

Pacific Palms – 22 October 2019

Discussion summary

A presentation was given on the planning history of the Pacific Palms and the conservation areas that now exist to protect the natural environment and restrict development in the area.

There was an interest from those gathered in planning issues, weed control and improving the recreational activities available in Pacific Palms – particularly the need for a playground and bike tracks.

Council staff reported on how we plan to deliver the top five priorities from the Community Conversation held at Pacific Palms earlier in the year. Those present were invited to contribute suggestions on the detail of these projects to assist in our delivery.

Below are the top five priorities that were raised from the first round of community conversations and the commitment from council.

Top five priorities identified in round one

1. Retain unique character and protect the environment

We presented on the history of planning in the Pacific Palms area and the controls and protections currently in place to ensure the character and environment of Pacific Palms is protected. (Refer to the Ecology presentation attached separately).

2. Sustainable development

An education program will be developed that clearly explains the development assessment process and how it links to the history of planning in the Pacific Palms area.

3. Access to bike paths/footpath tracks and foreshore walks

Many communities have asked for improvements to the footpath network in their area, including cycle ways. A Pedestrian Access and Mobility Plan (PAMP) is the first step in addressing this.

The PAMP will provide a framework for developing pedestrian routes and infrastructure to cater for the needs of all pedestrians; including older persons, people with mobility or visual impairments, young children, tourists, cyclists and recreational pedestrians.

The PAMP is being developed in conjunction with a Bike Plan which will identify opportunities for developing and enhancing pedestrian and cycle related activities and attractions for community members and visitors.

There is an emphasis on the development of commuter pathways as well as acknowledging the importance of recreational cycling for a healthy community. We will be consulting with the community on the development of the PAMP in **Pacific Palms on 26 November at 11am.**

4. Promoting tourism – off season

The Growth, Economic Development and Tourism team are implementing the MidCoast Destination Management Plan which supports off season tourism, with a tactical marketing campaign for next winter scheduled to start around March/April. The team will also work collaboratively with event and other tourism operators to develop more off season opportunities.

5. Community spaces/recreation areas

Many communities have asked for improvements to community spaces and recreation areas. MidCoast Council recognises the social, environmental and economic importance of recreation to the community. In recognition of this importance the Community Spaces, Recreation and Trades team has committed to commissioning a Recreation Strategy for the MidCoast Local Government Area.

The Recreation Strategy will provide the overarching framework and strategic direction for the planning and improvement of recreation facilities and services. The purpose of the strategy will be to identify opportunities to improve the provision and quality of recreation facilities by developing a clear understanding of the current supply and demand of recreation facilities in conjunction with the needs of the current and future population.

Further feedback from the community on top five priorities

Retain unique character and protect the environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Buy lot 54 back at 134 Amaroo Drive Smiths Lake• Retain, sustain• Sustainable and appropriate development for the beaches
Sustainable development	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Traffic management at the new supermarket in Charlotte Bay• Blueys shops parking area needs to be improved• Traffic calming/slowing devices at Blueys shopping precinct• Sustainable and appropriate development protects our unique environment• The council to look after the public toilets at the visitor centre. Now only open from 10am-3pm. Needs to be open 24/7• Why is there 7-day restricted parking at the bus-stop outside the motel? The last bus on Saturday and Sundays (the busiest time) leaves at 10am• Traffic Management Plan in Charlotte Bay• Roundabout needed at Blueys shops

<p>Access to bike paths/footpath tracks and foreshore walks</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A bicycle plan needed from Tarbuck to Elizabeth Beach • Smiths Lake crown reserve walking track as proposed and detailed in the former Great Lakes Council surveys
<p>Promoting tourism – off season</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do we need a “rest period” from tourism in the off-peak/winter season? • Dollar for dollar grants for tourism operations are used as they only attract people during school holidays • Need to attract people who are not tied down to school holidays • Do this by subsidised off season holidays – book 1 week in a home outside holidays and receive \$100 on arrival as an example. Occupancy rates will soar and business will prosper. • Much more effective than the \$100,000 grants that tourism NSW offers
<p>Community spaces/recreation areas</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Circular bike track for school children and broader community (Boomerang Drive → Lakes Way → Lakeside Crescent) • Smiths Lake playground needs to be safer and completed • Smiths Lake crown reserve walking track • Bike path from South Elizabeth to North Boomerang • Netball courts at Pacific Palms to be fixed and maintained • Picnic spaces around the lake fronts • Playground at Blueys between Kembali and the motel

Q & A session

Q1: What is Council doing to support the community to protect the natural environment from weed infestations?

A: Council has implemented a Backyard Bushcare program in Pacific Palms that is about engaging communities in actively managing weeds in their own spaces. This will extend to Smiths Lake soon. We recognise we need to work with the community to protect our natural environment. We also have a program of auditing all our natural places and this will inform strategic decision making around where we will prioritise interventions to reduce weeds.

Q2: Can there be something done about the parking allocations to houses?

A: While car parks are required to align with the size of the property, we know parking does become an issue when a home is leased for holiday accommodation and more than two cars are present. We have partnered with Destination North Coast recently to support a survey they have undertaken on a range of issues that arise from Airbnb type accommodation in residential areas.

Q3: Is the reason you can't do all of these projects because of the cost of the Masters office relocation?

A: No, the office relocation project has a separate funding strategy, that is available on our website. The funding for that project is separate to operational funding for the projects discussed for the Pacific Palms areas.

Q4: Why aren't we fixing footpaths, we have said before this is something that is important?

A: We have heard that this is a priority, which is why we are getting our Pedestrian Access and Mobility Plan underway, along with a Bike Plan. Consultation is coming up in November – 26 November at 11am for Pacific Palms. A draft plan will then be on exhibition for public comment before implementation.

Q5: Why run triathlons on Saturdays? These events are of debatable economic benefit, yet are to the detriment of those living in Pacific Palms. It impacts on those who have to go into Forster-Tuncurry for work on Saturdays. How about Sundays?

A: There is huge economic benefit to the community as it not only brings approx. 1,000 competitors and officials, and also their families to the area – many of these come back on holidays at some stage as they can see what we have to offer in the area. We understand that a Saturday is not the best day for the Pacific Palms community due to work / sport / shopping etc but it does increase the overnight stays to mostly include Friday and Saturday instead of just Saturday. This increases the economic benefit to the area as the extra people in town spend money on shopping, meals etc. Whether the event is held on Saturday or Sunday it will inconvenience some people. The Lakes Way is closed for approx. four hours – we do work in with the organisers about the time of year the event is held especially around the times where there is limited sport on to try and minimise the impact. We do take the impact to the community seriously during our assessment and if we believe the benefit is outweighed by the impact, we discuss this with the organisers to come up with other solutions. The event organisers are conscious of the need to minimise the negative impacts on the local community. As an example, they altered the event to help accommodate competitors for a bowling event taking place at Pacific Palms.

Q6: What can be done to beautify and clean up the area at the Smiths Lake bus shelter? Both the bus shelter itself needs attention and the area around it, dirt was piled up there and moved, but rocks have been left so the park still can't be used.

A: We have initiated investigations into the Smiths Lake bus shelter and will update the community as a strategy to improve the shelter and surrounding area is determined.