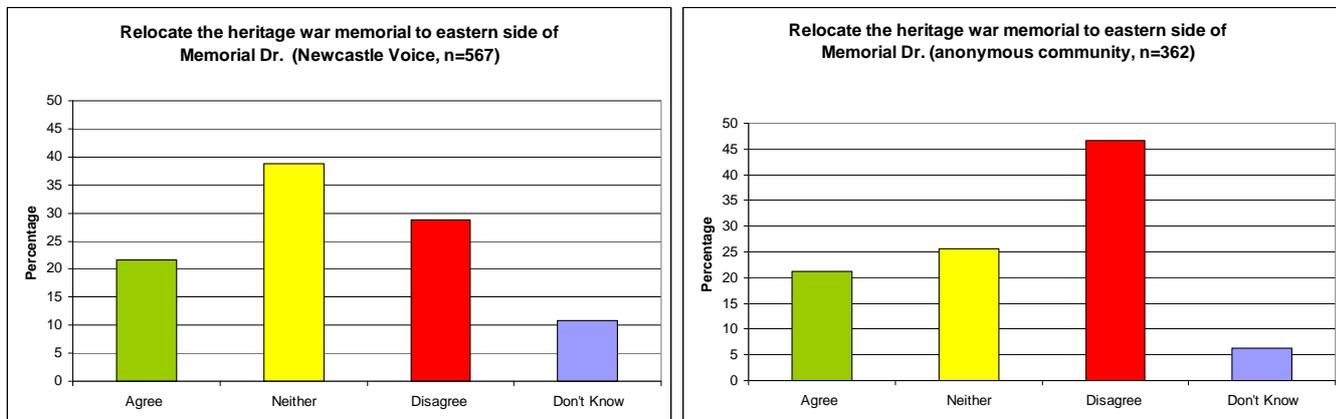
- “Cafes and other small scale commercial businesses used to benefit the surf lifesaving clubs and the community.”
- “Do not develop new buildings or alter existing structures to accommodate commercial ventures. Since when is going to the beach about having to BUY stuff??? NCC is out of tune with its people if it thinks that this is what we want! Think again NCC.”
- “NO retail development at Empire Park. There is insufficient demand. The M/Plan states a MINIMUM size of 500sqm for five outlets. The back view of these shops will be very unsightly to anyone using Empire Park, as sport or simple recreational use. It will likely have garbage bins, extra rubbish, unsightly back doors for deliveries and so on.”
- “What you need along the beaches are cafes/restaurants: can’t understand why Newcastle is so backward with this concept. It would create tourism and employment. Every beach in Sydney has cafes so does, Noosa, Gold Coast, just about everywhere!!!”

### Relocate the heritage war memorial to eastern side of Memorial Drive

Newcastle Voice members were split between those who agree (21.70%) and those who disagree (28.75%) with the proposal. A very high proportion of Newcastle Voice respondents (49.56%) indicated that they either neither agreed or disagreed or did not know.

Comparatively, more than double the number of anonymous community members (46.69%) disagree completely or somewhat with this proposal. Similar to Newcastle Voice respondents, over 32% of anonymous community members indicated that they either neither agreed or disagreed or did not know.

Graph 12 & 13: Relocate the heritage war memorial to eastern side of Memorial Dr.



Comments about the war memorial reflect the wide divergence in responses, as follows:

