

## 3. COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

### 3.1 Introduction

Community consultation has been an important component of the plan of management process. Warringah Council has promoted an open, transparent approach to community consultation, providing opportunities for all stakeholders and members of the community to contribute comments and submissions or to discuss specific issues.

### 3.2 Community Feedback

Significant effort was made to contact adjoining residents and stakeholders, including government departments and utilities, for land parcels included in this plan of management. Approximately 1500 letters, including a feedback form, were delivered for the purpose of assisting Warringah Council in the preparation of this generic plan of management. The community was asked to respond to three main questions as follows: -

- Why is the parcel of community land important to you, or to the local community?
- What types of community uses or activities do you think would be suitable for this site?
- What do you consider to be the most important issues in the management of this site?

Warringah Council received almost 200 written submissions on the feedback forms and in letters, plus a form letter from 221 residents of the Belrose Country Club retirement village. A broad range of community values, uses and issues were identified (refer to *Appendix IV: Summary of Responses to Community Consultation*).

The draft Plan of Management was placed on public exhibition for a minimum period of 28 days and a submission period of 42 days between Monday 28 February 2005 to Monday 11 April 2005. Eight (8) submissions were received during this period.

The Plan of Management was prepared taking into account the issues raised during this period, as well as the Independent Public Hearing Report, which was prepared by Council by an Independent Chairperson (refer to *Appendix V: Public Hearing Report for categorisation of Community Land*).

### 3.3 Community Issues

Community issues are important factors in determining management options. A broad range of issues continue to affect the integrity of these miscellaneous land parcels, particularly with respect to natural, cultural, social, aesthetic and recreational values.

A large proportion of the correspondence received by Council raised concerns over perceived development issues in relation to bushland and buffer strips and potential loss of amenity values for neighbouring residents. Other important issues included the following: -

- Protection of private property (e.g. flooding/ bushfire risk);
- Public accessibility and linkages;
- Rubbish dumping, weed management and general maintenance;
- Landscape embellishment (more trees/ shrubs);
- Noise attenuation/ buffers;
- Lighting;
- Outdoor/ park furniture;
- Vandalism, anti-social behaviour and security;

- Traffic congestion and parking;
- Public land encroachments and private use.

A number of written requests were made for the purchase or transfer of public land. In some instances, there was confusion over the subject land parcels, especially in relation to very narrow buffer strips adjoining larger open space (e.g. Belrose corridor). The letter from Council also prompted a relatively high level of concern over possible changes to the status quo. Many of the issues raised by respondents were followed up in discussions with Council staff.

Issues raised during the consultation process (although not ranked in any order) can be summarised into three key areas – environmental management, public access/ infrastructure and adjoining property issues, including encroachments onto public land.

The exclusive occupation or use of community land by any individual or group is prohibited under Section 47D of the *Local Government Act* 1993, unless it is in accordance with a lease, licence or other estate. Leases, licences and estates may be granted subject to requirements of the *Local Government Act* and must be authorised in a plan of management. It is important for the community to understand that occupation or use of public land is considered an encroachment when no authorisation has been granted. Encroachments will be investigated by Council to assess existing use rights before compliance procedures are instituted to remove unauthorised structures or prevent prohibited use.

A key issue, which was not raised in the community consultation process, refers to the management of fragmented and vestigial components of former native bushland occurring on these land parcels. There are many examples of remnant native trees and/ or fragmented understorey components which have been retained in mown grass. These native elements are part of Warringah's natural heritage and are a vital part of its landscape character. In many instances, these native remnants have either highly restricted or no opportunities for natural regeneration or recruitment under the current maintenance regime. Indiscriminate mowing, slashing and edging practices are a continuing threat to the long-term durability and resilience of these remnant components. Furthermore, unless these practices are appropriately modified it is likely that these significant native remnants will be lost over time. It is important therefore that current maintenance practices are reviewed and modified to provide sustainable outcomes for the future (refer to *5.1 Action Plan – items MG1-MG7*).

For further discussion of issues refer to selected comments in *Appendix IV*.