

Minutes

Manly Warringah War Memorial State Park Advisory Committee Meeting

Held on Monday 25 November 2025 at Civic Centre, 725 Pittwater Road, Dee Why in the Flannel Flower Room and online commencing at 5:00pm

ATTENDANCE

Committee Members

Cr Kristyn Glanville	Northern Beaches Councillor
Cr Robert Giltinan	Northern Beaches Councillor

Community Members

David Beharrell	Environment Representative
Paul Lidgard	Recreational Representative
Robert Baker	Community Representative

State Government Representatives

Mel Hall	NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service
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Council Officers

Jeremy Smith	Executive Manager, Parks and Open Space
Damian Ham	Manager, Open Space Planning
Scot Hedge	Manager, Park Assets – Planning Design & Delivery
Jodie Crawford	Manager, Coast & Catchments
Jone Wright	Environment Officer – Coast and Catchments

Apologies

Paul Harper	Crown Lands, Natural Resource Management Project Officer
Stephen Hartley	Manager, Parks Operations

1.0 ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

2.0 WELCOME

3.0 APOLOGIES

- Paul Harper, Crown Lands, Natural Resource Management Project Officer
- Stephen Hartley, Manager, Parks Operations

4.0 DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

- None

5.0 UPDATE ON ACTIONS FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS & PLAN OF MANAGEMENT

The Advisory Committee were updated on the status of Actions and updates were provided by Council Officers in attendance:

5.1 Water skiing governance, safety and potential winter access sharing

The committee discussed whether the Plan of Management needs to change for the power boat zone or if a council resolution alone is sufficient. Jeremy Smith advised that changing the permitted times for water skiing requires approval via council resolution, whereas changing the power boat zone requires an amendment to the Plan of Management. Approving a new / amended plan of management requires approval from council and the State government.

Jeremy Smith noted that while the new Plan of Management is years away and not a priority at this time, the committee will need to strongly consider water-skiing because, despite the issues, it provides an important opportunity for recreation on the Northern Beaches. He advised that seeking approval for a buffer area or safe passage may trigger a new application for a water-skiing area (zone), and the State have indicated that the zone's boundaries may require review and assessment against current standards. A discussion was had on water ski safety.

Cr Glanville requested that staff seek advice regarding safety standards and compliance with these standards under a legal lens, noting if Council is aware of a potential risk, it may create liability. Jeremy Smith indicated he will refer the matter for review while reiterating that water-skiing at Manly Dam remains an approved arrangement.

The committee also discussed the data for January to October 2025. The data confirms that water-skiing activity is extremely low during winter months, with some periods showing virtually no usage. While this does not change the formal process for any permanent changes, the committee acknowledged that these figures strengthen the case for exploring shared access with other recreational users, such as kayakers, during the off-season.

Members were advised that previous reports showed similar trends. A discussion was then held on whether low winter utilisation should trigger a review of arrangements to allow greater flexibility for other users, and how such sharing could be initiated without altering the current approvals. Jeremy Smith advised that changing the permitted times for water skiing requires approval via council resolution.

Jeremy Smith noted that any formal change would not be a small body of work. It would require consultation with stakeholders and the community, which demands resources not currently allocated. However, if Council decides to initiate consultation, staff will accommodate that process. Jeremy acknowledged the usage trend remains consistent with previous findings, including very low winter use and reiterated that Council previously considered this issue and chose not to proceed with changes at that time.

Cr Glanville asked whether there is a process for the committee to formally refer matters to Council. Jeremy Smith advised that there is no separate referral process; the committee provides its advice back to Council through the Councillor representatives and staff.

The committee agreed on a two-pronged approach. Firstly, Council staff will approach the Water Ski Club to suggest voluntarily reducing their hours during low-use winter periods to provide greater recreational access for the community, supported by the usage data presented. Secondly, Councillors to consider a Notice of Motion.

NEW ACTION:

1. Council to review the power boat zone boundaries in light of relevant legislation and relevant standards in particular related to safety and in consultation with relevant State government agencies and report back. *(Task assigned to Executive Manager)*
2. Staff to re-engage the Water Ski Club and discuss the possibility of voluntarily reducing water-skiing hours during winter, with the aim of increasing access for other recreational users – noting that changing the permitted times for water skiing requires approval via council resolution. Report back. *(Task assigned to Open Space Planning)*

5.2 Volunteer participation and corporate volunteering

Members advocated for more structured volunteer opportunities to support bush regeneration and maintenance in high-use areas.

Staff advised that current works are delivered under contractual arrangements, while volunteer efforts have focused on bush regeneration activities such as tree planting. Mel Hall raised the potential for corporate volunteering, noting that such programs often bring additional resources and funding. The committee agreed that expanding volunteer opportunities would require a structured approach, including identifying priority areas, ensuring supervision, and addressing insurance and compliance requirements under Council's volunteer policy.

