

# Newcastle Voice Bar Beach/Empire Park



October 2009

# Table of Contents

<b>Executive Summary .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Scope of Consultation .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Methodology.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Quality Assessment Criteria .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Key Findings .....</b>	<b>12</b>
Critical Success Factors.....	12
Common Themes .....	12
Bar Beach Cliff .....	13
Empire Park .....	18
<b>Other Subjects Raised.....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Appendix I - Site Maps.....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Appendix II - Workshop Materials and Outputs .....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Appendix III - Promotional Tools and Media .....</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>Appendix IV - Participant Feedback.....</b>	<b>59</b>

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## Executive Summary

This report summarises the public opinion regarding the Bar Beach cliff stabilisation project and the Empire Park playground and surrounding area. The consultation was conducted on behalf of Infrastructure Management Services and Place Management Services to identify community views of the area and to inform near residents of imminent works. This consultation was conducted within the Newcastle local government area, inviting Newcastle Voice community reference panel members and the wider community.

Qualitative consultations involved two community workshop sessions and two stakeholder workshop sessions during September and October 2009, with a total of 89 participants. The themes presented in this report represent the views of the community, some high user groups and near residents. The use of large aerial photographs guided community input and encouraged much discussion among the participants. The discussions produced a number of consistent themes: access, aesthetics, recreational activities and safety.

The community workshops generated a great deal of public interest and synergies exist between community expectations of the whole area. Of primary concern is the desire to retain the area's natural atmosphere, while upgrading facilities for the community, such as plantings, paving, shade, and seating. Residents, ratepayers and stakeholders expect the planned work to beautify the area and result in an increase in visitors to the area.

Dependent on detailed project design, economies of scale may be possible by completing amenity and aesthetic works at the same time as major engineering works.

# Introduction

## Report Purpose

Newcastle City Council is committed to place making. A place-based consultation approach was used for both the Bar Beach cliff and Empire Park projects as multiple user groups access both locations at different times. Changes to one area will affect many user groups. The integration of various Council service units working on a concentrated geographic area to upgrade facilities for the community, such as plantings, paving, shade, seating and rubbish bins will be beneficial.

Infrastructure Management Services and Place Management Services are working on two projects scheduled to commence in 2009/2010.

The Bar Beach cliff stabilisation project, which is partially funded by the Federal Government, commenced following concerns regarding the long-term stability of the cliff face. The cliff lies directly adjacent to the beach and the adjoining beach facilities are a very busy location, especially over summer months.

The project is expected to inconvenience the public as a large area will need to be fenced and pedestrian traffic will be diverted further south, near the Bar Beach Kiosk.

Below are the four zones as described by the GHD Principal Geologist. Each zone will require a different treatment.

The project may require the removal of the poor quality soil horizon, or battering back to decrease the gradient of the cliff face to a more suitable angle, benching the cliff face at half the vertical height and grooming the area. Adjusting the geometry of the cliff face may be the least intrusive method to reduce risk and stabilise the cliff face. Four zones:

1. Behind wall, loose poor slippery surface
2. Above walkway along stormwater drain – ski jump for fragments onto beach below
3. Cave – a natural hazard
4. Natural cliff – rock fall hazard onto sand below.

Increases in native vegetation are viewed favourably, with the Greening Centre available to support a new Landcare group if this were of interest to local residents.

There is an opportunity to consider ancillary works to the Bathers Way as part of this cliff stabilisation project. As such, opportunity for community input presents itself at this early stage, and is welcomed by Council as a part of its commitment to increase community engagement. Possible project enhancements were canvassed, as well as early opportunities to inform near residents about forthcoming works.

Allocations in the 2009/2010 Management Plan include funds for a new playground at Empire Park, for the design of a new canteen adjacent to the current amenities block in the centre of the park, and for the design of new skating facilities. The playground is partially funded by the State Government, and work is scheduled for this financial year. The project is expected to inconvenience the public as part of the park will be fenced while work is underway.

Community input from workshop sessions will guide the creation of a master plan for Empire Park. The Empire Park Master Plan is being developed to improve future management of the park and address the goals from the *Newcastle Recreation Plan 2006-2016*, as follows:

- Quality sport and recreation experiences.
- Respond to changes in sport and recreation.
- Improved community awareness.
- Integrated walking and cycling networks.
- Diverse activities within parks and protection of environmental values.
- Sustainable aquatic facility that meet community needs.
- An active lifestyle community.
- Cost-effective recreation services for the broader community.
- Accessible recreation services
- Increase participation across the entire community.

This consultation report will contribute to Council's *Coastal Revitalisation Strategy*.

## Scope of Consultation

A number of communication tools and engagement methods were implemented as part of this consultation. The purpose of this activity is to increase the awareness in the community of the proposed work and to do so in a public, transparent way. All promotional tools are included in Appendix III.

### Information Provided

A poster and information fact sheet were created and distributed. The poster was positioned at Bar Beach and in front of the Bar Beach Kiosk, at the Merewether Surf Lifesaving Club and in Empire Park. The poster was also visible during Doggy Fun Day at Empire Park on 20 September to increase awareness of the public workshop sessions and register interested parties. Over 150 information fact sheets were letterbox dropped to nearby residents (Memorial Drive, Bar Beach Drive, Parkway Avenue, Kilgour Avenue, Wrightson Avenue and cross streets), distributed at the Bar Beach Kiosk, by the beach inspector and Merewether Swell Café.

Throughout the consultation program, local media was used to inform the public, about the workshop sessions and proposed work. Specifically, a media release and 'This Week at Council' were created and distributed. An advertisement was placed in the Newcastle Herald on 19 September.

Information on the workshop sessions was provided on Council's website. The weekly Council e-newsletter also had a standing item about the consultation's progress.

## Workshops

Invitations to the four workshop sessions were mailed to internal and external stakeholders. Invitations were also e-mailed to all Newcastle Voice members (over 1500 individuals) via e-mail as well as through the Newcastle Voice (MyVoice) newsletter.

Workshop Session	Location	Time
Community	Cooks Hill Surf Club, Bar Beach	21 September, 10-noon
Community	Cooks Hill Surf Club, Bar Beach	22 September, 6-8pm
Stakeholder Group 1 (Bar Beach Cliff project)	Cooks Hill Surf Club, Bar Beach	22 September, 2-3pm
Stakeholder Group 2 (Empire Park project)	City Hall, Newcastle CBD	8 October, 6-7pm

Attendance figures for each session were as follows:

21 September (community)-----	32
22 September (community) -----	42
22 September (stakeholder) -----	10
8 October (stakeholder)-----	5
<b>TOTAL -----</b>	<b>89</b>

## Methodology

### Data Collection

Workshop sessions can build a sense of community and are a useful tool for in-depth insight into the opinions of a small group, allowing many contributions. Unlike a survey, they enable the discussion of complex issues and underlying concerns and allow for deliberation and the brainstorming of ideas.

Newcastle Voice and Infrastructure Management Services met with GHD Geotechnics prior to the workshops to discuss the site in general terms as well as to prepare for the workshop introductions.

Four workshops were held at various times of day during September and October to increase the possibilities for community engagement. The workshops were semi-structured to allow participants to impart their likes and dislikes about the area as well as discuss possible enhancements. This input has been analysed for trends.

### Consultation Area

Because both Bar Beach and Empire Park are well used by all residents and ratepayers throughout the city, invitations to the workshop sessions encompassed the Newcastle City Council local government area (LGA). The entire Newcastle Voice panel was invited and promotional activities were aimed at both the residents and ratepayers in the immediate vicinity as well as the entire LGA.

### Representation

The views collected in this report can not be said to be statistically valid, however they represent the views of some high user groups and near residents.

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

The information contained in this report will guide works towards the project plan, in the case of the Bar Beach cliff works; and the Master Plan in the case of the Empire Park works. In both cases, a period of public exhibition may follow, which would offer further opportunity to increase the representativeness of views gathered.

## Participants

The community workshops were open to all residents and ratepayers of Newcastle. The workshop sessions were facilitated by Newcastle Voice, whose responsibility as researchers is to protect the privacy of individual participants.

There were a total of 89 participants at the four sessions, 74 were community members and 15 were stakeholder group members, including some internal stakeholders - Council staff. Participants were asked to identify the suburb they live in, how they travelled to both Bar Beach and Empire Park, and how frequently they visit the area:

- 47% of participants were males and 53% were females during the first community workshop.
- 76% participants were males and 24% were females during the second community workshop. This can be attributed to the large number of hand gliders and skateboarders present during this session.
- Participants live in Bar Beach, Cooks Hill, Hamilton, Lambton, Maryville, Merewether, Newcastle, The Junction, Wallsend, and outside of Newcastle (Highfields and Kahibah – hand gliders).
- 45% of participants walk, 34% drive and 21% cycle/skateboard to the area (of 62 individual responses from the community).
- 52% of participants frequent the area on a daily basis, 29% between two to three times per week, 15% weekly and 5% less frequently (of 62 individual responses from the community).
- The ages of the participants ranged from late teens to over 70 years old.
- 20% of participants are Newcastle Voice panel members.

The following key stakeholders were invited to a stakeholder workshop.