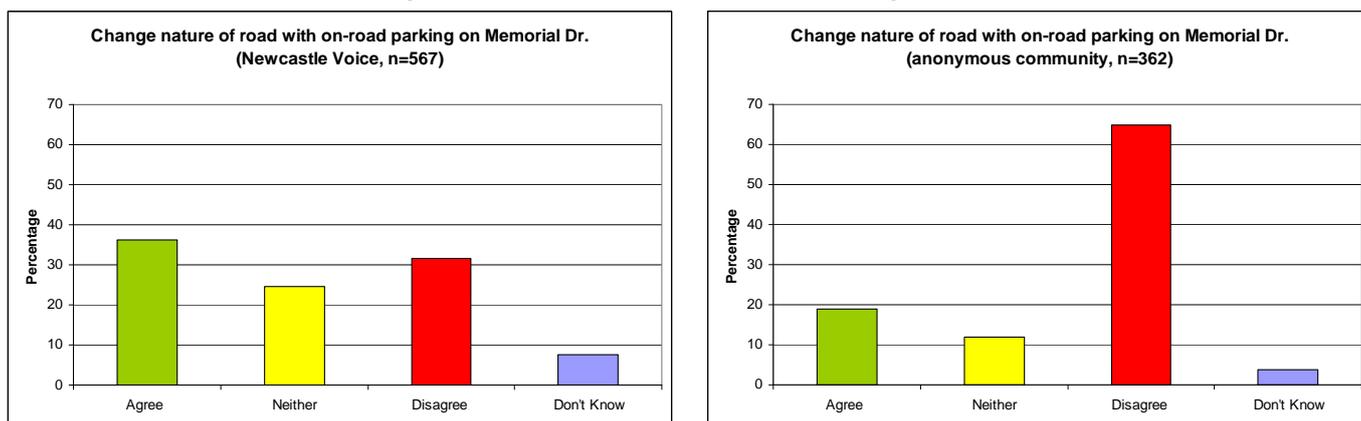
- “No skate park for Empire Park, leave War Memorial at existing site and no retail outlets or road changes in or around Empire Park.”
- “Leave war memorial where it is. Have some respect, how arrogant can you people be?”
- “Do not even mention moving the war memorial after the old ladies at my pro-skatepark workshop meeting were assured it would remain where it was, how dare you even have it in your questionnaire?”

### Change nature of road with on-road parking on Memorial Drive

Newcastle Voice members were split between those who agree (36.16%) and those who disagree (31.75%) with the proposal. A proportion of Newcastle Voice respondents (32.09%) indicated that they either neither agreed or disagreed or did not know.

Comparatively, more than double the number of anonymous community members (64.92%) disagree completely or somewhat with this proposal. A fairly small number of anonymous community member respondents (18.88%) agree completely or somewhat with the proposal to change nature of road with on-road parking on Memorial Drive

Graph 14 & 15: Change nature of road with on-road parking on Memorial Dr.



On road parking on Memorial Drive attracts a variety of opinions, as the charts above demonstrate. The following comments illustrate:

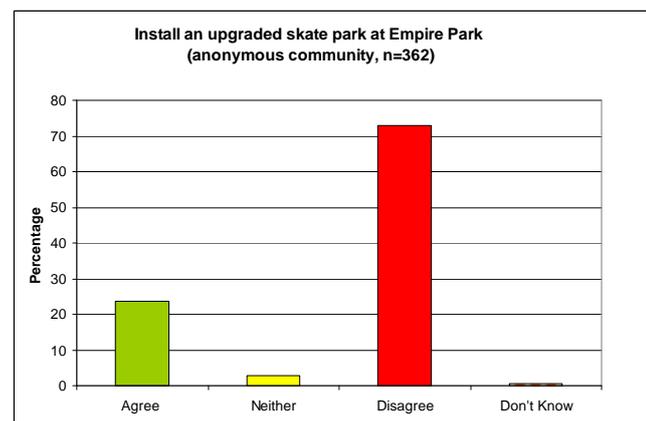
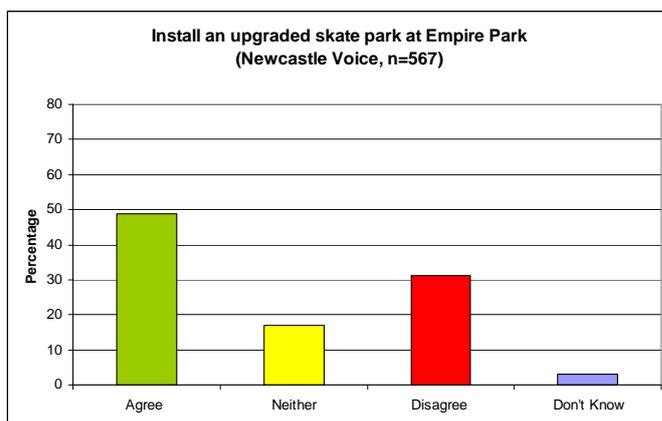
- “Improve parking on Memorial Drive at Bar Beach. All of the developments and improvements are wasted if the ordinary family cannot throw all their gear into the car, drive to the beach and park without too much difficulty!”
- “Trees along Memorial Parade to provide shade to walkers and cyclists, cools the road surface and provides a soft green vista towards the coast.”
- “We do not need any more retail at the expense of open space (Empire Park) or to restrict traffic flow on Memorial Drive.”
- “Change Memorial Drive to reduce speed of cars / increase safety of users/ pedestrians.”

