

ALL ABOUT
PLANNING

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Community Infrastructure Needs and Priorities for South West Rocks

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On Behalf of:
Kempsey Shire Council

**Outcomes Of A Facilitated Public Meeting To Discuss Local
Community Infrastructure Needs and Priorities For South
West Rocks**

July 2004

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1.0 Introduction

All About Planning P/L was pleased to facilitate a public meeting in South West Rocks, on behalf of Kempsey Shire Council, on Wednesday, 7 July 2004 commencing 7.00pm and finishing just after 9.00pm. Our brief as the Council appointed facilitators was to identify the local community's needs and priorities for infrastructure provision in South West Rocks to 2016.

The meeting was advertised in the local paper during the two weeks prior and in addition, Peter Chapman (from All About Planning P/L) was interviewed on ABC Radio the day before the meeting. It is anticipated that a follow up interview with the ABC radio will also be undertaken.

The meeting was held in the RSL Sub-branch Hall in McIntyre Street, South West Rocks and was very well attended. 25 people had registered their interest in attending but significantly, 83 people signed the attendance sheet and a further 6 or 7 additional persons were counted during the meeting. Therefore a total of approximately 90 persons attended, which we found very encouraging.

A meeting agenda and copies of Council's most recent report discussing infrastructure provision in the area were distributed at the meeting for each participants information.

To discuss local needs and priorities, group workshops had been planned. The great turnout on the night necessitated a slight revision to the agenda however, with a general facilitated workshop replacing the proposed group workshops. Four questions were discussed during the combined workshop.

Those in attendance clearly demonstrated their commitment to the area and successfully articulated their concerns and issues about South West Rocks' projected growth and priorities for infrastructure provision.

2.0 Projected Population Growth

Before the issue of infrastructure needs and priorities could be dealt with, it was clear those in attendance were very worried by the absence of public debate about what is an environmentally sustainable population growth for the area. In particular, those in attendance were concerned that the report "Infrastructure Priorities in South West Rocks to 2016" appeared to accept forecast population growth as inevitable. This document reports that South West Rock's population would nearly double over the next 12 years from a current population of 4759 to 9102 by the year 2016.

The meeting resolved the following matters concerning population growth:

"The inevitability of forecast growth for the area is questioned. In particular, the Council and the community should be considering the question of whether to restrict population growth in South West Rocks. The community has a right and a responsibility to seriously contemplate this issue of population growth and whether mechanisms such as population capping are required."

“The issue of environmental sustainability must be considered in this debate. For example, how much ground water will be available in South West Rocks and what sewage disposal capacity is there?”

Additional studies may be required to confirm if there are any such fundamental constraints to growth and whether or not infrastructure and services can reasonably be expanded to cater for anticipated/desired growth.

The meeting also raised two matters concerning the incompleteness of Council's Current Residential Land Release Strategy. It was noted that:

“The Lot predictions in the Discussion Paper are incorrect, in particular for Area SWR 9 and the Draft LEP for the ‘Old Oil Terminal Site’ will move this land under the Strategy from Long Term to Short Term classification in terms of availability.”

3.0 A Quality Built and Natural Environment

Those in attendance expressed great concern at what they described as -

“the current poor quality of development in South West Rocks and the lack of planning.”

A review of planning controls for South West Rocks to improve the quality of development and to determine environmental impacts, preferably in co-ordination with adjoining Coastal Councils was called for.

A Master Plan and Environmental Study of all land in South West Rocks was also considered a priority before any further population explosions.

The group emphasized that a meeting to discuss future infrastructure and services for South West Rocks was premature given that the basics of environmental capacity and design quality had not yet been addressed. The community recognized they would be in a better position to discuss future infrastructure needs and priorities once these fundamental issues had been resolved.

The community suggested the following particular requirements for new development as part of the workshop discussion.