<b>Organisations</b>	<b>Attended (Yes/No)</b>
Coastal Technical Working Party	Yes
Cooks Hill Surf Lifesaving Club	Yes
Federal Department of Environment and Climate Change	Yes
Internal City Council Service Units	Yes
Merewether United Football Club	Yes
Newcastle City Council Greening Centre	Yes
Newcastle hang gliders	Yes
Newcastle skateboard riders	Yes
NSW Land and Property Management Authority	Yes
Reid Park Tennis Club	Yes
Bar Beach Bowling Club	No
Cooks Hill Community Group	No
Cooks Hill Soccer Club	No
Darby Street Precinct	No
Empire Park Tennis Club	No
Junction Public School	No
Merewether Carlton Rugby Union Club	No
Newcastle City and Eastern District Cricket	No
Newcastle District Cricket Association	No
Newcastle Port Corporation	No
Newcastle Souths Rugby League Club	No
NSW Playgroup Association	No
The Junction Primary School	No

## Data Handling and Analysis

The data handling and analysis was carried out by Council staff from the Customer Service, Communication and Consultation Service unit. The approach used during the consultation was designed to increase inclusiveness and generate data for analysis into themes. An iterative process developed themes from workshop transcripts.

All participants were informed of what the workshops were about and what would happen to the information provided, including its potential use in any reports or publication. All responses are treated in confidence, to ensure the anonymity of respondents. No identifying information is included with any responses selected for this report.

The designs concepts that participants were invited to develop on the aerial maps were given to Council staff for inclusion in the planning process. [The aerial photographs are included in Appendix I].

At the conclusion of each workshop session, participants were asked to provide feedback. A total of 62 community participants complete the feedback form. Of those who chose to complete the question referring to overall satisfaction (41 individuals), 92.4% said they were somewhat or completely satisfied with the workshop. [The feedback is included in Appendix IV].

# Project Quality Assessment Criteria

## Bar Beach Cliff

<b>Seating</b>	There are adequate numbers of seats on various levels at Bar Beach, but not all of it is of adequate quality. Aged picnic tables and old park benches compete with new picnic tables and shade at the kiosk level
<b>Accessibility</b>	There is ramp access to the beach, but the gradient is too steep for wheelchair or pram access. Wheelchair parking spaces are marked.
<b>Weather Protection</b>	Too little weather protection is available – from both wind and sun.
<b>Pavement</b>	The pavement is uneven across the whole area in a patchwork of concrete, asphalt and pavers from Memorial Drive to the sand.
<b>Public Transport</b>	Bar Beach is served with bus routes 201, 310 and 320, all of which run at least two streets behind the beach.
<b>Parking</b>	There is plentiful parking at Bar Beach, both close to facilities and in easy walking distance from the beach.
<b>Signage</b>	There is signage advising of the risk to pedestrians below the cliff face. Bathers Way signage is comprehensive.
<b>Bins</b>	There are rubbish bins at the beach and on the near areas, but they are considered insufficient near the Bar Beach kiosk.
<b>Bubblers</b>	There is one bubbler near the cliff face of Bar Beach.
<b>Public Toilets</b>	There are public toilet facilities at Bar Beach. Lighting is considered insufficient after dark when some visitors use the facilities. Cleanliness is a frequent issue, particularly in summer in high usage.
<b>Playground</b>	There is no playground at Bar Beach. A small one is located at Empire Park across the street.
<b>Shade</b>	There is some adequate shade near the Bar Beach kiosk, and another shade shelter close to the outdoor showers.
<b>Safety</b>	The area is considered one of the safest beach areas for children in the Newcastle area, due to shallow waters, good visibility and good parking access. Some of the paved areas are too steep and uneven to be completely safe for pedestrians of all ages.
<b>Café/Kiosk</b>	There is a full café/kiosk facility at Bar Beach, offering beverages, light refreshments and cooked meals all day, every day.

## Empire Park

<b>Seating</b>	There is little bench seating in the park, with some near the playground and other benches scattered across the park.
<b>Accessibility</b>	There are some ramps for wheelchairs and prams into the park. There are no dedicated wheelchair facilities in the park.
<b>Weather Protection</b>	There is little weather protection in the park. It is very exposed to sun, wind and rainy conditions.
<b>Pavement</b>	There are few pathways within the park and they do not connect with one another.
<b>Public Transport</b>	Bar Beach is served with bus routes 201, 310 and 320, all of which run at least two streets behind the beach.
<b>Parking</b>	There is free on-street parking right around the park. The very large Bar Beach car park is immediately adjacent.
<b>Signage</b>	There is minimal signage in the park - most ensures Council's legal obligations are met.
<b>Bins</b>	There are few rubbish bins in the park, close to the amenities block in the centre of the park.
<b>Bubblers</b>	There is a tap in the north eastern corner, but no bubbler. There are few other bubblers in the park.
<b>Public Toilets</b>	There are no public toilets in Empire Park. An amenity block is unlocked for sporting clubs on competition days. Both Bar Beach Bowling Club and Reid Park Tennis Club have their own toilet facilities. Bar Beach public toilets are across the street.
<b>Playground</b>	There is one small playground in Empire Park close to the tennis courts.
<b>Shade</b>	Trees provide minimal shade in Empire Park. A verandah around the amenities block provides some shade.
<b>Safety</b>	The park is not considered especially safe, with cited examples of anti-social behaviour in the undergrowth in the park. There is minimal lighting in the park, but both lights and toilet facilities are available during sporting events.
<b>Café/Kiosk</b>	There is no café or kiosk in the park. Bar Beach Bowling Club and the Bar Beach Kiosk have a range of food and beverage options in the immediate vicinity. Darby Street, with everything it provides, is nearby.

## Key Findings

Current area uses span a wide range of recreational activities, from passive enjoyment of ocean views to active team sports. Activities are pursued alone and in large groups at public or sporting events.

## Critical Success Factors

Workshop participants were asked to identify the critical success factors which would determine in broad categories how the community will evaluate the projects upon completion. These guide their opinion about any works undertaken by Council at the Bar Beach cliff and Empire Park. Following are the critical factors generated during the workshop sessions:

- More visitors to the area, using the facilities as they were intended to be used.
- More beautiful, while retaining the natural atmosphere of the area.
- More environmentally sustainable, with increased plantings of suitable natives.
- More integrated with long term plans discussed included in a forward program.
- More consultation - in the form of a second public workshop once final plans are drawn up for both projects.

## Common Themes

The workshop session discussions produced a number of common themes. It is important to note that these two areas of Newcastle are not viewed as distinct, but are grounded and constituted within each other. Moreover, the intention of this report is to focus on important issues: Access, Aesthetics, Recreational activities and Safety.

## Bar Beach Cliff

For a full map of the area of consultation, please refer to Appendix I, Site Maps.

The ocean is the major attraction of the area, with swimming, surfing and all beach play as favoured activities. This includes Nippers club activities, volunteer surf patrols and ocean fishing. The Surf Club is a busy destination, hosting many activities and events, from tai chi to dancing lessons to weddings.

The suitability of the area for a wide age range of visitors is appreciated, with facilities like toilets, kiosk and showers used by families with small children, adults and retired people alike.

- “The all-ages appeal of the beach. I have spent all my 75 years up and down Bar Beach, using different parts as I have aged, as I became a parent and then a grandparent. You work your way up and back at the beach over the years.”

### Zone 1 – The immediate cliff surrounds



### Aesthetics

A minimalist approach to the area is supported by workshop participants, with completed works retaining the beach's natural appearance. The undeveloped nature of the area is widely appreciated by a wide group of users, with the following indicative comments:

- “Please do not over-develop Bar Beach, I like it the way it is!”
- “No commercial developments (e.g. restaurants, hotels). We still remember Lloyd's nightclub!”

This view is particularly supported by the hang gliders, who rely on stable rock and weather conditions for safe flying and landing. The hang gliders desire low-growing vegetation to maintain safe hang-gliding. Furthermore they would like the cliff to maintain its existing profile to ensure optimum lift. There is strong community preference to keep the area relatively unspoilt and retain many current features. However, the stark appearance of the area is a concern for participants, with great interest in more plantings, more rubbish collection and generally a more attractive appearance:

- “The area looks harsh and barren - it's not soft and green, should be possible to do this.”
- “Not enough shade anywhere.”

Improved shade, wind and sun protected seating facilities and picnic areas/shelters were favoured among the participants, along with endemic vegetation and landscaping above the south-facing cliff face. There was also mention of adding swings to the area.

### Safety

Respondents were strongly agreed on the need to improve the line of the Bather's Way across the area of the cliff. There was widespread support for a built, formalised continuation of the Bather's Way along the cliff edge, along the car park and along the line of the cliff. Cyclists and pedestrians struggle with car traffic on the Bar Beach carpark, as the Bather's Way dissipates into this car park and resumes only at the kiosk. Rubbish which collects on the fence line is of concern. Indicative comments, as follows:

- "Build the path (min 6 m for shared use) along the cliff line, with low-level mesh fence to catch rubbish. Remove this rubbish daily or every 2 days."
- "Closing the cave on the sand for safety."
- "Improve lighting above the cliff face – over footpath, over the beach for swimming at night."

### Zone 2 – The car parks north and south of the cliff



The Bar Beach car park has become a commuter car park for people working in the city, which is viewed as positive. The parking area is also used by community carers on excursions.

### Access

Accessibility is appreciated at the beach and in the park, with adequate parking at most times of the year. The large carpark is extremely valued, and there is an acknowledgement that there are ramps and level access points for prams and wheelchairs. These however, are not considered of adequate quality and gradient to be useful.

### Aesthetics

Much discussion and participants' input focused on improving the aesthetics and amenity of the two car parks at Bar Beach; the large paved surface above the cliff, and the smaller car park closer to the kiosk facilities. Rubbish which is left uncollected has been identified.