### Install an upgraded skate park

Over 48% of Newcastle Voice members agreed somewhat or completely with the proposal to install an upgraded skate park at Empire Park, with another 20% indicating that they either neither agreed or disagreed or did not know.

Comparatively, only 23.75% of the anonymous community members agreed somewhat or completely with the proposal to install an upgraded skate park at Empire Park, with 72.92% disagreeing completely or somewhat with this proposal. Please note that this proposal is the one of four whereby the broad community had differing views compared to members of Newcastle Voice. This may due to a substantial amount of anonymous responses representing a group of individuals with a particular agenda.

Graph 16 & 17: Install an upgraded skate park at Empire Park



The proposed upgrade to the stake facility in Empire Park has been the subject of an earlier Newcastle Voice consultation in March 2010, gaining extensive media coverage at the time. For this reason, skate facilities attracted many comments which illustrate the strength and spectrum of community opinion:

- “I don’t agree with the skate park, considering there is already one at Newcastle and the money on offer for Empire Park can be used to update/upgrade Newcastle’s park.”
- “Improvements to Empire Park including the development of the skate park. A similar arrangement is located at Umina Beach on the Central Coast with high patronage from families and serious skate users. Allow users of the facility to have significant input and ownership of the skate park. Newcastle would be a leader in active and passive recreation should Empire Park be developed to the full potential for non-business related activities.”
- “A new skate park facility will ruin the park and will introduce ‘derros’ and ‘westies’ and is not wanted by any residents or anyone who goes to Bar Beach.”
- “Improvements to the skate park at Empire Park should get under way as soon as possible. Skate boarding is multi-million dollar industry and Newcastle is missing opportunities to attract world class skaters to the region because of the lack of facilities. When it the skatepark is complete, NCC should invite some of Australia’s best skaters to the opening and see how many fans follow.”
- “My involvement with motorcycle riders and skaters has always been positive. If they are given facilities that address their needs and interests and are given the opportunity to have input and some ownership of the outcomes they respect other users and the facilities. I would request that Council considers all potential users and does not impose the values and expectations of people who do not want or use facilities onto all others.”

## Dixon Park

Respondents were asked to state the extent with which they agreed with the draft proposal for this precinct, as outlined in the draft Newcastle Coastal Revitalisation Masterplan (page 62, figure 47). The table below lists the eight proposals:

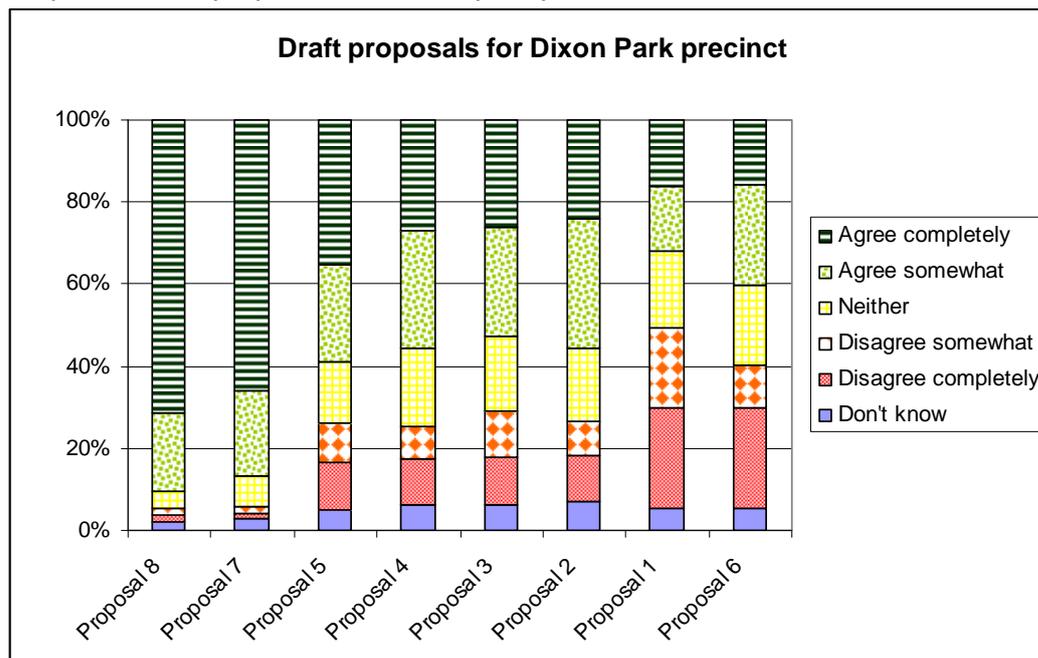
Table 10: Draft proposals for Dixon Park precinct

