

Forster Community Conversation – 17 April 2019

Q1. Change the Forster hours so working people can attend

A. Traditionally we have held the Forster sessions during the day as attendance of an evening has been very poor, however we will take this on board and when conducting the next round of conversations will schedule the Forster meeting during the evening.

Q2. Why register questions. You should not have to think about the answers

A. Questions do not need to be registered, this is an option for those who may not feel comfortable asking questions at the gathering or who are unable to attend and wish to receive an answer to their question. At each session there have been a number of questions from the floor and this is very much welcomed.

Q3. Why won't Council publish its detailed organisation chart with incumbent's names?

A. Our organisational chart is published on our website to provide a guide to the community on our functional areas of management. All enquiries from the general public on issues relating to Council should be addressed through our customer service system – either via a request on our website or via our customer service phone line and it is then directed to the best person to handle the enquiry.

Q4. Why can't the drainage channels at the back of the Forster bowling club and near the bus depot in Kularoo Drive be properly and continually maintained; for a Council that likes to fly it's "environmentally responsible" flag these areas are a disgrace and a breeding area for all manner of vermin?

A. The open drain is a grass lined channel that is infrequently slashed as required. It is not identified as a recreational area and therefore is maintained or mown regularly. The channel is designed to minimise ponding of runoff whilst maximising drainage.

Q5. Why can't the "bullring" pool be more regularly maintained to keep the water cleaner, less smelly and refreshed; even flushing every two weeks without full water blasting each time would help?

A. The current maintenance schedule on the bullring sees the pool completely drained, all algal growth pressure cleaned from all walls, ladders and access points and sand changed over once a month during February to November. This process is undertaken twice a month during the peak swimming time of December and January. Once a year we repaint the pool.

Q6. When is Beach Street Road in Harrington going to be repaired to an acceptable standard.

A. This section has been identified as a priority for major rehabilitation and is included in next year's capital works program, with pavement investigation and design already underway.

- Q7. What is happening with the proposed dog park in Dolphin Reserve Harrington?**
- A. Plans are progressing for the dog park.
- Q8. Why can't Council management be more transparent in the decision making processes for major capital expenditure projects risks, project data and assumptions, total costs etc.??**
- A. All Council decision making processes in regards to major capital expenditure are undertaken in line with the Office of Local Government guidelines and information is reported to Councillors who have been elected by the community to make decisions on their behalf. There are strict rules around the information councils can keep confidential, all other information is reported as required.
- Q9. Children are often considered second to the aged in most considerations with budgets. How will Council ensure equality in budget considerations so that children are provided with the best start in life and all ages groups are involved within their communities particularly children who are on the fringes due to no fault of their own?**
- A. We have a Community Strengthening team that is focused on providing services and advocating for various sections of the community including youth. We have a youth officer who is employed to provide a range of services, activities and programs to the youth of the area.
- Q10. When will Mid Coast council totally ban all plastic bags from the MidCoast area?**
- A. Plastic bag bans are currently put in place through legislation at State Government level. There is currently no State-wide plastic bag ban in NSW. MidCoast Council, and its various waste partners, actively promote recycling messages and provide information on how to recycle various forms of plastics.
- Q11. "The Centre for Policy Development found 71% of Australians believe ordinary citizens should have a greater say in setting the priorities of all tiers of government. The same research found that 68% of Australians would support involving citizens on parliamentary committees" Rebecca Huntley's "Australia's Fair Listening to the Nation"
Can Council consider a renewed form of social democracy by forming a citizens committee to sit alongside or separate to elected councillors?**
- A. We have been working on a Community Engagement Strategy which outlines how we will engage with our community into the future. This will be placed on public exhibition and the community will have the opportunity to provide feedback on this.
- Q12. I would like to see more detail about the community space in the new civic precinct - size, layout, performing facilities and possibilities. I currently organise the Taree Eisteddfod concerts, and would like to organise similar events in Forster. I am/have been involved in many music/drama/dance /vocal performances. Would like to see what planning might be involved in this space.**
- A. We have information on the Forster Civic Precinct project on our website <https://www.midcoast.nsw.gov.au/Council/Works-and-Projects/Council-Projects/Forster-Civic-Precinct-Development> this will continue to be updated as the project progresses, and we encourage you to keep an eye on this space.

Q13. Barking Dogs. The council procedure for residents to have dog owners prevent their dogs from continuous barking is tedious, long winded and ineffective. In Smiths Lake where approximately 50% of the housing stock is rental holiday accommodation and much of it "pet friendly" the number of dogs in the town can be expected to double during holiday periods. With few visitors staying more than seven days, a 14-day diary noting the times dogs bark is redundant. We need a new procedure?