Conflicting views exist between those using the paved car park area for recreation and those using it solely as a car park. Furthermore, some residents would prefer the car park to be locked at night with the use of a gate while others view this as a major detraction. Suggestions and community input for this zone:

- “Keep parking area open, used for buses and recreation, i.e. skaters.”
- “Formalised car parking spaces, with plantings between rows and line markings indicating one way flow of traffic, will improve the efficiency of the car park.”
- “NCC will shoot self in the foot if they install boom gates on the car park.”

Key stakeholders such as the Department of the Environment and Climate Change and the Greening Centre also mentioned the need to improve the efficiency and appearance of the car parks. They propose that the car parks be made more efficient with marked car parking spaces, directional arrows and plantings.

### Safety

Anti-social activities are observed by nearby residents, with the large car park and Memorial Drive the location for drag racing and ‘burn-outs’ from Thursday to Sunday evenings. The noise is upsetting to residents and safety for pedestrians and cyclists is a concern for many, as evidenced in the following comments. Works to improve the look of the car parks would also improve their safety. A formalised path for cyclists and walkers will remove the current dangers faced. Indicative comments:

- “Walkers and cyclists are tipped into the car park and into traffic, unsafe!”
- “Car hoons on car park and on Memorial Drive, and Bar Beach Avenue every Friday and Saturday night.”
- “Car park is unsafe with small children and walkers, no layout.”

Traffic congestion along Memorial Drive was a discussion point. The crossing at the Surf Club was identified as dangerous. Changed pedestrian crossings were recommended. Most participants favoured a crossing to Parkway Avenue, with speed limitations down to as low as 40km/h. The closure of Memorial Drive, with traffic routed along Bar Beach Avenue and Kilgour Avenue was also discussed at length.

### Zone 3 – The public spaces south of the cliff



#### Access

Although there are ramps in place, they are not actually providing access for elderly or young users because of the poor quality of the ramp:

- “Have you tried getting a wheelchair down to the beach from the car park?”

#### Aesthetics

The majority of workshop participants agree that the surfaces in this area are unsatisfactory and require improved facilities. The grading of all terraces and pathways was identified as unsatisfactory, for all users of the site, which include families, young people and the elderly.

Many people enjoy meals and refreshments at Bar Beach, with food purchased nearby or brought from home. This can take the form of breakfast, weekday coffee breaks, family fish and chip dinners, meals with table cloths in the beach shelter or at other picnic tables. There is a repeated desire for more seating and shade. This topic dominated discussions about this zone, with a firm view that the area should retain its informal appearance.

The cleanliness of the area concerns people. Council is viewed as responsible for cleaning sand off the promenades, removing rubbish from bins, but also providing more rubbish bins near busy locations such as the kiosk at the beach. The work done by Council staff is appreciated, and more is required as evidenced in the following comments:

- “Wet sand and overflowing pipes on the lower paved sections – poor design.”
- “Bar Beach pool needs maintenance – clean the slime and barnacles off the bar.”

Community suggestions for improvements centre on better shade, paving and seating facilities, as well as more cleaning of facilities during high use times. Indicative comments:

- “Continuous step access to the sand – as at Newcastle Beach.” *(see image below)*
- “More planting – colourful plants, e.g. gazanias.”
- “Shade shelters and seating in small booth styles. Cabanas?”
- “Lighting – sensor-based if needed – in covered shelter area for meals taken here.”



During one of the community workshops, a participant designed a major development for the area. The surf-board rack-shaped building would hold all beach facilities such as exercise rooms, cafes and surf club storage. The building would include several apartments to generate much-needed funds for the surf lifesaving club. The drawing of the development is included in Appendix II].

Some community members are involved in regular clean up and revegetation activities, on their own volition and completely voluntarily. It is recognised that Council does clean along the beach front, but does not clear rubbish up to the Strzelecki lookout.

### Safety

The safety of the beach and the surrounding area is specifically mentioned, for both younger and older swimmers and beach goers:

- “The nanna’s pool at Bar Beach is the safest place to take small children to the beach in Newcastle.”
- “Improved terracing of paved areas to the kiosk, smoother surface for improved safety of pedestrians.”
- “Lack of lighting in change room – it feels unsafe in there after dark.”

## Empire Park

For a full map of the area of consultation, please refer to Appendix I, Site Maps.

Cycling, walking, running, with and without dogs, are enjoyed in the area, with the Bather's Way busier in the mornings than the road at certain times. Other sporting activities are enjoyed, with skaters, soccer, both rugby codes and cricket well-represented.

Empire Park discussions and workshop exercises revealed the need for improved footpaths across the whole park, providing logical links across from Cooks Hill and Bar Beach to the beach. Some people mentioned the need for a footpath along Memorial Drive to ease access to their cars.

The Anzac Day memorial dawn service in Empire Park attracts approximately 200 people each year. The Cooks Hill Surf Lifesaving Club is interested in the small grassed area above the cliff (below the car park), as some club members would like to move the war memorial there. An initial costing has not inspired action.

A number of public events are also held in this area, with the following identified by workshop participants:

- Christmas Carols in Empire Park.
- Doggy Day Out.
- Outdoor cinema, provided by the Surf Club, in Empire Park.
- Surfing contests at Bar Beach.
- Triathlon events.

One workshop participant mentioned the need to install a permanent power supply for community events.

### Zone A – parklands, playground, walkways



### Aesthetics and Amenity

The playground, though moderately well used, is unattractive to families. A general view was that the location of the playground is not ideal, and that a location closer to Bar Beach Avenue would be safer and well supported. Dogs run across the playground, bushes reduce

visibility and provide opportunities to discard dangerous items such as syringes, glass bottles and other small items dangerous to small children.

There was much discussion about the nature of the vegetation in Empire Park. The broad view is that it is not attractive and promotes anti-social behaviour. Australian natives are by far the preferred plantings, with a balance struck between natural vegetation and the recreational needs of the park. Indicative comments:

- “Clear the trees from back of the playground – allow for passive surveillance.”
- “Grass needs looking after.”
- “Extend footpath all around edge.”

Amenities were discussed during the workshop session, with participants wanting the public toilets restored and the bubblers vandal-proofed.

Extensive discussion about the types of play equipment needed in the park and on the playground centred on the needs of children at different ages. The location and surrounds of the playground were discussed, with groups suggesting a relocation closer to Bar Beach Avenue, or closer to Memorial Drive. Community desires are for a better-designed playground, with more equipment for children of all ages. The integration of play spaces for all-ages use are of interest, with tables and shade (see image at right, below, Grant Reserve Coogee) near play equipment or lines of sight across many play spaces.

A natural appearance would be consistent with the overall desires for this area. The following comments provide illustration of the scope of discussions about all play equipment at Empire Park:

- “Add another bat ball wall, with sensor lighting. Excavate southern side.”
- “Eco-appearance of playground.”
- “As parents we are told not to give our children small toys to play with as they might choke, yet at Dixon Park the entire area is covered with small timber pieces! I strongly suggest that this does not happen at Empire Park.”
- “Relocate to east of tennis court area, soft rubber surface, for young and old children.”
- “Install a double-sided basketball hoop.”
- “See other cities and towns designed playgrounds – Lismore and Gold Coast.” (Image below left : Playground in Lismore, Kardina Park)



## Safety

A number of features were identified by the community and key stakeholders as unsuitable in a park and it was recommended that they be removed. A disused water pump box is used for children to play in, as is a decommissioned power substation on the other side of the tennis courts. Safety would also be increased by better lighting and maintenance. The following comments from participants illustrate:

- “Remove shipping container at toilet block in centre – what is a shipping container doing in a park? Put back proper storage.”
- “Dig out large rock close to Kilgour Ave.”
- “No sensor lights at the bat ball wall.”
- “That is not a playground at Empire Park – we feel uncomfortable there, unappealing.”

## Zone B – skate ramp and surrounds



## Aesthetics

A contingent of skateboarders attended the community workshops. They were interested to supply input on upgrades to the skating facilities, which includes removing the cricket pitch in the immediate area. Even though those attending the workshops were of similar age, it was apparent that their interests are for a skating facility for all ages, from 5 years to adults, with the following indicative comments:

- “Keep the half pipe no matter what.”
- “In the summer, nights are often best for skating - lighting!!”
- “Seats, lights, bubbler.”

A meeting of the working party has been scheduled by Council staff to discuss forthcoming plans for this part of Empire Park. Those participating in this community consultation were invited to attend the meeting scheduled for November 2009.

### Zone C – north eastern corner, Bar Beach Avenue



#### Aesthetics & Recreational Activities

This area is viewed differently by various community members, but needs could be accommodated within the overall park. Some respondents suggested relocating the playground to here, with good fencing from Memorial Drive, and good pedestrian access across the road to the beach, thus creating a large recreational area – with picnic tables and bubblers. This is not inconsistent with a suggestion for plantings of natives. Indicative comments below:

- “Large children’s playground, ages 0-12. Playground with small wading pool or fountain. Rock climbing wall, trees, bushes, multiple swings, large multiple slides, etc.” *(picture below rock climbing wall in the UK)*
- “Native shrubs and avenue of Norfolk pines on pathway. Mounding for natives, semi-circular banks of native shrubs.”