Cr Glanville expressed concern that relying solely on contractors for works may not be sufficient, noting that some areas of the park appear degraded. Cr Glanville suggested a more holistic approach to volunteer involvement, with volunteers helping maintain the park beyond bush regeneration, including weed removal and general upkeep. Cr Glanville also highlighted that volunteer programs could serve as a way to build relationships between different stakeholders, as usage within the dam is often contested. Activities such as planting together could foster collaboration and reduce conflict. The committee agreed that exploring structured volunteer opportunities could improve park condition and strengthen community engagement.

Paul Lidgard mentioned that volunteers have for many years successfully assisted with mountain bike trail maintenance with the support of Council.

Damian Ham mentioned that from time to time corporate volunteers undertake planting activities at Manly Dam. Council provides supervision, personal protective equipment and materials for volunteers at Manly Dam.

It was noted that managing volunteers effectively is a significant task that requires resources and funding.

NEW ACTION:

1. Council to investigate options for additional and more structured volunteering opportunities at Manly Dam, including but not limited to maintenance and bush regeneration and report back. *(Task assigned to Park Operations)*

5.3 Picnic Areas 3 & 4 – options refinement and engagement

Scot Hedge updated the Committee on the Picnic areas 3 and 4 upgrade project. Notes from recent meetings have been consolidated and distributed to the Committee. The plan will be refined in line with these notes. Two access corridor options remain under consideration, road alignment versus foreshore boardwalk, with both options requiring assessment including of vegetation impacts and pedestrian safety.

Accessibility stakeholders will be consulted, including disability advocacy groups, to inform inclusive design outcomes.

Project briefs this project will be prepared as part of the annual business planning and budget process, with design and construction currently scheduled across the 2026/27–2027/28 cycles. Further updates will be provided.

5.4 Bookings transparency and lead times

Damian Ham gave an overview of the booking process for online Manly Dam picnic table bookings and payments and the real-time access to what's available on Council's website. Complex bookings for events and seasonal field allocations require longer lead times than a picnic table booking due to the assessment of risks, scheduling, site preparation such as line-marking and playing surface preparation, impacts on other use and nearby residents. Approved seasonal sports field allocations are now published online for transparency, and recent improvements allow users to view which associations hold bookings and their allocated times.

The committee noted that this agenda item was intended to address water-skiing bookings. Damian Ham confirmed that water-skiing bookings by the water-ski club are visible online and can be accessed from a Manly Dam webpage on Council's website.

The committee noted upcoming events at Manly Dam, as advertised in the recent Council newsletter, including activities such as night walks scheduled through early December. It was acknowledged that events are not held on a regular basis and often rely on grant opportunities or sponsorship to support delivery. The committee discussed that events present a good opportunity to promote initiatives such as dog compliance education and volunteering for bush regeneration.

5.5 Entry/signage (solar-powered electronic signs)

An outstanding action from an earlier meeting relates to installing solar-powered electronic signs at key trailheads to indicate open/closed status. Quotes have been sought from several suppliers; one response received to date was for a large unit priced at approximately \$19,000, which is considered the upper limit and not recommended. Staff are exploring smaller, fit-for-purpose options and will continue to obtain quotes. The proposed units include battery storage and remote messaging capability.

Members discussed the potential to seek sponsorship from local solar companies under Council's sponsorship policy to offset costs, noting that branding on the sign may be acceptable if it reduces expenditure. The committee agreed that any solution must be cost-effective and appropriately scaled for public acceptance.

It was noted that while signage is a useful tool for improving compliance and enabling faster operational responses compared to manual signs, it is not a silver bullet, non-compliance, even at low levels, can still cause significant track damage.

NEW ACTION:

1. Council to report back on the options for installing solar-powered electronic signs at key trailheads (*Task assigned to Park Assets*)

6.0 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Minutes of the Advisory Committee Meeting held on 25 August 2025 were adopted.

7.0 AGENDA ITEMS

7.1.0 Standing Items

7.1.1 Water Quality Matters

Jodie Crawford introduced Jone Wright to the committee as Environment Officer, Coast and Catchments, noting that Jone will likely attend future meetings and provide ongoing updates from their team.

Jone Wright reported on catchment management initiatives and compliance monitoring. The committee was advised that Applied Ecology has been engaged to undertake a comprehensive water quality assessment program including at Manly Dam. The contractor has commenced desktop review and methodology planning in consultation with Council staff. Fieldwork is scheduled for early December 2025 and will include:

- Rapid riparian health assessments to identify features and any issues along creek lines.
- In-stream water quality monitoring and sampling to assess ecological condition.
- Surveys will be conducted across designated sites to ensure comparability of results.

Members expressed interest in observing the fieldwork and will be provided with dates and opportunities to attend. Jodie Crawford noted that these assessments will inform future management strategies and restoration priorities across the LGA.

On compliance, Jodie Crawford indicated that Council continues to notify the EPA of breaches and provide photographic and video evidence where possible. A recent September 2025 incident resulted in a positive enforcement outcome: the EPA issued a clean-up notice after reviewing evidence supplied by Council and correlating rainfall data from the Manly Dam gauge. This demonstrates the importance of timely reporting and robust documentation. Council is continuing to explore the clean up of the Madison Way inlet basin with the EPA.