Proposal number	Draft proposal
Proposal 1	Remove the beach-side rows of car parking
Proposal 2	Provide new car parking bays on western side of Dixon Park along Ocean St.
Proposal 3	Change car park configuration at Dixon Park to have more open space on the beach
Proposal 4	Provide open space for overflow car parking or special events
Proposal 5	Remove unused kiosk building
Proposal 6	New low-rise built form into hillside opposite surf lifesaving club for a training facility
Proposal 7	Retain play equipment and existing shade structures
Proposal 8	Additional shade, seating and vegetation

In order, the top three draft proposals which received the most support from respondents were recorded as follows:

1. Additional shade, seating and vegetation (90.2% completely or somewhat agree)
2. Retain play equipment and existing shade structures (86.7%)
3. Remove unused kiosk building (59.1%)

Graph 18: Draft proposals for Dixon park precinct



As with other proposals across the coast, the least controversial proposals with highest benefit for current users are those most strongly and consistently supported. The following comments illustrate community views about Dixon Park's highest priority proposals:

- "The natural environment is the main attraction in these areas and requires enhancement. Also, we're doing our bit to improve the natural environment, that's been degraded."
- "A training facility at Dixon Park. The role of fitness as a way to health is being recognized slowly. People exercising."
- "The beach needs a shelter in bad weather."
- "Additional shade at Dixon Park - a few more bbq's and another shade structure would be great as well as additional shade over the existing playground."
- "And why remove the playground at Dixon Park? Our taxes just paid for it."
- "Upgrade Dixon Park play facilities."

The relative divergence of community opinion about the removal of the disused kiosk building at Dixon Park is reflected in the range of comments. The following comments suggest actions to be taken with this building:

- "Dixon Park SLSC kiosk should be upgraded and re-opened in its current position ASAP to meet the needs of picnickers in the park adjacent to the

club, travelling workers who come to the area at lunchtime and beach-goers. It is the only surf club without a kiosk and the closest one is 500m away.”

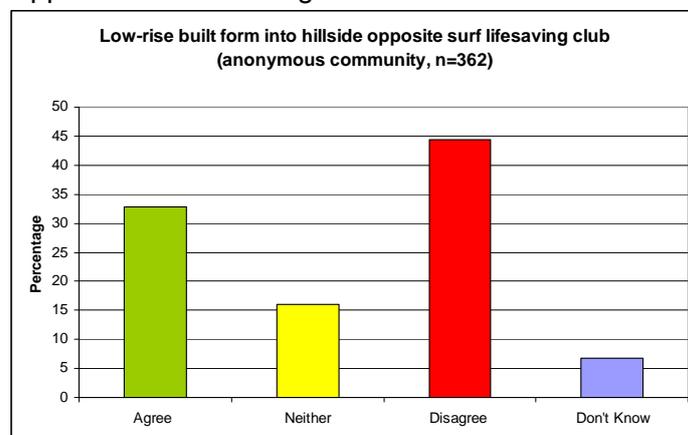
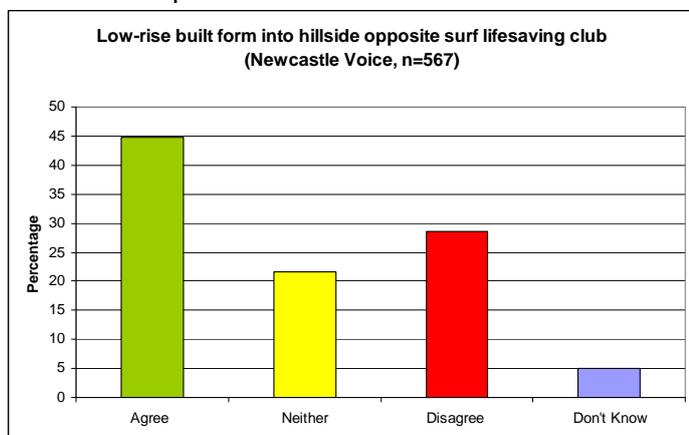
- “How many cafes are needed? Definitely no commercial sites along Bathers Way. Do not clutter the coastline by allowing cafes, surf shops and fast food outlets. There are enough now e.g. Swell is a very popular cafe right on the beachfront as is Bar Beach kiosk.”
- “Build new cafe or kiosk at Dixon Park.”

