

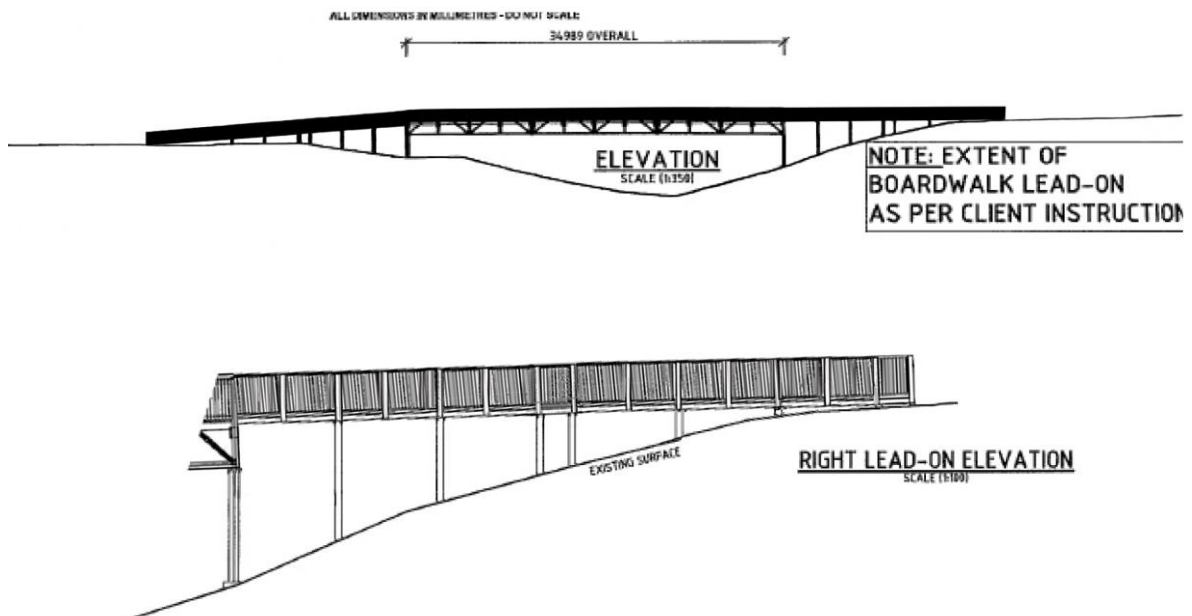


MIDCOAST
council

BROWNS CREEK BRIDGE

FEBRUARY 2020

Engagement Outcomes Report



Introduction

This report provides a summary of community consultation that was undertaken between 3 February and 21 February, 2020 to ascertain the level of support for the height proposed for the Browns Creek Bridge.

This report is presented in seven sections:

1. Introduction and background
2. What were people engaged on?
3. Who did we engage with?
4. How did people have their say?
5. What people said?
6. Summary
7. Next steps?
8. Appendix

Project background

The Browns Creek Bridge is proposed as part of the Figtrees on the Manning Masterplan development.

The proposed cycle/pedestrian bridge will link the Bicentennial Gardens to the Figtrees on the Manning development.

The proposed bridge will provide a cycle/pedestrian path from Harry Bennett Park (next to the Martin Bridge) through to the Recreation Grounds, Manning Entertainment Centre and Manning Aquatic and Leisure Centre providing improved access.

The mean high water line from the bottom of bridge construction is currently proposed at a minimum of 3.5m. With an approximate span of less than 40m it is anticipated that a single span bridge constructed off-site would provide the desired construction outcome avoiding the need for piers/bridge abutments within the creek channel.

What were people engaged on?

Purpose of engagement

The overall purpose of the engagement is for community to provide feedback that informs the decision outcomes and ascertain whether community support the proposed cycle/pedestrian bridge with a mean high water line of 3.5m.

Who did we engage with?

Consultation was targeted to businesses/residents/landowners whose properties line Browns Creek through direct mail and letterbox drop informing them of their opportunity to participate by completing a feedback form/submission by direct email.

The feedback form provided an opportunity to;
Yes, support the proposal; no, not support the proposal, or other.

How did people have their say?

28 letters were sent by mail to landowners/ratepayers to ensure if they do not reside in the property they were provided with the opportunity to participate.

A further 28 letters were letterbox dropped to the identified properties to ensure residents/tenants/ and businesses were provided with an opportunity to participate.

Each letter included a feedback slip and reply paid envelope. Each letter detailed alternative feedback methods such as email or telephone.