The flat essentially featureless north-eastern corner of Empire Park is used as the emergency landing spot for the rescue helicopter for Bar Beach to Dixon Park. It is also the same location strongly preferred by the glider community. Its barren appearance provides good prevailing wind conditions which make the park and cliff sides ideal for the hang gliders, para-gliders and kite flyers:

- “It’s one of the best places to fly hang gliders in the world, one of two (Torre Pines, California). Safe landing, free of obstacles and regular safe weather patterns on cliff faces.”
- “I moved here for the hang-gliding.”
- “No buildings or trees here - to maintain safe landing. We can land in almost any wind conditions on this section of park.”
- “Clear path for hang glider landings, no power poles.”
- “We can’t use Empire Park sports field because the ground is lower there, which makes the air unsafe for landing. Dirty air tumbles into the park.”

### Safety

Drinking and drug use are suspected in the park, with litter such as syringes and glass from these activities found in the undergrowth of Empire Park.

### Zone D – along Memorial Drive



### Aesthetics & Safety

A number of respondents view this as a harsh environment and suggested several ways to improve the usefulness of the area – with increased parking and reduced speed limits. The pedestrian access was repeatedly recommended to Parkway Avenue, as the crossing near the surf club is viewed as dangerous. Indicative comments follow:

- “Reduce speed limit to 40kph in high pedestrian areas.”
- “Pathway along the street to connect Bar Beach Bowling Club, beach access and along to Darby Street.”

Others spoke about the possibility of closing Memorial Drive to traffic and diverting traffic down Bar Beach Avenue and Patrick Street or Kilgour Avenue.

## Zone E – sporting grounds



### Aesthetics & Recreational Activities

This part of the park was specifically addressed during the key stakeholder meeting, with a proposal put forward to change the location of soccer, rugby league and union home fields to improve the usage and accessibility for all players. It would also carry the benefit of allowing the clubs to run more efficiently, as officials would be in fewer locations on match days. This proposal requires further discussions.

The Merewether United Football Club has outgrown its allocated playing fields. The club's preference is to hold all games at one location with facilities for adults, 8-9 year olds and 6-7 year olds. They are interested in modifications to the grounds that would allow four children's soccer games and one adult game to occur simultaneously at Empire Park.

The Reid Park tennis club is interested to continue discussions initiated during the workshop regarding future lease arrangements. NSW Tennis recommends four courts as ideal for well-run, well-attended community tennis facilities, to maximise financial return and player patronage.

Much discussion surrounded the location of the bat ball wall, with the Reid Park tennis club recommending that it not be relocated near the tennis courts because the nature of players is very different, where one requires some concentration and quiet and the other can be quite noisy.

Although participants discussed the option of demolishing the unused brick substation, Council has allocated funds to design a free-standing canteen building, immediately south of the current toilet block.

## Other Subjects Raised

### Access

There is some interest in the stairs down to Susan Gilmore Beach. The path is blocked, but remains the only allowable access to the beach for those individuals with dogs, which are allowed on the beach. Dogs are not permitted to cross on the sand below the cliff, around from Bar Beach.

- “These stairs were removed years ago, yet the path remains the recommended access to Susan Gilmore beach, including for dog walkers.”
- “Walkway to Susan Gilmore is absolutely shocking!”

### Safety

Key stakeholders were naturally concerned with public liability now and during the works, and discussed the need for additional signage or wide fencing around the area during the completion of works. This would also include informative signage close to the kiosk during the works.

Public safety at Dixon Park was also raised, with a comment about the poor quality of beach access all the way along the beach.



## Appendix I – Site Maps

## Bar Beach Cliff Stabilisation Project

Zone 1 – the immediate cliff surrounds

Zone 2 – car parks north and south of the cliff

Zone 3 – public spaces south of the cliff



## Empire Park

Zone A – parklands, playground, walkways

Zone B – skate ramp and surrounds

Zone C – north eastern corner, Bar Beach Avenue

Zone D – along Memorial Drive

Zone E – sporting grounds





## Appendix II - Workshop Materials and Outputs

## Workshop Outline – 2 hours

### Welcome and Introductions

5 mins

### Bar Beach and Empire Park Current Usage

A Kasper 15 mins

Usage of beach, access to beach. Current likes and dislikes of beach and park area.

### Bar Beach Cliff Project

G Beattie 5 mins

What has created the need for this work? Is the cliff not fine as it is? What are the resources? How has this been given high priority to start now? How large is the site? Limitations of scope? What will be the impact on people during the project?

### Exploring the Options

All 25 mins

Groups form to discuss project enhancements, using aerial maps and overlays. Emphasis on creating suggestions, drawn on maps. One person from each group to report back on completion.

### Break All 15 mins

### Empire Park Master Plan Project

R Maughan 5 mins

What has created the need for this work? Is the park not fine as it is? What are the resources? Why start now? How large is the site? Limitations of scope? What will be the impact on people during the project?

### Exploring the Options

All 25 mins

Groups form to discuss project enhancements, using aerial maps and overlays. Emphasis on creating suggestions, drawn on maps. One person from each group to report back on completion.

### Critical Success Factors

A Kasper 20 mins

Determine how the community will evaluate the project on completion (amenity, aesthetics, safety, speed, cost, access). Identify, then prioritise critical success factors. Discussion – measurement, targets, limitations.

### Conclusion

A Kasper 5 mins

Next steps after this workshop? How will people find out what happened to their input? Further contact information – NV.

## Agenda

<b>Welcome and Introductions</b>	<b>5 mins</b>
Newcastle Voice and Project Engineers	
<b>Using Bar Beach</b>	<b>15 mins</b>
Newcastle Voice	
<b>Bar Beach Cliff Project</b>	<b>30 mins</b>
Infrastructure Management Services	
<b>Break</b>	<b>15 mins</b>
<b>Empire Park Master Plan Project</b>	<b>30 mins</b>
Place Management Services	
<b>Critical Success Factors</b>	<b>20 mins</b>
Newcastle Voice	
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>5 mins</b>
Newcastle Voice	

## Ground Rules

- Today is about gathering community priorities, so every contribution is valued.
- A range of views, perhaps divergent from your own, may emerge today: that's fine.
- Photographs may be taken and used on the Council's website and to promote future Newcastle Voice events. Please let us know if you would not like to be photographed.
- Thank you for your participation today.

# Feedback Form

Your feedback is important to us - thank you for taking the time to complete this sheet and provide us with your comments.

1. What did you particularly like about this workshop?

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2. Please suggest any improvements that could be made.

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3. Any other comments?

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4. Please rate your overall satisfaction with the workshop.

<input type="checkbox"/> 1- Completely dissatisfied	<input type="checkbox"/> 2- Somewhat dissatisfied	<input type="checkbox"/> 3- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	<input type="checkbox"/> 4- Somewhat satisfied	<input type="checkbox"/> 5- Completely satisfied
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5. Would you attend another group like this– on a different subject?

YES / NO

NAME: (optional) \_\_\_\_\_

# Workshop Transcripts

21 September 2009 10-12 noon (Community)

## Current Usage

### Access

Walk 16

Car 10

Cycle 4

### Frequency

Daily or more 14

3-4/week 8

Weekly 6

Less Often 2

### Types

Swim, surf, fish,

Run, walk, exercise, twice daily dog walk.

Coffee, picnics in the shelters.

Visit with grandchildren – but no decent playground

View ships, whales, out to sea.

Sons skate, kick balls in park.

Bat ball.

Hang glide, fly kites.

Mid week commuter car park – up to 15 cars daily now. This is a good thing.

Display advertising parked in the car park.

Read, picnic, enjoy the beach.

Saturday mornings – Touch football on Empire Park or back field.

Cycle along Memorial Drive, through the car park, past all the parked cars.

Burnouts in the car park Saturday night, hooning up and down Memorial Drive. Noise! Drag racing.

Special events – Doggy Day, triathlons, surf competitions

### Current Likes

Foliage – the park has never looked so good in all my 75 years.

Beach.

I love that I can take my dog around to Susan Gilmore.

Physical beauty – Bar Beach is stunning!

The Bar – a child who's ten is safe to swim out here, and every other age.

Swimming – out to sea.

The size of the car park – you can usually get a park, even on busy days.

Change room, kiosk – facilities for young children!

NCC workers who clean the rubbish from the beach – need more!

### Current Dislikes

The area looks harsh and barren – it's not soft and green, should be possible to do this.

Bar Beach pool no maintenance – wall not cleaned up, rocks falling.

Smokers around the kiosk.

Dangerous car park, ugly car park, the fact that it's open at night. Congestion of pedestrians, cyclists and cars on car park.

Insufficient lighting and security in the park.

Drugs and alcohol consumed in park after hours, late. Intruders into homes.

The state of the change room in summer – please clean more often! Very wet and sandy.

Picnic shed on beach – no lighting.

Walkway to Susan Gilmore is absolutely shocking!

No shade!

That is not a playground at Empire Park – feel uncomfortable there, people spying on children, unappealing.

Empire Park – open space, not a facility for children.

Bar Beach pool needs maintenance – clean the slime and barnacles off the Bar.

Bathers Way cycle and walk way ends in car park. It's good above Bar Beach over the hill.

Rubbish – up the fence line towards lookout.

Not enough rubbish bins at kiosk/surf club – it's always full!

### Other concerns raised, outside scope of current projects

Safety at The Cliff – person was injured, difficulty in getting them off the beach. Public safety in immediate vicinity should be first concern.

Road safety – bikes and pedestrians too close!

Police presence??? Is it true that there are only 5 police cars on in Newcastle at night? More needed at night!

Restoration work to cliff to Susan Gilmore

## Bar Beach Cliff Stabilisation Project

### **Zone 1 – The immediate cliff surrounds**

Cleared graded path, min width 3m.