### Least supported proposals

For the Dixon Park area, most proposals gain support with the exception of two proposals, as follows:

1. 43.6% of respondents somewhat or completely *disagreed* with the proposal to remove the beach-side rows of car parking.
2. Divided opinion exists about the low-rise building into the hillside behind Dixon Park for a training facility. Over 44% of Newcastle Voice respondents *agree* somewhat or completely, and 26 % indicate that they either neither agreed or disagreed or did not know. Comparatively, 32.3% of the anonymous group of respondents *agree* somewhat or completely with the proposal and 44.4% *disagree* somewhat or completely, as the following chart illustrates.

Graph 19 & 20: Low-rise built form into hillside opposite surf lifesaving club



Comments received demonstrate the value of the beachside Dixon Park location for parking and ocean-watching, querying the value of any expenditure. Comments about the low-rise building for training at Dixon Park are mixed. The following remarks illustrate:

- “Do not remove the frontline parking at Dixons as it is a unique spot to do just that-park and view the beach. Do not waste money on scrapping and changing a carpark which doesn't need change.”
- “The new training facility at northern/western end of Dixon Park is a great idea - it's a wasteland at present.”
- “Dixon Park's proposal is very poor, and it appears Dixon Park has been overlooked. Instead of putting commercial shops into Empire Park why don't you put them into Dixon Park below Ocean Street in front of the Housing Commission? At this stage Dixon Park is just a big paddock with nothing going for it. The current proposals don't change this, so it needs some work.”
- “Keep car parking close to the beach but don't extend it - we don't want to lose more public green space.”
- “Concept sounds good but really: Dixon Park SLSC gets a training centre set into hillside????!!”
- “Increasing parking not decreasing it to encourage tourists.”

## Merewether Beach

Respondents were asked to state the extent with which they agreed with the draft proposal for this precinct, as outlined in the draft Newcastle Coastal Revitalisation Masterplan (page 65, figure 49). The table below lists the eleven proposals:

Table 11: Draft proposals for Merewether Beach precinct

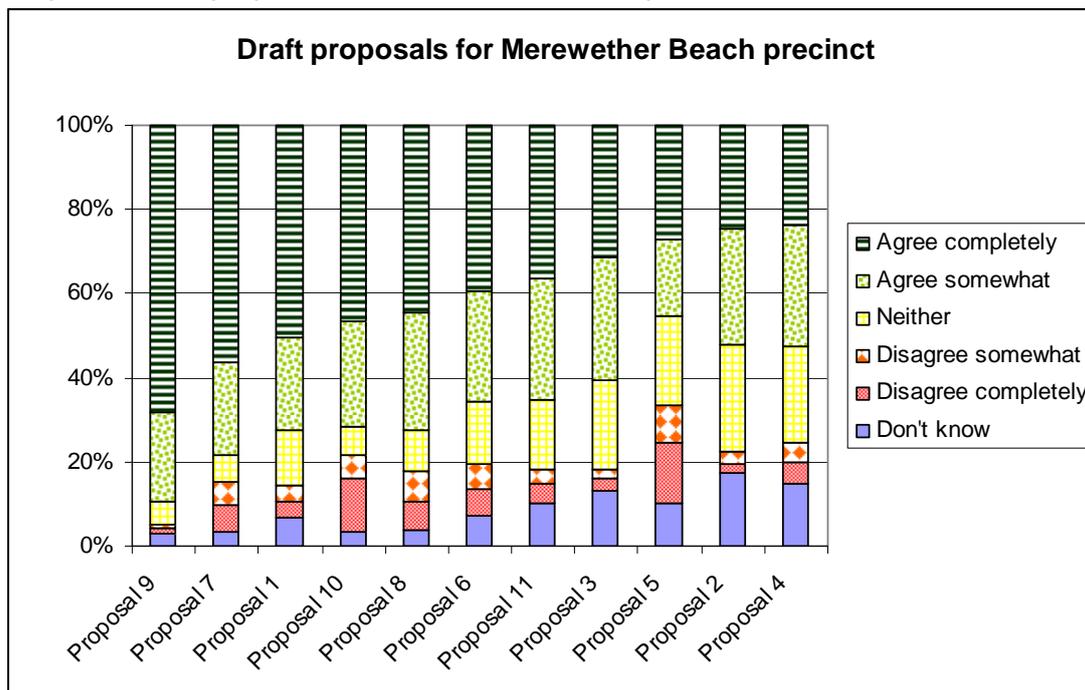
Proposal number	Draft proposal
Proposal 1	Widen upper promenade to 6 metres from John St to the baths
Proposal 2	Reinstate Watkins St road alignment, on street parking, stormwater capture and treatment
Proposal 3	Redesign Watkins St carpark, stormwater capture and landscaping.
Proposal 4	Enhance access and size of Jefferson Park by reconfiguring Henderson Parade
Proposal 5	Convert John Parade to one-way road (northbound)
Proposal 6	Frederick St. to include street trees, street edge parking and central median
Proposal 7	Build a new surf club at Merewether with lifeguard facilities, café, amenities, a roof terrace, amenities and other public space.
Proposal 8	Introduce traffic calming measures to increase pedestrian safety to Scenic Drive, Frederick St. and John Parade
Proposal 9	Improve the public domain around the Surf House site and promenade
Proposal 10	Explore commercial opportunities (eg café) at the Baths Pavilion to upgrade user facilities
Proposal 11	Add viewing terrace at Robinson Reserve