Communication

We completed a direct method of communication to get the word out to the community. A summary of these activities is provided in the table below:

Communication method	Date distributed	Reach
Mailed letter & letterbox drop	4 February	56 businesses/residents/landowners

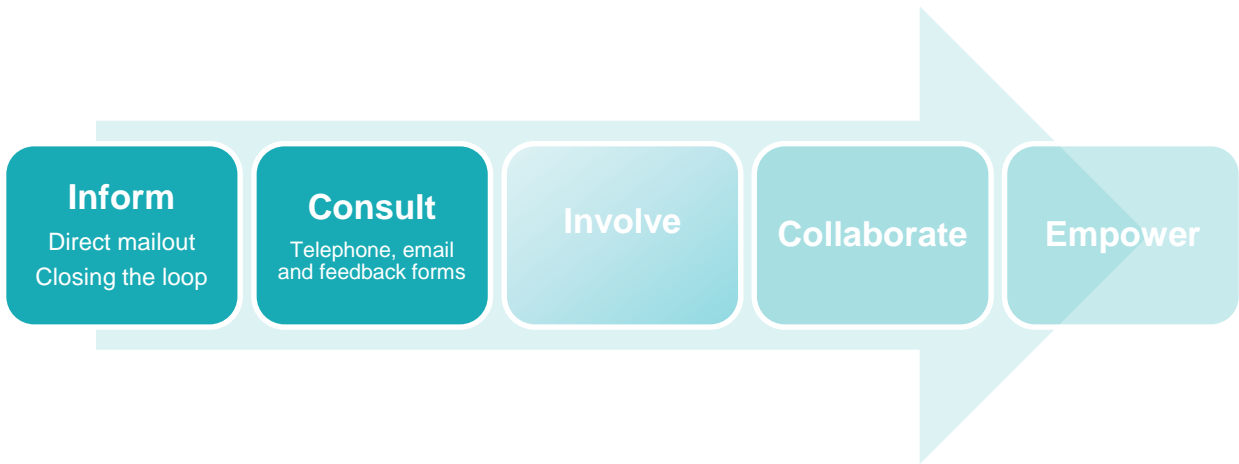
In addition, we attended The Friends of Browns Creek joint public meeting/AGM on 30 January 2020 in Taree. An agenda item included the proposed pedestrian/cycle bridge over Browns Creek linking the Bicentennial Gardens to the Figtrees on the Manning development precinct. At the meeting the Bushland Health Group presented on the grant they'd received to provide public infrastructure associated with the development precinct, with a focus on the pedestrian cycle bridge. The bridge was well supported by attendees and was seen as an important link between areas of open space. The Friends of Browns Creek advised Council staff in attendance they would like to work with Council to improve the Bicentennial Gardens (the area has been significantly drought affected) to help restore the gardens to their former glory due to the likely increase in people visiting the gardens as a result of the bridge.

Level of engagement

As outlined in MidCoast Council's Community Engagement Policy we utilise the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) five-point framework for measuring the level of community engagement for each project.

Within this scale, this project achieved an Inform /Consult /Involve level of engagement. At this level our commitment to the community was to listen to and acknowledge the benefits and limitations of the proposed design and consider these in the development of the final design.

The diagram below shows the levels of engagement and the activities undertaken within each level.



What people said?

Participants in the engagement were asked to respond to the following;

Do you:

Yes, support the proposal;

No, not support the proposal, or

Other.

We received the following responses.



Many participants took the opportunity to make additional comments, which are provided in Appendix 1.

Summary

From the 28 letters direct mailed and 28 letterbox dropped;

12 responses were received;

9 responded 'yes' in favour of the bridge, of these there were four that raised concerns in relation to the proposed height of the bridge

3 responded 'no'

While majority of the people who responded indicated they were happy with the bridge, this was not the direct issue, the issue was the height of the bridge and it is evidenced that many of those in support of the bridge are only in support of the bridge if it is higher than its current proposed height of 3.5 metres.

When the height is taken into account out of 12 responses 9 support the bridge project with 4 of the 9 raising concerns with the bridge at its current height.

From the responses received concerns were raised in relation to;

- Proposed current height of 3.5m
- Privacy
- Crime
- Flood refuge

What's next?

The engagement data contained in this report will be used to inform on the outcomes of the consultation.

Once a decision has been made by Council the project will progress to a detailed design phase or further investigation be undertaken.

A copy of this report will be made publicly available on Council's website following Council's decision.