Walkway to beach, or cliff, better gradient?

Rubbish bins needed.

Restore access to Susan Gilmore.

Can restoration works give positive benefits for beach usage?

Lighting is good.

BBQs and shade and picnic tables above cliff area.

BBqs and covered shade below cliff face – in the sheltered part.

Re-terrace picnic area, improve spaces.

Make more useable – shelters, swings, landscape.

### **Zone 2 – The car parks north and south of the cliff**

Cycleway, footpath along cliff edge, linkage to Bathers Way on Memorial Drive.

More lighting, green this space, speed humps.

Garden beds, low natives.

Footpath formalised on cliff edge.

Create box plantings, natives.

Continue parking between two car parks – angle parking, increase spaces.

How much water runs off car park and cliff, taking the rubbish with it? Capture water for cleaning or watering trees.

Remove power lines and other 'hard' items.

Landscape both car parks.

Remove, reorganise car park access.

Redesign car parking – and landscaping.

### **Zone 3 – The public spaces south of the cliff**

Continuous stepped access to beach, as at Newcastle. Remove fence to beach.

Master Plan – regrade; steps up from beach along length of facilities; kiosk protection (wind and rain); rationalise levels, BBQ, outside showers, weather protection.

SHADE.

Green this parkland – less stark.

Shade shelters on last level above beach.

Lighting.

Better ramp access to beach generally – disability, pram, aged.

## Empire Park Project

### **Zone A – parklands, playground, walkways**

Move playground from current location, change to second bat ball wall. Add sensor light.

Demolish brick substation (unused).

Underground sprinkler system.

Level sports training areas – I train there twice a week, it's not level.

Additional bat ball court near tennis courts.

Restore public toilets. More water taps.

See other cities and towns designed playgrounds – Lismore and Gold Coast.

Cycle way around oval. Shade at stand areas.

Vandal-proof bubblers.

West-Australian style dog poo stands and bags.

Reduce foliage around grandstand and improve visibility and behind it and playground area.

Additional tables, shade, seating around perimeter of area near Bar Beach Bowling Club.

Relocate fence opening to Empire Park football grounds closer to tennis courts.

Permanent power supply for community events (see usage).

Retain existing use for group picnics.

Add another bat ball court.

Extra lighting – motion sensor automatic lights!

Eco-appearance of playground. Fenced, all ages, disability-friendly.

Integrated family use – lines of sight across park to bbqs, playground, etc.

Extend footpath all around edge.

### **Zone B – skate ramp and surrounds**

Skate park – all ages, 5 to adults.

Seats, lighting, bubbler.

Connecting pathways from here to northeastern corner.

Add rubbish bins.

### **Zone C – northeastern corner, Bar Beach Avenue**

Large children's playground, ages 0 – 12. Playground with small wading pool or fountain. Rock climbing wall, trees, bushes, multiple swings, large multiple slides etc.

Close road off between beach and park, route traffic along Bar Beach Avenue and Kilgour Avenue. Decent roundabout at Darby Street corner.

Relocate larger playground to here, fence, shaded areas. Access to pedestrian crossing to beach.

Find out what RSC is doing re relocating war memorial.

Playground modules for all ages, easy access to beach.

Retain existing use – kite flyers, helicopter landing spot, hang gliders.

Shaded areas.

Add picnic tables.

No over-use – keep open space for hang-gliders and helicopter.

### **Zone D – along Memorial Drive**

Safety issues – remove through road, and divert down Bar Beach Avenue and Patrick Street or Kilgour Avenue. Create parking on southern end of Memorial Drive.

Reduce speed limits on Memorial Drive – 40 kph in high pedestrian area at beach.

Close Memorial Drive to traffic.

Cycleway and paths to continue through.

Public toilet in park.

Traffic calming.

Pedestrian access to Parkway Avenue.

### **Critical Success Factors**

- More people use the area
- Less antisocial behaviour
- Looks better!
- Maintain the open space, park feel of the place
- Integration of the whole – not piecemeal approach, not ad hoc works.
- All ages!
- Not too commercial – no tavern or pub at Bar Beach
- Lines of sight, better visibility in park.
- This area is a contribution to tourism, it's viewed and promoted as an asset – promotes the Hunter!

## 22 September 2009 2-3pm (Key Stakeholders)

### Representatives

1. GHD, geotechnical consultants
2. Federal Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water
3. NSW Land and Property Management Authority, formerly Department of Lands (Crown Lands)
4. Coastal Technical Working Party
5. Greening Centre
6. Cooks Hill Surf Live Saving Club
7. Newcastle City Council staff involved in planning, funding or executing the works: Strategy, Aquatic Services, Landscape Architectural Services, Recreation Projects.

### Discussion

#### **Briefing from GHD Principal Geologist**

4 zones in site with different treatment needed for each:

1. Behind wall, loose poor slippery surface
2. Above walkway along stormwater drain – ski jump for fragments onto beach below
3. Cave – a natural hazard
4. Natural cliff – rock fall hazard onto sand below.

The intention is to adjust the geometry of the cliff to reduce risks for Newcastle City Council. Restricting access is a further, undesirable, option – due to the high visitation and appeal of the area.

#### **Removal Rearrangement Re-grooming**

These 3Rs encapsulate the current preferred solution, at this early stage. The first stage would be to remove the poor quality soil horizon, or batter it back to decrease the gradient of the cliff face to a more suitable angle. Benching the cliff face at half the vertical height is a likely method for this expanse of cliff. A degree of grooming would follow these works.

Test pit excavations will test soil and rock thicknesses within the next month. Three or four of these in various sites will test possible locations for the Bathers Way, assess options to configure a rock shelf and test for the quantity of surface runoff water.

Twenty percent (20%) of people take notice of signs – note for risk management methodology. Other options are preferable.

#### **Aesthetics of solutions**

A fence on the outside of Bathers Way is considered necessary – this could follow natural contours and be interrupted with seating/shade structures. Warning signage could be in place during the works.

Options without walls are to batter the angle of the cliff back to 2.5:1.

The appearance of seating, shade and picnic areas could be improved – these facilities are in place, but aged and in poor condition.

### **Nature of the Grant**

Grant donor will consider ancillary works to the Bathers Way as part of this cliff stabilisation project.

The grant may be extended another year, should that be necessary to complete the scope of works, as long as proper documentation accompanies any request. Contracts are expected to be in place before the end of F10 (June 2010); increases in native vegetation will also be viewed favourably.

Applications for next year's funding round (F11) will be due within the next month – earlier than previously.

### **Other Council Strategies**

Coastal Management Revitalisation Strategy consultant has been engaged to complete works from Nobbys to Merewether beaches and the report is to include Bar Beach. The report will take a precinct-based approach to the beaches. (This report will be made available to the external consultant). A draft is due by February 2010. This document will clarify future uses at the beach – including the degree of desirable commercialisation at the beach and its immediate precinct.

It is not expected that this work will reduce sand at the beach. Newcastle City Council has not conducted studies into sand loss erosion at the beach.

### **Greening Centre**

Greening Centre is keen to assist in any works which reduce bitou bush on the coastal cliffs – and replace it with hardy natives for this particular coastal environment.

### **Car Park**

The car park could be made much more efficient with marked car parks, directional arrows and plantings – which would compensate for the loss of car park along the edge of the cliff line.

The direction of stormwater needs to be considered; there may be divergent opinions within NCC.

Hanglider pathways to landing spots on Empire Park need to be considered in the planting of trees on the car park.

There is a possibility of harvesting stormwater runoff into tree vaults in the car park, obviating the need for costly routing towards Cottage Creek.

### **War Memorial**

Surf Live Saving Club has had an estimate done to relocate the war memorial in Empire Park to the area above the cliff, below the car park. There is little widespread interest in this proposal, even with one keen proponent within the Surf Club.

There is a possibility to relocate the war memorial further south in Empire Park, to bring it into closer alignment with the Surf Club – particularly for sunrise in April.

## 22 September 2009 6-8pm (Community)

### Current Usage

#### Access

Walk/Skate	12
Cycle	3
Car	17

#### Frequency

Daily or more	18
2-3 times a week	10
Weekly	3
Less often	1

#### Types

Swim – Nanna’s pool and out to sea

Surf, boogie board

Hang glide and paraglide

Breakfast, coffee, family meals/entertainment – not all purchased here.

Surf club – volunteer patrols

Nippers clubs

Change rooms, showers.

Helicopter emergency landing pad in park.

Enjoying the view, chilling out

Skating

Walk run exercise

Twice daily dog walk

Fishing

Kids activities – on beach, in park

Native revegetation at cliff profile, volunteer from Trees in Newcastle

Bat ball, tennis in park

Tidying up from the car park up to Strelezki spelling?! Lookout (NCC don’t do this part) – there are lots of us

Football, 3 codes, cricket and training.

Anzac Day Dawn service, attended by 200 people. War Memorial (located in Empire Park Zone C) belongs to Cooks Hill Surf Club. Estimated cost of \$22,000 to relocate to a more suitable position for April dawn.

Surf Club events – dancing lessons, weddings, tai chi lessons.

Public events – triathlons, Doggy Fun Day, outdoor cinema hosted by surf club, Christmas carols.

Lawn bowls in Bar Beach Bowling Club.

### **Current Likes**

Not too much development.

Safety of the Nana's pool for children and elderly users in all weathers.

Bit of bush up to the lookout.