- *Wildlife corridors should be incorporated into any new development*
- *Off road bicycle ways and pedestrian paths should be required to be provided with new developments*
- *Retention of trees should be a priority with any new development and the proposal should also incorporate native landscaping*
- *Playgrounds should be incorporated into new developments*
- *Council should require rainwater tanks and rainwater retention on site*

4.0 Financing of Infrastructure and Services

The community expressed a desire for ongoing dialogue with Council over how new and/or upgraded services and infrastructure for the area would be financed. They were particularly concerned that existing community land not be lost and resolved that:

“Existing community land should not be sold to finance additional infrastructure and services.”

5.0 Community Identified Infrastructure Needs and Priorities

5.1 Current services and infrastructure which are most valued

When asked what public services and infrastructure in South West Rocks were most valued, those in attendance identified the following:

- *Existing Community land (the community included the ‘Old School Site and its precinct’ in this category, despite the fact that this site is now privately owned)*
- *The current off road bicycle ways and pedestrian paths*
- *Library Service*
- *Swimming Pool*
- *Wildlife*
- *All areas of natural scenic beauty*
- *The Saltwater Creek Lagoon and Catchment Area (In this regard, the meeting noted that a catchment management study of the lagoon and catchment area by WBM Oceanics is soon to be released. It was anticipated that this study will conclude that this catchment has reached its limit. A rezoning of land in the middle of this catchment ie. ‘Oil Terminal Site’ should therefore be delayed until the study findings are available - as land clearing on this site would be detrimental.)*
- *Footbridges*
- *Surf Club (needs a new roof however the club has plans to upgrade as soon as possible)*



5.2 Current public service and infrastructure needs

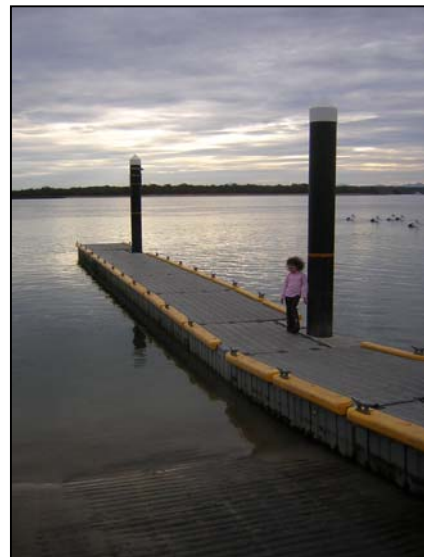
When asked what additional public services and infrastructure in South West Rocks were needed, those in attendance identified the following:

- *Kerb and guttering for existing dwellings*
- *More footpaths*
- *An extension to the existing off road bicycle paths and pedestrian paths. (Particular mention was made of the need to extend paths to Arakoon, Arakoon Road, Little Bay and the*



River Boat Ramp. The community was also keen to see that any future developments would be required to provide such pathways and green space/nature reserves)

- *Resurfacing of existing 'noisy' main roads eg. Gregory Street*
- *More vehicle and boat parking at the main boat ramp and more lighting – currently the area is a traffic hazard*
- *River siltage pump-out for boats at Matty's Flat. (Council could consider a 50/50 funding arrangement with the Waterways Authority.)*



- *More children's playgrounds and associated shading and trees (in particular a new playground at Phillip Park next to the skate park was mentioned)*
- *The existing pool's season and opening hours could be extended and an upgrade of facilities would be supported*
- *The Library Service could be extended or redeveloped*



- *New Community and Cultural Centre – the existing centre is being used as a theatre and is not readily available or large enough (Could the old school site be used for such a purpose and has the land known as SWR 9 been targeted for some community purpose?)*
- *Town water pressure and quality needs improvement especially in the higher areas*
- *Aged care facilities – the provision of which could be facilitated by Council (Gordon Young Drive is one possibility)*
- *Co-ordinated Street Planting*
- *Street lighting needs to be provided at the intersection of Arakoon Road and Gregory Street and also Russell Road*
- *Additional parking and disabled parking at Horseshoe Bay*

It should be noted that the community made some negative comment about Council's current traffic calming initiatives around South West Rocks.

The meeting also noted that two Council Committees for South West Rocks have been disbanded which should be resurrected. They are:

- South West Rocks Structure Plan Review Committee
- Environmentally Sustainable Development (ESD) Committee

5.3 Future public service and infrastructure needs

The issue of what future public services and infrastructure would be needed (given projected population growth and an aging population), was not resolved on the night.