Appendix

1. Additional comments

Appendix 1

Additional Comments

Browns Creek Bridge Additional Comments

1	<p>I am in favour of a bridge across Brown's Creek but the plans you have sent me, I feel, are not up to standard. I currently have a 25ft boat moored at the front of my residence at Crescent Ave, because of dangerous conditions last week during the flood.</p> <p>I understand the standard for a bridge over a navigable creek or river is a minimum of 4 metres above high water mark. Your drawings do not show this height. The bridge in this case should be even higher as for years Brown's Creek has been used as a flood refuge.</p> <p>As we go higher and the fact I am a keen cyclist, the law, as I understand it, the cycle track must have a maximum rise of 1 in fifteen which is not very steep.</p> <p>I, with a friend, put a submission to Council when this was discussed some years past. We surveyed the area and submitted a plan to Council. Our bridge and approaches were a lot longer than shown on the plan if all proper criteria are followed.</p>
2	<p>We have been given the opportunity to voice any concerns of the proposed cycle/pedestrian bridge as our property lines this development. We have many opinions and concerns over this proposal as the privacy of our house will be severely affected. Please take the time to read through this email and consider all the different aspects we have included.</p> <p>We believe that the 'Figtrees on the Manning' project will be such as asset to our community and will drastically enhance the area, bringing in people from out of area as well as bringing the community together in a positive aspect. HOWEVER the placement of this pedestrian bridge and walk way will either be a positive improvement to the place we live or will dramatically decrease our home value and affect our everyday life. I have attached several photos to back up what I am saying as it is hard to express over an email.</p> <p>Our home faces south, directly over this new proposal, therefore our entire living area, master bedroom & kitchen/dining area have large glass windows and doors facing the river. This means that if the cycle/pedestrian path is for some reason moved off the train line and onto the raised land beside it, every person using this path will have a direct view straight into those areas and there is no way to build a fence or have a shrub high enough to give us any privacy and with having young children this is a major concern for us. If the path is ON the train line like the online master plan indicates than we will be able to grow a small hedge to maintain our privacy.</p> <p>This brings us to our next concern. We noticed the developer discussing two possible placements of this cycle/pedestrian bridge. The first photo attached to this email named "Bridge Placement" indicates the two areas the developer and surveyor were discussing but clearly points out the placement of the bridge that we DO NOT support vs the placement of the bridge that we do support. This again comes down to privacy. The placement marked in red that we do not support is directly in front of our house and will be impossible to have the blinds open in our master bedroom and living area. The position marked in blue is the area we do support and is a much better access from the bicentennial gardens as well as the walking path being located on the lower train line level. The second photo named "View from Gardens" is the placement we would like to see finalised and was taken from the gardens looking across towards our residence.</p> <p>Our final concern and that which we share with our neighbours is linking two of the biggest notorious drug taking hotspots. 1 being the gardens themselves and 2 being the old pumping station that we had to contact John Holland rail about boarding up as a man nearly</p>

	<p>lost his life there and children would climb up and play on the roof. We believe to eradicate both these issues would be firstly the erection of this bridge, opening up the gardens and allowing it to be a thoroughfare and secondly to be demolishing the pump station as shown in the final photo "Pump Station". I have spoken with most of the neighbours and know that all of us in Nelson Street and those at the beginning of Pitt Street all want to see this building demolished and will petition for the removal.</p> <p>We support the removal of any trees/shrubs to make this proposal a reality as the thoroughfare will clean up and support the environment rather than the overgrown, weed filled, fire hazard it was before the beginning of this proposal. We also support and encourage the lowering of the land on the southern side of the train line for walkway aesthetic, privacy and easy council maintenance.</p> <p>All in all we believe that this will be a benefit to our community but only support the bridge proposal if all the concerns we have are addressed and consideration is taken for our family and neighbours homes too. We are happy to have onsite discussions if any of these points are not clear and would love to see a response and acknowledgement of the items I have brought to you today.</p> <p>Thankyou for your consideration and time taken to read through this email.</p>
3	<p>I am responding to a letter we received regarding the Figtrees on the Manning-pedestrian bridge. After many years of living on acres we purchased a property in Crescent Ave about 5 years ago. Our residence is not right on Crescent Ave but we are situated at the back of 20 Crescent Ave on Browns Creek itself. The main reason we purchased this property was because our family of 5 are all keen boating and fishing enthusiasts and our property has direct access to Browns Creek via a slipway from our garage where we house a boat. Although not being totally against the idea of a pedestrian/cycleway, we would like to know if the plan of management as far as the bridge is concerned, will have decent elevation spanning across the river as to not interrupt us being able to get our boats out into the Manning River from Browns Creek. We also have friends that sometimes come up to visit us via their leisure craft boat which is much bigger than ours. I certainly hope the residents that do have access to the Manning River via Browns Creek are taken into consideration before any final decisions are made as any hasty decisions on a flat pedestrian bridge could be very detrimental to a number of residents along Crescent Ave.</p>
4	<p>Our property, owned by us for 11 + years, currently has unimpeded protected deep water access to the Manning River via our waterfrontage to Brown's Creek. The property is approximately 75 metres from the Manning River.</p> <p>Although we do not currently own a boat, we have been renovating our property with the intention of building a pontoon and purchasing a boat. The type of boat we are interested in buying is a cabin cruiser or a small flybridge style fishing boat (see attached photos for examples). These types of boats require a clearance of between 2.5 and 3.5 metres to drive under a bridge and a draft of approximately 0.6 to 1.0 metre.</p> <p>Your advice that the proposed bridge will be 3.5 metres above high water mark would mean that the type of boats we are interested in would have clearance, however a higher rather than lower height would be our preference, given we already have unimpeded access to the Manning and we would prefer to not have onerous tidal restrictions imposed on our use of the waterway. It would be preferable if the pedestrian bridge spanned the creek without pylons obstructing the waterway. It would also be preferable that if the opposite banks of the creek are of different heights, that the bridge itself be constructed to be flat rather than</p>