A. We are currently reviewing our procedures, however barking dogs come under the Protection of the Environment Operations Act, and there are certain criteria the barking must meet to enable action to be taken by Council. While we acknowledge barking dogs are an issue across the area, to be dealt with it must be shown the barking is having a significant impact.

Q14. Can you tell me what happens to the green waste collected in Forster? I rang the Tuncurry waste centre to inquire about accessing mulch (in Taree, residents can access free mulch for gardens) but was informed that the green waste from Forster ends up in landfill and is 'capped over'. If this is true doesn't this contradict the Council's aims? Can the local green waste be mulched and made accessible to residents? Also can council consider providing native tube stock?

A. Green waste collected at the Tuncurry site is mulched and used at the Tuncurry landfill as capping. The green waste from Forster area does not end up in landfill, it is reused onsite. The recently closed landfill is being progressively capped and the green waste/mulch is used, as part of the EPA licence conditions, as a protective layer on the top of the landfill. It is anticipated that mulch will be available to the public once the landfill capping is complete. We do prepare tube stock for use by Landcare and Dune care groups, as well as our own revegetation projects, however at this stage our nursery does not have the scale and capacity to provide tube stock more widely.

Q15. Weed invasion is recognised as a major threat to biodiversity. The proliferation of previously absent weeds on local roads in the Pacific Palms area following road repair & maintenance by Council has become common. This is a major concern as roads pass through National Parks & many of these weeds are being spread in imported materials or on machinery. What steps are undertaken by the road teams to prevent weed distribution and what funding is available for weed control post roadworks?

A. Council teams control the vegetation alongside most sealed roads to improve roads safety. We also conduct weed inspections on both private and public land throughout the area. Where weeds are identified, appropriate actions are used to manage them.

Q16. What is happening regarding the proposal by Club Forster to build a new \$10M club and facilities for the Forster Surf Life Saving Club? Has a DA been lodged?

A. This is a proposal only at this stage – no DA has been lodged.

Q17. Are there any long-term plans for improving access to Forster by increasing the width of the Forster-Tuncurry bridge?

A: This road and bridge is owned and operated by the State Government. It is not under the control of Council. We are aware the State is undertaking a study to look at optimising traffic flow in this area and to allow for future planning. The challenge is the benefit of investing in infrastructure to deal with a peak period of two months over

December – January, when the infrastructure is fit for purpose for a large part of the rest of the year.

Q18. How can we go about volunteering for Council?

A. Volunteers play a vital and valuable role in the provision of services across the MidCoast region. There are many areas in which you can volunteer your services and skills with Council. If you are interested, find out more information on <https://www.midcoast.nsw.gov.au/Community/People/Volunteering>

Q19. Why has not a path around the north side of Smiths Lake been constructed by Council on the Crown Reserve managed by Council? The path was first planned by Great Lakes Council in 1986, and updated in a Feasibility Assessment in 2009. Good planning. No implementation for a path around the lake in a town without footpaths.

A. There is no funding for this work at this point in time.

Top priorities

1. Cycle ways/footpaths
2. Shade parks/playgrounds/kid facilities
3. Beautification/Facilities for community
4. Performing Arts Facilities
5. Access to Forster

Full list of priorities identified

Group one priorities

1. Main beach improvement
 - a. More parking
 - b. Less encroachment on existing
 - c. Toilet and change rooms
 - d. Toilet roll holder placement
 - e. Shade
2. Shade
3. Maintenance of reserves
4. Beautifying of reserves
5. Long term road and bridge access to Forster
6. Water safety i.e. speed limits
7. Facilities for children – outdoor
8. Cycleway/walkways
9. Fitness stations
10. Development fees – house
11. Recycling centre for mulch in Forster

Group two priorities

1. Pedestrian Walkway for Smith Lake
2. Coast walk
3. Cycleway - lakeside roadside
4. Support for Tuncurry Hall and historical preservation
5. Facilities for performing arts
6. Civic precinct needs to be accessible and affordable
7. Shade cloth for children’s playground
8. Dump point for both Marine and RV’s – RV friendly region
9. More parks and promenades
10. Civilian Jury
11. Community leaders to be included in the consultation process
12. Councils land manager of Crown land reserve
13. Close the wharf street 2 story car park in the back
14. Forster surf club requires an urgent upgrade including special needs facilities and accessibility
15. Sustainability
16. Barking dogs – council compliance
17. Council communication needs to improve including their electronic communication