One of the best places to fly hang gliders in the world, one of 2 (Torre Pines, CA). Safe landing, free of obstacles and regular safe weather patterns on cliff faces.

Looking out to sea, watching the ships

Accessibility – welcoming open parking. NCC will shoot self in the foot if they install boom gates on the car park.

The village feel, like it the way it is

Flood lights on the beach for evenings.

Bar Beach is beautiful!

The all-ages appeal of the beach. I have spent all my 75 years up and down Bar Beach, using different parts as I have aged, as I became a parent and then a grandparent. You work your way up and back at the beach over the years.

Shower and tap facilities.

Tennis courts and tennis wall – more please!

### **Current Dislikes**

Lack of lighting at sheds and shelters and change room – it feels unsafe in there after dark.

Car hoons on car park and on Memorial Drive, and Bar Beach Avenue every Friday and Saturday night. Noise!

Lack of cleaning on the promenade – sand and rubbish.

Insufficient parking at far end of Bar Beach, towards the Cliff.

Not enough vegetation, a harsh, barren looking place. Should look softer, greener.

Not enough shade shelters.

Bathers Way is discontinuous – walkers and cyclists are tipped into the car park and into traffic, unsafe!

Car park is unsafe with small children and walkers, no layout.

Poor accessibility to beach for elderly and disabled users. The current ramp is terrible.

Wet sand and overflowing pipes on the lower paved sections – poor design.

Play area at the tennis courts – this is not a playground. Not enough equipment, unsafe bushes – glass, needles, rubbish, homeless people sleeping areas, undesirable behaviour, antisocial behaviour.

Sensor lights missing at tennis wall

## Bar Beach Cliff Stabilisation Project

### **Zone 1 – The immediate cliff surrounds**

There was widespread support for a built, formalised continuation of the Bather's Way along the cliff edge along the car park and along the line of the cliff.

Walkway along the cliff line, with low-level mesh fence to catch rubbish. Remove this rubbish daily/2 days.

Viewing platform.

Close cave – safety!

Replace access stairs to Susan Gilmore – public safety! These stairs were removed years ago, the path remains the recommended access to Susan Gilmore beach, including for dog walkers.

Wind and sun-protected picnic shelters – curved south-facing over cliff.

Look at different engineering solutions.

Make raised area more useable – bbq, beautify the area.

Improved lighting above the cliff face – over footpaths, over the beach for swimming at night

Endemic vegetation, landscaping, shade and picnic areas above the cliff. Low-growing vegetation to maintain safe hang-gliding and provide habitat.

Maintain existing cliff profile if possible (for lift). Do not excavate and reduce top surface area for picnics etc, but apply an engineering solution of the technique of roof bolt stabilisation, as in mines, then overlay with vegetation.

Please do not overdevelop Bar Beach – I like the way it is! I like the community feel, the beach feel. I dislike Newcastle Beach with the following: man made mounds, cement bunkers, minimal access to the beach.

### **Zone 2 – The car parks north and south of the cliff**

A wide, formalised path along the cliff line for shared use – walkers and cyclists. This path will connect the sections of the Bathers Way, removing the current dangers faced by pedestrians and cyclists in the large car park.

Keep parking area open, used for buses and recreation.

Formalised car parking spaces, with plantings between rows and line markings indicating one way flow of traffic, will improve the efficiency of the car park.

Please keep the car park the way it is, without cement strips etc.

Antihoon surface.

Maintain car park view to ocean!

Retain free parking!!!

Pedestrian crossing across to Parkway Avenue to reduce risks at the one opposite the Surf Club. This was repeatedly identified as a dangerous crossing.

Discussions about traffic calming along Memorial Drive to ensure public safety. Changed pedestrian crossings recommended.

### Zone 3 – The public spaces south of the cliff

Lighting – sensor-based if needed – in covered shelter area for meals taken in this shelter.

Ramps for aged and disability access to the beach from the height of Memorial Drive – the current ramp is not the gradient recommended – 1:14 is too steep. “Have you tried taking a wheelchair down there?”

Graded step from beach to promenade, as at Newcastle Beach. Only few narrow steps now.

Shade/trees/landscaping – NOT Norfolk Island pines!

Seats on crest below car park.

Please put power lines underground.

Continuous step access to the sand.

More shade shelters on northern area.

Shade, BBQs, seating!!

Beach access for disabled and elderly people.

More planting – colourful plants, eg gazanias.

Shade shelters and seating in small booth styles. Cabanas?

BBQs.

More shade needed.

Upgrade quality and cleanliness of toilets and change rooms.

Improved family facilities – lights, BBQ, showers, seats.

Improved terracing of paved areas to the kiosk, smoother surface for improved safety of pedestrians.

No commercial developments eg restaurants, hotels. We still remember Lloyd's nightclub!  
Status quo.

## Empire Park Project

### **Zone A – parklands, playground ,walkways**

Playground, native bushland, parkland, trees!!!

New playground – relocate to east of tennis court area, soft rubber surface, no pine chips, for young and old children. Big climbing ball, disabled swing, small frame – toddlers.

Table at playground.

Double sided basketball hoop.

Add another bat ball wall, with sensor lighting. Excavate southern side.

Anti-social behaviour from park users late at night.

Change vegetation around playground – improve visibility.

More lighting around sheds and playground.

Extend pathways, link to pathway on Memorial Drive.

Dig out large rock close to Kilgour Ave.

Clear trees from back of playground – passive surveillance.

Remove shipping container at toilet block in centre – what is a shipping container doing in a park? Put back proper storage which is nicer.

Add bubblers to park.

Grass needs looking after.

Golf practice net.

Public toilets at northwestern corner – near tennis courts.

### **Zone B – skate ramp and surrounds**

Improve and upgrade skating facilities

Keep the half pipe no matter what.

Lighting!!

Delete cricket pitch.

More skate park!

### **Zone C – northeastern corner, Bar Beach Avenue**

Hang gliding landing zone

Native shrubs and avenue of Norfolk pines on pathway. Mounding for natives, semi-circular banks of native shrubs

Hang gliding landing zone, retain as open space. No buildings or trees here to maintain safe landing.

There's a water tap but no bubbler!

Picnic tables.

Clear path for hang glider landings, no power poles.

Keep this for hangliding – can't use Empire Park sports field because the ground is lower. Make air unsafe for landing in sportsground. Dirty air tumbles into park.

### **Zone D – along Memorial Drive**

Angle parking to increase accessibility to whole beach.

Taxi ramp undercover at Bar Beach Bowling Club.

Pathway along the street to connect Bar Beach Bowling Club, beach access and along to Darby Street.

Native shrubs.

### **Critical Success Factors**

- Usage is increased – to the purposes for which facilities are designed.
- The area is more beautiful.
- The environment is more sustainable, with increased plantings of suitable natives.
- Communication occurs throughout the next design phases. Once a plan has been drawn – consult again.
- The consistent themes raised today are taken up.
- The area is left much as it is – the natural, wild appearance is appreciated.
- Long term plans discussed tonight are on the programme.

## 7 October 2009 6-7pm (Key Stakeholders)

### Representatives

1. Reid Park Tennis Club (3 courts).
2. Merewether United Football Club.

### Discussion

#### **Playground**

The playground is very unattractive to families at present: dogs run across the playground, bushes reduce visibility and provide good opportunity to discard dangerous items such as syringes, glass bottles and other small items dangerous to small children. It does not provide value for children aged 6-12, only the under 6 age group.

A disused water pump box is used for children to play in, as is a decommissioned power substation on the other side of the tennis courts. Both these sites are also considered very unhygienic and unsafe.

#### **Ball Sports at Empire Park**

Merewether United Football Club has grown to 650 players, becoming the second largest football club in Newcastle. Adult players will not be able to be accommodated, growth is coming in men's and women's football from the increased Australian interest in football since the last World Cup. Australia is again competing in the World Cup next year.

The club has comprehensively outgrown its allocated playing fields, using many locations to play games: Myambalah Oval, Merewether High School ovals (with canteen proceeds going to Merewether High School), Empire Park and some games at Connolly Park, Wickham. This stretches Club executives very thinly across dispersed locations as they have to be present at Club games.

The Club's preference is for one location with facilities for all players as follows:

- Adult games and training 2 full size fields, at 60 x 90m minimum, or 100 x 70 m full size.
- Eight and nine year olds 40 x 30m field
- Six and seven year olds 20 x 30m field

The suggestion from this Club is in two stages:

1. Meet with the other sporting clubs to discuss a swap across the various parks, with the major swap proposed between Myambalah Oval and Empire Park. MUFC would already be more satisfied with this arrangement as four of the children's soccer games and one adult game could be played concurrently in Empire Park. **Considerations:** value of lighting at Myambalah, temporary canteen arrangement at Empire Park, options for additional lanterns onto the Empire Park poles to increase lighting to playing standard for evening games. Council agreed to invite this group to meet to work towards an agreement in principle: rugby union, rugby league, soccer and cricket clubs to be convened.
2. Excavation earthworks on Empire Park to create two full-size fields side-by-side. This would retain the cricket pitch *between* the two fields, reducing the MUFC's maintenance costs as at present, where a cricket pitch is in the *centre* of the field, needing to be relaid each season. **Considerations:** accurate estimates for earthworks, consideration of timing and payment of works

MUFC would be willing to invest what resources it has into this option, working in co-operation with all the other football clubs, and Newcastle City Council. A map of the proposal included in Appendix II.

### Canteen

Newcastle City Council has allocated funds in this financial year to design a free-standing canteen building in Empire Park, immediately south of the current toilet block. It has been evaluated that renovations or extensions to the current building would be more costly.