	<p>on a slope to allow maximum clearance for a large vessel in the centre of the creek rather than being forced to manoeuvre to one side.</p> <p>We envisage a bridge constructed of steel or aluminium with timber decking would be attractive and practical.</p> <p>We expect that the vertical clearance for boats would be 3.5 metres at highest astronomical tide to the bottom of any support structures underneath the bridge and that it will be built to the National Construction Code and relevant Australian Standards.</p> <p>We have been advised that important considerations in building the bridge include “future proofing” the structure for the next 50-100 years. In relation to this we would like to make the following comments:</p> <p>Under the current b6 Enterprise Corridor zoning of our property, tourism is obviously an important element given the current number of motels on Brown’s Creek. We feel that consideration of the future potential use of Brown’s Creek for tourism activities should form part of any decision-making on the height of the proposed bridge. My husband grew up in a canal estate in Sydney that has been in place now for 55 years and can personally vouch for the hugely increased usage of the canals in that time by large vessels. In our view building a pedestrian bridge of too low a height will unnecessarily constrain the use of Brown’s Creek by both residents and potential tourism operators in the future.</p> <p>The development of “Figtrees on the Manning” will in itself generate greater interest in the Brown’s Creek area. We would like to assume that the current and future residents of Crescent Avenue with frontages to Brown’s Creek will have similar right of access to the Manning that the development itself will have, given the local area strategy for the development states the “promotion of tourism, provision of water front activities, boating and marinas and water based tourism” as the main objectives.</p> <p>In summary, we are not against a cycleway or a bridge, and understand the importance of the pedestrian bridge both in the context of the overall strategy of the Figtrees development and in government “healthy living” initiatives, however we also ask that reasonable height restrictions be considered for Brown’s Creek residents given the creek’s deep waterfrontage status. Our personal experience of a 55 year old deep water canal in Sydney is that with population increases over time, the usage by larger watercraft of such a waterway will inevitably also increase. With the projected large population increases likely in Taree in coming years, we see it as imperative that not only the design and structure of the bridge be future proofed, but also the residential and tourism potential of the Brown’s Creek area.</p>
5	Does not support the bridge - at any height - neighbours have boats, the biggest issue is the bicentennial - drug exchange, linking elements of danger, we should really be investigating crime statistics for this area - especially before linking one area to another via a bridge
6	Am not completely against the idea but our home is directly on Browns Creek and we have direct access to creek and manning river. We would need to know elevation measurements as we have boats.
7	I own a house in Nelson Street and have often wondered why the foreshore at the end of Nelson Street is so neglected, the old railway line is still there as is the abandoned concrete pump-house and the remains of a jetty. The old pump house until recently was often a magnet for undesirables who would hang around down there and occasionally start a fire, since it's been sealed up that problem has been minimised. However, that area looks like it badly needs some attention. So the news that a bridge across Browns Creek that will link the foreshore on the Taree side with the foreshore on the Chatham side is an excellent idea! Taree has a lovely river-side aspect which is limited by the Browns Creek and this bridge will enhance this river-side aspect and make it possible for many people to access Taree and Chatham without going near the main road. It will also clean up this untidy part

	of the foreshore and hopefully remove that ugly concrete pump house and jetty, making it less attractive to the undesirables and more attractive to families. I wholeheartedly support this development and hope it gets approved promptly.
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