In order, the top three draft proposals which received the most support from respondents about Merewether Beach were recorded as follows:

1. Improve the public domain around the Surf House site and promenade (89.1% agree completely or somewhat)
2. Build a new surf club at Merewether with lifeguard facilities, café, amenities, a roof terrace, amenities and other public space (78.4%)
3. Widen upper promenade to 6 metres from John St to the baths (72.3%)

On balance, respondents tend to agree rather than disagree with draft proposals. In this section, there are no marked differences between Newcastle Voice members and the responses from anonymous community members.

Graph 21: Draft proposals for Merewether Beach precinct



This area appears to be the highest priority area for improvement in the suburban beaches section, with strong, consistent support for developments. The widening of the Bathers Way on the John Parade section draws many comments, as does development of buildings to increase the potential for other income streams to supplement Council rates, and provide facilities appropriate for users and visitors to the city.

The following comments illustrate the breadth and strength of current community opinion in relation to the proposals put forward:

- “Bathers Walk along John Parade is congested, so footpath should be widened. One way vehicular traffic northbound would allow for this.”
- “Improve the destination experience, by improving the car parking and providing improved cafe/restaurant facilities incorporated with surf club facilities.”
- “Frequently people drive too fast, pedestrians stroll on the roads, cyclists and joggers are at risk due to lack of room to move. I use the area for running and swimming training all year round and take my young daughter to the baths and beach, and in summer it can be a very dangerous place due to the amounts of people and traffic.”
- “Building a completely new centre at Merewether Beach is necessary to the survival of that area as a tourist destination in my opinion.”
- “Do all the Merewether stuff- the current buildings are ugly (stating the obvious) and the Jefferson Park amphitheatre looks like it'd be a great destination. The increased setback of the proposed buildings at Merewether to allow for a wider upper promenade is a great idea: get this bit of the DA amended now while there's still time.”
- “Improve the public domain around Surf House site. More picnic tables, tree planting and shade structure.”

- “To reduce the direct financial burden on income from rates as much as possible income generation from cafe/restaurants is essential.”
- “At the Merewether Baths, any privatisation of public land for commercial purposes with the added impost of timed parking would be an aberration to many of the beach goers in the area.”
- “Improvements to the club house and facilities at Merewether Beach and Baths. Improvements specifically would provide clean and modern facilities for the public that would include food outlets without hindering access along walkways. Specific facilities should be change, shower and toilet blocks, public open spaces with seating, shade and outside rinse showers and taps. Development of grass areas with trees further up towards Frederick St.”

### Additional suggestions for Suburban Beaches

There are suggestions to address environmental concerns as well as cycling improvements. Dog facilities were identified as lacking in the current draft Masterplan. The following comments illustrate the tone and span of comments received for additional work in the suburban beaches precinct:

- “Priorities seem to be all wrong. We'll build cafes and shops so you can sit and look at a festering rotting building. How delightful. We don't have enough money to fix our city hall, but we'll reconfigure some roads and put more car parks in. It just seems to me that we're spending money on the easy things and leaving the hard things out.”
- “A clear, legible cycling/pedestrian path that links the whole Newcastle coastline - even to Stockton (via the ferry). Currently there is no clear uninterrupted route for cyclists or pedestrians to move along the coast. Signposts aren't enough.”
- “Enabling the open spaces around the beaches to be utilised for events, activities and community spaces. Dixon Park, Empire Park.”
- “Not included as a proposal but a priority for me is a fenced dog-off-leash area at Dixon Park with nearby cafe. Sydney has fantastic dog off leash areas with shade, trees, cafes - good outcome for neighbourhoods, quieter dogs and better social outcomes at the dog park areas - economic activity for café.”
- “I moved to Merewether because I was impressed with how it hadn't been tampered with and was so open. I pay huge rates and levies to be where I am, and it seems Council wants to take it away from me. I strongly object to the Norfolk Pines and any other trees along Frederick Street.”
- “One other thing missing from the proposal (I think) is irrigation to all of the beachside parks. During summer it is quite usual for the grass to burn off and die, leaving a complete dust-bowl due to the prevailing winds. In addition, there are plenty of bindii and catseye in all parks, NCC should regularly spray for weeds.”
- “None of them - what is wrong with it as it is? It is packed every time I go for a walk and I experience no problem parking or getting around and don't feel the need for a retail therapy every time I walk out the door. It is a beach for goodness sake - let it be.”

## Final comments about the draft Masterplan

This subject is clearly dear to many respondents, as a further 564 comments were received: either reasserting comments made earlier, or proposing additional and alternative considerations to the draft Masterplan. Only those subjects not covered by the proposals included by sector are included here.

### Urgency for Action

Respondents' comments focused on the timeliness and necessity for this plan, with the strong overall support for most proposals. Comments received in response to open-ended questions provide insight to current community opinion:

- “Our beaches are Newcastle's greatest asset so we need to develop them in a way that enhances their natural beauty as well as making them more accessible without over developing them. I think this draft coastal plan is doing that. One thing that concerns me is that parking needs to be increased, not just reconfigured, to cope with increased patronage and tourism.”
- “The time it takes to fix up things like the surf clubs and the Bogey Hole is astonishing.”
- “Overall it is a positive plan and Newcastle desperately needs an overhaul of this type around the coast. After all this is one of Newcastle's main beauty attractions. If all new developments kept in mind the heritage and character of our coast and adhered to this as well would be great!”
- “I have friends from out of town who won't come here because they say the coast line, beaches need a lot of work done. 50 years ago was much better around Newcastle. It's worse than it's ever been now and it's a very forgotten city.”
- “Many of these proposals are a good idea BUT as resources are limited THEY MUST BE PRIORITISED. The council does not seem to be able to accomplish this important step. There is a major problem with the council, either it's officers or it's Councillors or both. Maybe someone should sort that out first, otherwise we will continue down the current path of procrastination.”
- “Get it going fast - there is no need for study after expensive study just get in and do it. More vegetation, no parking fees or metered parking.”
- “In general the overall plan is to be congratulated as there does not seem much that is controversial and the remainder (the great bulk of the plan) is exciting. The low point is the suggestion for accommodation at Nobbies Beach. This southern sector is very good.”
- “When I had a visitors staying from out of town, there is a very restricted choice if you want to find a restaurant that overlooks the water, which seems ridiculous given how much coastal view we have which is not built out.”
- “Please do something to develop Newcastle!! Please don't let this be another plan only.”

## Environmental considerations

The need to consider environmental concerns as well as commercial imperatives is identified by many respondents. The concern is that the plan is over-focused on the built environment, at the expense of either conscious environmental management or retaining natural open spaces. The following comments illustrate:

- “Too much interference and it seems like the focus is all on ways to make money for either the Council or its wealthy supporters. Why do we have to spoil every foreshore - Honeysuckle and near brewery is completely ruined. Let’s not carry the catastrophe along the coast. We want to be able to see the water from more than 20 metres away.”
- “A large part of the plan seems to impose new overbearing retail and restaurant structures which Newcastle has managed to successfully avoid. Don’t we already have that precinct, which works well and it’s called Honeysuckle?”
- “Essential not to over use prime green land for commercial use, to retain the natural green feel, but try to adapt to practical use.”
- “For God’s sake don’t give in to spivs and the restaurant mafia who see the beautiful view and lust to plonk another bloody restaurant on it.”
- “The coastline is about sea and sand. It is not about concrete cancer and high maintenance costs.”

## Dog areas

Dog facilities are resoundingly identified as missing from the draft Masterplan, with comments previously included at each of the sectors, and again at the final question. The following comments add to those already provided:

- “Dog areas and dog facilities have been completely missed. When one in every two residents in the Newcastle area owns an animal, this draft does nothing to cater for this sector of the community (which is a very large one). We want dog play areas, more dog beaches, dog parks, open dog training facilities with fences. Get with it Newcastle Council, not everyone has kids!”
- “No planning for dog facilities, parks, ovals and beaches. You have missed a major sector in the community - dogs and their owners.”