### Batball wall

Discussions about the nature of the batball wall and increased usage followed. The tennis club was very concerned that the batball facility not be moved closer to the tennis facilities, as the nature of players is very different: tennis requires some concentration and quiet; the batball wall attracts more sporadic play, chatter and high traffic to and from the wall.

## Tennis facilities

The Reid Park Tennis Club is well-attended with players from all age groups, including former A-graders. They charge reasonable membership fees, payment for one of three courts is on an honour system and have up to 15 players on a weekday morning. The benefits of tennis for older residents were extolled. Lighting is adjusted seasonally so as not to inconvenience nearby residents. Security is an issue: “we get constantly broken into”.

Revenues received have permitted the club to resurface their courts so that they are playable half an hour after rain.

The clubhouse facilities are basic, with a sink, a refrigerator and a table tennis table. Even so, it is well patronised, including for people playing musical instruments, table tennis and refreshments after tennis.

Empire Park Tennis Club has indicated to Newcastle City Council that it does not wish to renew its lease which expires within the next few months. It is in Council’s interest to lease all tennis facilities to one club. Options for the two courts:

- Lease to Reid Park tennis club, for their coach to use. They indicated that this might be a possibility – “we’ll consider it for sure.”.
- Bulldoze two tennis courts and return to parkland: build alternative facilities such as extended playground, basketball hoops, extra green area.
- Bulldoze one tennis court and return to parkland as above. Four courts are identified by Tennis NSW as providing the best use and best return for a neighbourhood tennis centre.

These options will be considered into the preparation of the Empire Park Master Plan.

## Written Submission Received: Empire Park

### 1. Footpaths.

The majority are unsafe; the tar surfaces are loose, rough, and uneven. The kerbs which boarder the pathways are in the same condition as both the footpaths and kerbs are loose under foot which potentially is dangerous to all persons no matter what age they might be.

I believe that there is a need for more pathways around the entire circumference of the park as Kilgour Ave side does not have satisfactory pathways and in particular in the wet and colder times of the year it becomes quite dangerous under foot as the grounds become swampy. It is also difficult as to walk/push a pram through this area and there is no access for persons in wheel chairs. There is no pedestrian crossing on Kilgour Ave.

I believe that there needs to be more pathways around the entire circumference of the park and these pathways need to be wider than the current pathways to accommodate wider strollers, wheels chairs, parents bike riding with there children etc. By enlarging the pathways it will reduce the maintenance of the grass, mowing, watering etc.

### 2. Play Area

To use Dixon Parks play area as a model with minor additions. As a frequent visitor to Dixon Park the play area has to accommodate the number of young children in the area and the parents, I believe that more seated covered areas for families that visit the park will be required for Empire Park upgrade.

Toilet facilities for older children and parents need to be in close proximity for easy access for parents and there children not like Dixon Park where the toilets are located up the hill and are usually locked.

I also believe that woodchip is not a satisfactory ground covering in the play area as is Dixon Park. The woodchip creates dust, the children throw it at each other, young children put it in there mouth and it is generally messy. ***As parents we are told not to give our children small toys to play with as they might choke, yet at Dixon Park the entire area is covered with small timber pieces!!!! I strongly suggest that this does not happen at Empire Park.*** I believe that the rubber surface at Newcastle Park near Nobbys should be used.

Have you considered large shade areas (trees etc) close to Bar Beach with BBQ facilities??

### Existing Club House

Is a eye sore. The shrubs need to be cleared and more lighting needs to be installed or security patrols to keep the riff raff away. Nearly every night young people congregate and drink alcohol, break bottles and deface the area. The amount of broken bottles and needles is unacceptable.

### Bar Beach Bowling Club Driveway

The driveway is uneven, loose pebbles, rocks, and is generally unsafe. The surface needs to be resurfaced. Also cars pulling in and out of driveway are not safe as I believe that it is a blind spot for oncoming traffic from Helen Street.

### **Recommendation**

Along Memorial Drive place some trees which would hold the ground, withstand the strong winds. By doing so, it will improve the erosion and make it more attractive. The sign that introduces the park has not been upgraded for many years and it cannot be read. This also needs a facelift with a nice garden bed and a sign that is clearly visible with all the information for park users.

In closing, Empire Park has not had many upgrades for many years and is long overdue. I believe that the recommendations that I have put forward to you will not only benefit that Council or the rate payers of the area but will appeal to visitors/tourists to the area. The ideas that I have proposed will be low costs and low maintenance where the main factors so the park does not lose its new form and last for many years. Once again thank you for the opportunity to put forward my ideas for your consideration.

## Proposed Development Design Created During Workshop

10 Units could be  
— Confined to Better Floor — No Surfhouse  
Best. Restaurant / Health Club  
Could be all on one floor: Enclosed.

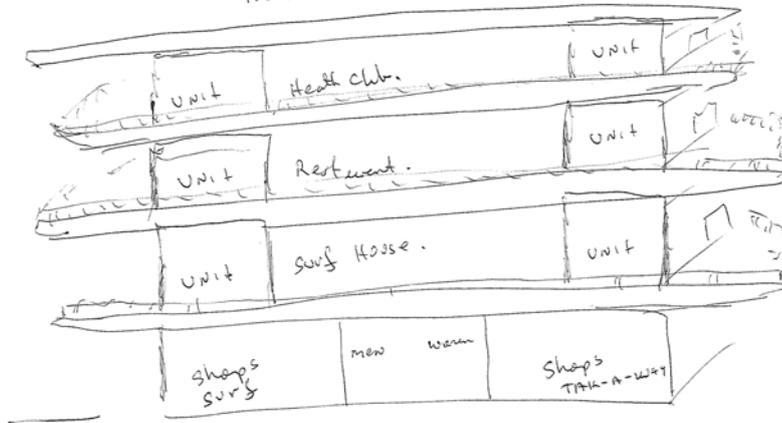
FOR the SLSClub

Units. = Rent for  
— Surf Club.

Restaurant Rent —  
Health Club —  
Shops —

Revenue

Public Viewing Deck



\* Existing Club  
Remains for  
Storage of Equipment  
& Functions.

← Surf board  
Shape.

## Submission Received: Empire Park, Merewether United Football Club





## **Appendix III - Promotional Materials & Media**

## Signage

# Help shape our city's future

## Current Consultation Bar Beach Cliff & Empire Park Playground

### Bar Beach

The cliff needs stabilising and we would like to hear about other enhancements to include in the project.

### Empire Park

A new playground is being planned along with other recreational facilities at Empire Park.

**Two workshops are being held to discuss forthcoming works on both sites:**

Time: 10.00-12.00noon

Date: Monday 21 September 2009

Venue: Cooks Hill Surf Club, Memorial Drive, Bar Beach

Time: 6.00-8.00pm

Date: Tuesday 22 September 2009

Venue: Cooks Hill Surf Club, Memorial Drive, Bar Beach

**Come to have your say about two important community assets.**

Let's see some more trees for pedestrian shade   
Yes, we think cycle racks will encourage people to leave the car at home

Share your views through mail or telephone surveys, workshops or community discussions.

Newcastle needs representation from all sections of our community. To join *Newcastle Voice* and take part in consultations with Council you must be a Newcastle resident or ratepayer and also be over 16 years of age

Registering online is easy at

[www.newcastle.nsw.gov.au/myvoice](http://www.newcastle.nsw.gov.au/myvoice)

Or order your Free Info Pack via mail by calling

4974 2000.

## Fact Sheet

### Bar Beach Cliff Stabilisation



Within the next nine months, works will start to stabilise the Bar Beach cliff. The project is at engineering concept stage and the opportunity exists now for the community to suggest improvements to the project design.

This may include, but is not limited to, walkways, whale-watching platforms, paving, BBQ facilities, shade.

The cliff and some of the immediate access points to the beach will be fenced off for the duration of the project which is expected to take a number of months. This consultation is being conducted for the Project Engineer by Newcastle Voice.

All community members are invited to have their say. Two workshops are being held:

**Time:** 10 - 12noon  
**Date:** Monday 21 September 2009  
**Venue:** Cooks Hill Surf Club,  
Memorial Drive, Bar Beach

**Time:** 6 - 8pm  
**Date:** Tuesday 22 September 2009  
**Venue:** Cooks Hill Surf Club,  
Memorial Drive, Bar Beach

Please RSVP by Friday 18 September on **4974 2823** if you're interested.

For further information please contact Council's Project Engineer on 4974 2420 or email [gbeattie@ncc.nsw.gov.au](mailto:gbeattie@ncc.nsw.gov.au)



Below are the number of lots and locations which pertain to the letterbox drop-off.

Location	Number of lots
Bar Beach Ave. (memorial Dr.- Darby St)	21
Kilgour Ave. (Helen St. – East)	5
Memorial Ave. (Parkway Ave. – Wrightson Ave.)	57
Parkway Ave. (Memorial Ave.- - Brooks St.)	33
Wrightson Ave. (No 2-8)	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>

## Print Advertisement, Newcastle Herald H2 19 Sept 2009

### Consulting with our community



## Bar Beach Cliff and Empire Park Playground

### Bar Beach

The cliff needs stabilising and we would like to hear about other enhancements to include in the project.

### Empire Park

A new playground is being planned along with other recreational facilities at Empire Park.

