

Meeting minutes

Port Botany Neighbourhood Liaison Group

Date: Tuesday 28 June 2011

Time: 5.30pm-
7.00pm

Meeting No. 13

Location: Sydney Ports Operations Centre – Dampier Room

Attendees

Lynda Newnam – Community Representative Pamela Meers – Caltex

Paul Pickering – Community Representative Cris Hickey – Beachwatch, Office of Environment and Heritage
John Burgess – Community Representative Frank Gurofalow – Metro EPRG, Office of Environment and Heritage
Rodney Kerr – Sydney Water

Michael Daley – State Member for Maroubra Shane Hobday – Sydney Ports Corporation

Mitchell Wilson – Office of Member for Maroubra
Lenda Oshalem – Office of Senator Thistlethwaite

Meeting minute taker: Sandra Spate

Meeting Chair: Shane Hobday

Apologies: Aldo Costabile – Elgas Limited, Nancy Hillier – Community Member, Charles Abela – Community Member, Neil Truskett – Patrick Stevedores, Steven Poulton – City of Botany Bay Council

MINUTES

Agenda Items

1. Apologies and introductions

Apologies were received and introductions made.

2. Presentations on Water Quality at Foreshore Beach

Cris Hickey, from the Office of Environment and Heritage's Beachwatch program delivered a presentation on water quality monitoring.

Beachwatch has been monitoring water quality at beaches since 1994 every six days in swimming season and monthly over winter.

Tests are conducted for the Enterococci bacteria, which while not causing illness itself, has links to illness in swimmers as an indicator of faecal contamination.

The National Health and Medical Research Council's Guidelines for Managing Risks in Recreational Water are followed, with beach suitability for recreation including swimming graded from very good to very poor.

While all potential sources of faecal contamination are identified the focus is on human

Meeting minutes

sources.

Results are achieved when all likelihoods are combined.

Results for Foreshore Beach are:

Bathers – low

Toilet – low

Sewage overflows – high

Stormwater – moderate

River discharge – moderate

Boats – low

These combined give an overall risk rating of high. It is susceptible to faecal pollution and water quality is often unsuitable for swimming. However, it can be suitable if daily Beachwatch bulletins are followed.

Water quality varies year by year, and water quality generally reflects rainfall patterns, with increased levels of Enterococci occurring at times of heavy rain.

Levels remain elevated for up to three days following rainfall and are usually suitable for swimming by the fourth day.

Results from 2010 and 2011 indicate some improvement in water quality.

Rodney Kerr from Sydney Water delivered a presentation regarding Foreshore Beach overflow abatement.

Private sewers lines from houses are connected to the public sewer lines.

The trunk sewer for Malabar goes through the airport area, with Campbelltown the furthest upstream location.

During wet weather the sewer can't cope with additional flows and therefore sewerage overflow is directed to stormwater channels.

One of the biggest overflows in Sydney is at the bottom of Millpond and this contributes to pollution at Foreshore Beach. Currently the overflow at Millpond is approximately 9 times per year.

Overflows in the inner west go to Cooks River and travel down the western side of the bay. The older residential areas contribute highly to overflows. Attempts have been made to control this infiltration.

There has also been an accumulation of material requiring de-silting. Dredging in 2002 led to a decrease in overflow frequency. Rehabilitation of the sewer also resulted in isolation of one barrel of SWOOS2 which decreased wet weather storage capacity. However from 2002 with 285 events per 10 years, in 2009 it was back to normal operation with 89 events per 10 years or 27 days out of the 365 in the year.

Other days have been affected as a direct result of stormwater.

Some solutions are the control of the accumulation of silt, a large storage/transfer tunnel and rehabilitation of the inner west sewers, and the long term redevelopment in the Cooks River of replacing private sewers.

Questions and discussion

MD asked whether the source of the additional volume during wet weather is largely from illegal household connections of stormwater to the sewer system.

RK replied there are varying sources, some illegal connections but also cracks and faults in pipes leading to an infiltration component.

LN asked what impact the new developments and increased population in the south west

Meeting minutes

of Sydney was likely to have.

RK replied that this would be minimal as the new sewers are leak proof. Sewer piping is PVA and new developments have been laid out around infrastructure such as roads and sewers. It is a lot more difficult to retrofit sewer lines in older areas.

PP asked whether Sydney Water had any responsibility for signage at the beach informing people of the safety of swimming.

CH indicated signage at Foreshore Beach by Council. Sydney Water is required to notify OEH of dry weather overflows but wet weather overflow reports are not immediate, but a week later.

LN suggested it was inadequate for signage to simply say people should not swim after rain and do so at other times at their own risk. This is particularly the case as there was promotion of the beach by SPC post expansion. If it is acceptable to swim here 75% of the time it should be signposted accordingly, as there is an overriding concern from residents that after losing 80% of the shoreline people can't use their beach.

SH responded that it is a Sydney Ports site, and Ports have erected signage consistent with that at Malabar and other beaches. SPC is happy to revisit signage, but there are difficulties associated with keeping signage up to date in real time.

JB suggested it has been a high risk beach for many years, but has improved since 2002. There will always be sewerage overflow issues, but it needs to be looked at how to make it acceptable.

CH noted that while Beachwatch says what pollution is likely to be today, it can't provide guarantees. It is still up to the individual to note the colour and smell of the water.

Signage is problematic in providing information in a timely manner. Websites are better. There is a daily bulletin and it is proposed to twitter.

FG noted that OEH takes the issue of water quality serious and works with Sydney Water. A lot of money goes into the wet weather overflow program and there are continuing improvements across the city.

PP suggested that it may make more sense to have the bigger overflow at Muddy Creek where there is a larger area to disperse the overflow.

JB asked where samples are taken from.

CH replied it is from the northern end of the beach.

JB suggested a wider issue as the OEH is only testing for one pollutant. The CMA has only two testing stations in Botany Bay and we have been pushing hard to get another to test for other contamination. There is an issue as well for recreational fishermen, if contaminants get into biota, but no one takes responsibility for contaminants getting into the food chain. Someone needs to be proactive regarding discharges into the northern part of Botany Bay.

CH indicated that while it isn't within their budget to test for other things, the OEH would be happy to work with CMA to collect additional samples. She asked that the JB let CMA know of this offer.

JB also suggested that this is the only public beach left here and it is being eroded daily through stormwater discharge. Two of the three discharge pipes are blocked and water from the third gushes and is destroying the beach. There have been suggestions made to relocate the pipes to Millpond. In the early days Ports offered to relocate the stormwater pipes but Sydney Water didn't accept. SPC put the case to relocate the drain which would have been better aesthetically and help reduce erosion. Four drains over a small

Meeting minutes

area including the Springvale and Floodvale drains are doing an enormous amount of damage to the rehabilitation works undertaken by SPC and paid for by taxpayers and he predicts in ten years Foreshore Rd will be destroyed. He asked for cooperation between agencies to sort the issue.

SH reported that Botany Bay Council is keen to meet with Sydney Water regarding the stormwater drains as they also have problems with the pond in Sir Joseph Banks Park. RK suggested a range of possible solutions could be looked at and he will take it away for consideration, but he noted the beach is at the end of a major stormwater discharge. He suggested aggregate in the pipes, and that storage sometimes works with pollution falling out and polluted water displacing clean water which flows out.

PP suggested potential problems with mosquitoes with water storage.

JB suggested relocation of the pipes to run parallel to Foreshore Road and discharge into the Millstream end rather than middle of beach.

SH thanked the representatives from OEH and Sydney Water for their presentations and participation in a discussion of the issues.

These minutes have been endorsed by the meeting Chair

Signed

Date