## Paid parking

Paid parking at the beaches remains staunchly rejected by respondents, with the specific proposals rejected and frequent comments at the final question. The following sample of comments illustrates this continuing concern:

- “Please, no paid parking for Newcastle beaches, ever! Don’t let Newcastle become Sydney’s little brother.”
- “I would not like to see the introduction of metered parking at the southern beaches.”
- “Disagree COMPLETELY with introduction of parking fees and meters. People from out of town have little choice but to use car. If they move from precinct to precinct they have to pay repeatedly.”

## Surf Club Upgrades

Interestingly, one of the prime motivators for this study – to increase funding sources for the maintenance of surf club facilities - has not gained the strongest community support, falling outside the top three priorities for every section. A cross-section of comments illustrating current community opinion follows:

- “The surf club is blocking visual connection from Pacific Park and the surf club should be moved southward, and attached to the side of Shortland Esplanade with cafes over so the skate area is no longer so distant.”
- “Any enhancement of community facilities (eg surf clubs in the area should meet community needs as priority over commercial potential.”
- “Development of a combined sports club, including the surf club along the Stockton foreshore.”
- “Let surf life saving alone.”
- “Nobby surf club, the water feature and the changes that go hand in hand with that, because it has outgrown its use by date and the parking and traffic around the park and beach is too congested on weekends.”
- “This beach (Bar Beach) has the largest intake of Nippers in the region, and should be invested in to ensure that the growth expected in this area can continue...not be impeded by NCC's inability to manage the site...nor the Surf Life Saving Branch's greediness.”
- “Dixon Park SLSC kiosk should be upgraded and re-opened in its current position ASAP to meet the needs of ‘picnickers’ in the park adjacent to the club, travelling workers who come to the area at lunchtime and beach-goers.”
- “Build a new Surf Club at Merewether ASAP. Get rid of the eyesore which is known as Surf House.”
- “Around the Merewether Surf Club. The access from the car park is pitiful. It's so much better during Surfest when the road is blocked off.”

## Funding Sources

The city's cost sensitivity is again in sharp relief. Some respondents are aware that increased commercial opportunities or parking along the coastal strip may create opportunities for revenue-raising, but this too is viewed with suspicion by others. The following comments illustrate the paradox confronting Council:

- “Don't fund this with increased rates, taxes or paid parking.”
- “Why develop the already thriving area of Bar Beach when Hunter Street is in desperate need of attention?”
- “One of the main attractions of the Newcastle beaches is that they remain uncommercialised. Please do not risk losing this by focusing on car parking, retail opportunities and money-making ventures.”
- “Grasping the land for the new apartments falls into the same mind set as removal of rail services to the city centre. The long term needs of the people who live, work or shop in the city are being sacrificed for the short term gain of the developers.”
- “Please use rate-payer money responsibly. We do not all live in beach-side suburbs. Why should our \$ be used to increase the property values of the wealthy?”
- “While the privatisation of public coastal land by commercial interests is anathema to most beach goers and the general populace, and therefore by

extension should form the council's stance as the representatives of the ratepayers, the general reference in the survey to 'cafe' at the Merewether Pool would seem, on the face of it, to be an acceptable facility."

- "You have a lot of good ideas but before we can into specific areas where is Newcastle going to get the money? So far all down Honeysuckle Wharf Road new buildings have gone up, with still-vacant space not being filled."

### Adequacy of the plan

Finally, some remarks address the nature of the draft Masterplan itself, with a view expressed that the plan is insufficient in addressing the city's long-range plans. The following remarks demonstrate:

- "Pretty wishy washy. Nothing of any real new significance. Council staff could have come up with the same conclusions and there would have been all that money to do something. The opinions of the SLS Clubs had too much influence."
- "The Newcastle coastline should incorporate a light rail linking back to Newcastle Station. This would not only link the beaches and coastal features but also link our coast with the rest of Australia."
- "It is obvious that the Masterplan was not written by people who live in the area, use the facilities, or understand the reasons people currently use these facilities."
- "I think the masterplan is rather lightweight. It seems to fiddle in the margins and not really provide any imaginative guidance that will revitalise Newcastle. The danger in accepting this masterplan is that it will perpetuate (lock in) the mediocrity that we currently see in Newcastle."