This was because the community was not prepared to accept the predicted rate of growth for the area or discuss future needs, without the benefit of much more comprehensive prior local planning, a detailed understanding of environmental constraints and what would be considered to be a sustainable population level for the area.

Some information on what the community considers important in future developments for the area have been listed under Section 3.0 of this report.

5.4 Public Service and Infrastructure Priorities

The meeting rightly confirmed that priorities for provision of infrastructure and services would be affected by the rate of population growth and the extent of new development.

Priorities should be rationally conceived and be based on comprehensive planning and analysis of environmental data.

Such Master Planning should incorporate the following key principles:

- Protection of the natural environment
- Management of storm water runoff to mitigate the impacts of future growth
- Replacement/retention of trees

The Master plan should have a key focus on sustainability and any sewer and water supply upgrades should form a component of this plan and be environmentally sustainable.

The community expressed concern that Council's assumption of population growth has even lead them to study the costs of bringing water from Hat Head and Kinchela, two environmentally sensitive areas – which seems to indicate a foregone conclusion.

6.0 Reporting Back to the Community

The community was keen to ensure that our report from this meeting would be publicly available.

A suggestion to make our report available on Council's website was supported and for those with no internet access, copies should be made available to pick up from Council's offices and/or the local library.

The community was advised that our report would be considered at a meeting of Kempsey Shire Council at a date yet to be determined, and that notice of such meeting would be given in accordance with Council's normal policy.

A majority of participants provided their contact details and it is recommended that a letter to these persons be prepared, thanking them for their attendance and contribution on the night. The letter should also advise how to obtain a copy of this report. If known, the details of the Council meeting at which this report will be discussed could also be advised.

7.0 Conclusion

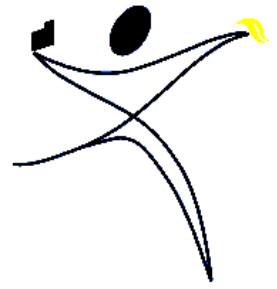
The meeting was very beneficial. Despite some initial negativity, the community seized the opportunity to express their concerns and issues about the forecast rapid population growth of South West Rocks and associated infrastructure and services planning.

Approximately 90 persons attended and significant feedback from the community was obtained in areas relevant to future service and infrastructure needs.

A key issue was the need for more comprehensive strategic planning and investigation of environmental constraints to development in the area. The community would like this work to be undertaken prior to:

- large scale future development (population growth) in South West Rocks
- plans for future infrastructure needs being determined.

Attachment 1: Meeting Agenda



ALL ABOUT
PLANNING

Community Meeting & Workshop

Public Services and Infrastructure South West Rocks

7.00pm – 9.00pm, Wednesday 7 July 2004
RSL Hall, McIntyre Street, South West Rocks

FACILITATED BY ALL ABOUT PLANNING PTY LTD

AGENDA

1. INTRODUCTIONS & PURPOSE OF MEETING

- meeting agenda
- reporting back to Council
- what are public services & infrastructure?
- any questions?

2. SUMMARY OF RELEVANT STATISTICS BASED ON THE DISCUSSION PAPER PREPARED BY THE GENERAL MANAGER, KEMPSEY SHIRE COUNCIL

3. COMMUNITY WORK SHOP

- group work to discuss and answer a set list of questions on public services & infrastructure needs and priorities to 2016

4. REPORTING BACK

- a spokesperson from each group to report back to the meeting on workshop outcomes

5. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Attachment 2: Workshop Questions

Community Meeting & Workshop



Public Services and Infrastructure in South West Rocks

COMMUNITY WORKSHOP

Question 1

What current Public Services and Infrastructure in South West Rocks do you most value?

Question 2

What additional or upgraded public services and infrastructure are needed now in South West Rocks?

Question 3

What additional or upgraded public services and infrastructure will be needed in the future, given the projected population growth and that the dynamics of the community is predicted to change?

Question 4

Of the public services and infrastructure that you have identified in Questions 2 and 3, what should be the main priorities?