The committee acknowledged that while expectations for enforcement outcomes remain modest, recent success highlights the value of proactive monitoring and collaboration with regulators.

ACTION:

1. Council to liaise with Applied Ecology regarding an opportunity for members to observe fieldwork to be conducted at Manly Dam. *(Task assigned to Coasts & Catchments)*

7.1.2 Strategic Planning

Jeremy Smith provided an update on strategic planning matters. He advised that the Department has granted gateway approval for Council's draft Local Environmental Plan (LEP). Importantly for Manly Dam, the Department raised no objections to the proposed C2 Conservation zoning, which offers stronger protections compared to the previous RE1 Recreation zoning. Jeremy noted this outcome is significant as Council has sought a more appropriate zoning for the dam and its surrounds.

Alongside the LEP, staff are preparing a Development Control Plan (DCP), with both documents scheduled for public exhibition in mid-2026. Councillors will participate in a workshop on the DCP this weekend. Jeremy confirmed there are no surprises in surrounding land use zones; however, areas of Frenchs Forest and a small pocket of Allambie Heights fall within the State Government's Low-Medium Density Housing reforms, which apply within 800 metres of nominated town centres. While these reforms may create future pressures downstream, no development applications currently affect the upper catchment of Manly Dam.

In response to a question, Jeremy Smith clarified that while the Department rejected Council's proposal to rezone some residential properties to conservation elsewhere in the LGA, this did not impact land around Manly Dam. Most proposed changes were in Pittwater, not the dam precinct. He reiterated that Manly Dam was largely unaffected by these decisions.

Councillor Glanville raised concerns about the Department's reluctance to rezone some residential properties to conservation. The committee agreed to keep monitoring for any future development proposals that might impact the catchment.

7.1.3 Grants and Capital Works

Scot Hedge provided an update on recent and upcoming works at Manly Dam.

Works have been completed at the bottom of the mountain bike trail 19th hole ramp, including construction of a bank reconnecting the ramp to the trail and associated vegetation restoration. Additional regeneration works were undertaken to stabilise the area.

Upgrades have been completed on mountain bike trail Trig Trail section including decking replacement and gentler climbs designed for novice and adaptive riders. Signage improvements and drainage remediation are underway. Procurement for a raised boardwalk and bridge section in the "blonding section" has been finalised, with works scheduled for January 2026.

Scot Hedge outlined that during a recent site inspection, drainage features requiring maintenance were identified and will be reinstated. Future priorities include targeted drainage and trail amendments on the eastern side of the dam.

There is no dedicated annual capital budget for the Manly Dam mountain bike trail (there is annual funding for mountain bike trail maintenance in the operational budget); there is a consolidated capital budget for recreation trail upgrades across the LGA and funding is prioritised based on among other things community needs.

The committee indicated their interest in expenditure transparency, particularly regarding approximately \$1 million invested in the mountain bike trail and \$100–200k allocated for car park safety improvements (on the trail route).

Jeremy Smith added context on delivery models for track and trail projects, noting that internal delivery of the trail works at Manly Dam provided flexibility and avoided significant fixed costs associated with design, approvals, and project management under external contracts. He contrasted this with previous similar projects which resulted in less than desirable outcomes and higher expenditure. Jeremy Smith reiterated that while internal delivery was resource intensive, it represented better value compared to external models.

The committee acknowledged rising construction costs and community expectations for transparency. Jeremy noted that Manly Dam is part of Council's asset renewal program and funding is allocated for renewal of Manly Dam assets in line with Council's asset management plan. Jeremy Smith also acknowledged the positive impact of the special rate variation, which has injected much-needed resources into trail maintenance and upgrades.

7.1.4 Community Use Matters

Dog education and etiquette initiatives were also discussed. Damian Ham mentioned that Rangers and the Companion Animal Education Officer hold dog owner education sessions from time to time at various locations most recently at South Mona Vale Headland Reserve. The committee recognised the value of these programs in promoting responsible dog ownership and protecting park amenity. Council will request that Rangers hold a dog owner education session at Manly Dam.

8.0 GENERAL MATTERS

Jodie Crawford provided an update on new funding allocated for restoration works along Manly Creek, from Mermaid Pool downstream to Condamine Street.

The works will focus on controlling invasive vines and priority weeds. This will be an ongoing program delivered primarily by contractors, with annual funding committed to the site.

Jodie Crawford noted that while contractors will lead the initial works, there may be opportunities to involve volunteer groups in the future. She will consult with Council's Volunteer Coordinator to determine whether new groups can be recruited and report back to the committee.

The committee discussed whether it would be more cost-effective to invest in volunteer recruitment and management versus continuing with contractors, noting that contractors may deliver higher efficiency, while volunteer involvement offers broader community benefits.

Meeting concluded at 6.45pm