



Clr Peter Abelson
Mayor
Mosman Council
PO Box 211
SPIT JUNCTION NSW 2088

Dear Clr Abelson

Re: Proposed Aged Care Facility, Middle Head – Council’s Notice of Motion 4 March 2014

I refer to the proposal for an aged care facility at Middle Head currently being assessed by the Harbour Trust, and Council’s Notice of Motion to consider the proposal at its upcoming meeting on 4 March 2014.

I write to provide an update on the progress of the proposal, in order to inform Council’s consideration of the matter. The applicant has advised the Harbour Trust of their intention to significantly amend the proposal and to refer this to the Minister for the Environment for consideration under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act)*. The proposal would only include the complex of 10 Terminal brick buildings on the southern side of Middle Head Rd. This would enable all the timber barracks to be removed and the northern side of Middle Head Road to be turned into parkland. As part of the referral process the Department of Environment will place the proposal on public exhibition. The Harbour Trust will notify the community of the exhibition by placing an advertisement in the *Mosman Daily*, as well as directly notifying all those who have previously written to us regarding the proposal.

Subject to the outcome of the EPBC referral, the Harbour Trust may then consider the amended proposal, which would involve further consultation with the community.

In light of these developments, it would be premature for Council to consider the present motion. I therefore request that Council defer consideration of the motion until the amended proposal is available, which I anticipate will be before the end of this month. I also request that the applicants be invited to address Council when it considers the amended proposal.

More broadly, I would also like to take this opportunity to respond to the Motion’s claim that the proposal is contrary to the Harbour Trust’s objects and plans. The Trust is considering the proposal because we believe it *is* consistent with our vision for the Headland Park. The Harbour Trust has always sought to reactivate these former Defence lands with a diverse range of uses that conserve buildings, maximise public access and enrich visitors’ experience. The Harbour Trust has successfully introduced a range of uses including sport and recreational facilities, offices, restaurants, childcare centres, educational facilities, accommodation, health and wellbeing services, and artists precincts. Indeed, the Middle Head area has a long history of clinical and respite care, from the WWI hospital at Georges Heights, through to the recent \$65m redevelopment of medical, residential and other facilities at HMAS Penguin.



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Moreover, the provision of adequate, quality aged care is one of the most significant challenges facing Australia's rapidly ageing population. Our community needs to develop better models for aged care. There has been a lot of research into the health benefits of parklands. "Healthy Parks Healthy People". It has been shown that availability and use of parks contributes to people's well being and natural settings contribute to the well being of patients and those in respite care. By being in landscaped public land, it would enable the elderly to be surrounded by life and activity as well as the soothing quality of the natural setting. The proposal is for a residential clinical care facility with associated community day care set within public parkland open to all. It is neither a retirement village nor a gated community.

On the matter of community involvement I note that the Motion includes a claim that the Harbour Trust's public consultation on the proposal has been insufficient. The Harbour Trust refutes this claim. The proposal was on public exhibition for 6 weeks from 31 October – 11 December 2013. During this period notifications were placed in the *Mosman Daily* on three occasions; local residents were notified by letter on three occasions; and a public information session and public Harbour Trust Board meeting were held. Direct notifications were made to a range of authorities and stakeholders; and the Harbour Trust's Community Advisory Committee was also informed. Following on from this there will be further consultation through the EPBC referral process, and the Harbour Trust's re-exhibition of the amended proposal. This is an extensive consultation process that I expect would be at least as robust as the process that Council would undertake if it were considering a similar proposal.

In regard to bushfire risk, the Harbour Trust has consulted the NSW Rural Fire Service, which has advised that aged care facilities must comply with the requirements of *Planning for Bush Fire Protection 2006*. The Harbour Trust has required the applicant to engage a specialist bushfire consultant to prepare a Bush Fire Protection Assessment that specifically addresses the proposal's compliance with bush fire management requirements, including *Planning for Bush Fire Protection*.

I request that this letter be tabled at Council's meeting on 4 March 2014, and that Council's consideration of the proposal be deferred until it has an opportunity to review the amended proposal.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss any matter raised in this letter, please contact me on 8969 2164.

Yours sincerely

Geoff Bailey
Executive Director

3 / 3 / 2014

CC – Ms Veronica Lee, General Manager