*Two workshops are being held to discuss forthcoming works on both sites:*

**Date: Monday 21 September**

**Time: 10am - 12noon**

**Venue: Cooks Hill Surf Club,  
Memorial Drive, Bar Beach**

**Date: Tuesday 22 September**

**Time: 6 - 8pm**

**Venue: Cooks Hill Surf Club,  
Memorial Drive, Bar Beach**

Come along and have your say about two important community assets.  
No registration necessary.



## Invitation Letters

DATE

«Salutation» «First\_Name» «Surname»

«Title»

«Organisation»

«Address1»

«Address2»

Dear «Title» «Surname»

### **INVITATION TO COMMUNITY CONSULTATION – BAR BEACH CLIFF WORKSHOPS**

Following concern regarding the long-term stability of the cliff face, we are inviting the community to discuss possible project enhancements to Bar Beach Cliff.

Each session will include maps and aerial photography of the site and allow for community input.

I am pleased to invite you to attend the workshop session planned to discuss the project and gather community input.

The workshop details are as follows:

**Time:** 2.00 - 4.00pm  
**Date:** Tuesday 22 September 2009  
**Venue:** Cooks Hill Surf Club, Memorial Drive, Bar Beach

Please register by 18 September by calling 4974 2823.

Yours sincerely,

**John Johnston**  
**ACTING MANAGER, INFRASTRUCTURE MANAGEMENT SERVICES**

DATE

«Salutation» «First\_Name» «Surname»

«Title»

«Organisation»

«Address1»

«Address2»

Dear «Title» «Surname»

### **INVITATION TO COMMUNITY CONSULTATION – EMPIRE PARK MASTERPLAN WORKSHOP**

Newcastle City Council is inviting interested local users of the park to be involved in a master planning exercise for the future direction of Empire Park.

Each session will include maps and aerial photography of the site and allow for community input.

I am pleased to invite you to attend the workshop session planned to discuss the project and gather community input.

The workshop details are as follows:

**Time: 5.30 – 7.30 pm**  
**Date: Wednesday 7 October 2009**  
**Venue: Waratah Room -City Hall**  
**King Street Newcastle**

Please register by 1 October 2009 by calling 4974 2823.

Yours faithfully,

**Rod Maughan**  
**RECREATION PROJECTS CO ORDINATER**

## Media Release

14 September 2009

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# Input wanted for Bar Beach project

Newcastle Voice members and Bar Beach enthusiasts are invited to get involved in workshops next week to discuss what improvements could be made to the area.

Liveable City Director FRANK CORDINGLEY says Bar Beach is a prominent part of Newcastle's coastal strip and a popular place for locals and visitors to the city.

"In the next 12 months council will be starting a cliff stabilisation project at Bar Beach and improvements to the amenity of the area can be included as part of the project so we need to talk to the community and see what ideas they have."

"The community will well remember 'the rock' and the works that need to be done at Bar Beach are similar to the cliff stabilisation at South Newcastle Beach. It is a big project and there will be disruptions to beach users while it is underway. However the light at the end of the tunnel is incorporating improvements into the project plan."

"These could be a whale watching platform, new pathways or even a BBQ area. What we are looking for is to get all options on the table now so we plan and budget for them."

Newcastle Voice has organised two workshops to discuss the project and ideas for improvements. Voice members and Bar Beach enthusiasts are all welcome.

**Time:** 10am to 12noon  
**Date:** Monday 21 September 2009  
**Venue:** Cooks Hill Surf Club, Memorial Drive, Bar Beach

**Time:** 6pm to 8pm  
**Date:** Tuesday 22 September 2009  
**Venue:** Cooks Hill Surf Club, Memorial Drive, Bar Beach

Please register by 18 September by calling 4974 2823.

A series of workshops about **Place Making** have also been organised in each Ward by the Newcastle Voice team. Bookings are essential call 4974 2823.

Ward 1	6.30 – 8.30pm Thursday <b>17 September</b> , The Mulubinba Room, City Hall
Ward 2	6.30 – 8.30pm Tuesday <b>29 September</b> , The Courtyard, The Jockey Club
Ward 3	6.30 – 8.30pm Thursday <b>8 October</b> , Waratah Rugby Union, Football Club
Ward 4 Club	6.30 – 8.30pm Wednesday <b>7 October</b> , The Rainbow Room, Beresfield Bowling Club

For interviews call FRANK CORDINGLEY on 4974 2409.



## Appendix IV – Participant Feedback

# Participant Feedback – community workshops

## 1. What did you particularly like about this workshop?

- The overlapping of people's desires and hopes for the areas.
- Excellent community consultation and input. Speakers were well informed and had good knowledge of the 2 areas.
- All ideas listened to – none dismissed.
- Good agenda, stuck to it. Civil discussion of some differing ideas. Well done by Anna.
- Great opportunity to hear a diversity of community opinion.
- A chance to be heard.
- The diverse ideas presented – basically we all want safety (paths, lights) and beautification (plants etc)
- Discussion at an early stage of planning.
- Public consultation and throwing around of ideas for council to consider in any redevelopment or alterations.
- Opportunity to have a say.
- All ideas considered/included. Facilitator (Anna) did not show any bias.
- Everybody's voice was heard. Many ideas were encouraged.
- Well facilitated – timing good
- Interaction with other residents, wide range of ideas.
- Hearing other people's ideas.
- Free speech.
- Ability of community input to projects.
- Open discussion. Project managers not holding back uncomfortable ideas. Tried hard to get users' wants and needs.
- Everyone got a say, lots of ideas on paper and taken away.
- Opportunity to voice opinion.
- Usage of beach and park openly discussed.
- Communication regarding future changes to the beach and park etc. Opportunity to impart problems or requests.
- It increased my knowledge of the area and its amenities. Well-controlled by Anna. Also put forward a vast array of options and ideas to the council planners.
- Ideas came from a variety of residents/users.
- Open.
- Everyone had a voice and was listened to. Kept moving along; obviously it would be nice to have more time to hear/voice opinions, but good. It finished pretty well on time.
- Opportunity to have your say.
- Pleased to see Council talking to local people.
- All the input we were encouraged to provide. Ran well.
- Opportunity to input, well run and to time. Good facilitator.

- Meeting neighbours.
- Hearing the plans for Bar Beach.
- The calling of it and the sense that it is taken seriously.
- Well run and to the topic.
- Anna's professionalism in the consultation process.
- Diversity of views.
- Opportunity to give opinion on topics of interest for our area.
- Communicating ideas about my beach – while I may not agree with them – still they are ideas.
- Free discussion – co-operative atmosphere.
- The fact that it happened.
- Blue sky mining was encouraged. We identified what is working rather than focusing on negatives.
- Open sharing of ideas – likes/dislikes.
- The open discussion from a diversified group.
- The opportunity to give my ideas about how I would like our local area be improved.

## 2. Please suggest any improvements that could be made.

- Better acoustics.
- Same process once plans are done, or reporting to attendees on outcomes.
- Not enough media to inform on this event occurring.
- Start promptly would give more time.
- Have a recorder working with the facilitator – this will speed up the process.
- Reasonably adequate, just frequent re-consultation with public needed.
- Plates for the food that is provided.
- Good as it was.
- Big clips to hang maps etc during presentation.
- Second meeting with the people who attended to assist with the fine tuning of the project.
- With expanded subjects (Bar Beach and Empire Park), time was too limited.
- Suggestion box.
- Not really – a lot was covered (if not in great detail) in the allotted times.
- Was OK.
- Weightings were absent from suggestions, eg the Norfolk Island pines suggestion from a couple appears as prominent as the desire to have no tress in the existing hang gliding area. I suspect all the neighbours should be consulted.
- Please take on board residents' ideas and concerns on this or this is a waste of time.
- Follow-up meeting.
- Perhaps trying to cover too much.
- Need a scribe in addition to the facilitator so that you can get through the program quicker.
- Start and finish times – could start and finish on time instead of late.

- Better communication to public – eg radio. Use of long and short advertising periods.

### 3. Any other comments?

- What chance of anything being done – ever?
- Don't make this another Surf House or Newcastle South rock.
- Feedback essential and progress reports.
- Small group size about right.
- Will our ideas be taken into account.
- People were talking over each other which made it hard to hear the main person talking. Would be good if the sessions could start and finish at the times stated in the session information sheets. Overall relatively satisfied with the session.
- Nearly all comments discussed at forum totally support.
- Thank you!
- Good presentation.
- Good stuff – keep doing this sort of community consultations, it's really welcomed by people.
- Well done!
- More advertising regarding meeting.
- Anna did well handling some opinions was off point.
- Hope the ideas are put to use.
- The Council officer's inability to delineate the boundary of a proposed excavation seriously impedes any rational discussion on the matter, without the facts. This could mean a reduction of 50% of the grassed picnic area above the cliff. There are better solutions.
- Should be more of this.
- Forum well run.
- Some differentiation of 'locals' from others, this is a Newcastle-wide beach.
- Limitations of budget did not encourage wider thinking.
- Council talking to residents.
- Appreciate community consultation - excellent forum, thanks.
- Plan a follow-up consultation.
- Dissatisfied with the only one option of fixing the cliff face.
- Good for the Council to ask for community input.

#### 4. Please rate your overall satisfaction with the workshop.

Completely dissatisfied	0	0%
Somewhat dissatisfied	2	4.8%
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	1	2.4%
Somewhat satisfied	26	63.4%
Completely satisfied	12	29%
TOTAL	41	100%

#### 5. Would you attend another group like this – on a different subject?

Yes 43  
No nil

**NB:** Not all participants completed a feedback sheet; not all questions were answered on each sheet received.