

CATHO CHRONICLE

CATHERINE HILL BAY PROGRESS ASSOCIATION

DEDICATED TO PRESERVING THE HERITAGE VALUES OF CATHERINE HILL BAY



COUNCIL'S RECREATIONAL MASTER PLAN ON EXHIBITION

Lake Macquarie City Council (LMCC) has reached a significant milestone on the Master Plan for recreational facilities in Catherine Hill Bay. On Monday 27 June, Council approved the public exhibition of the draft Catherine Hill Bay Precincts Master Plan.

The draft Master Plan and associated report is now on public exhibition, during which time the community can make comment. The Plan is relatively unchanged from what was shared at the last Community Working Group meeting in late May. Comments received during public exhibition will be considered in the finalisation of the Plan. At the close of the public exhibition period, any proposed changes will be presented to Council to consider final adoption, scheduled for October.

Once the Master Plan is adopted there are many approvals required prior to commencement of works, with engineering and detailed drawings required. The timeline for this is not yet available.

The draft Master Plan can be viewed at the link below and comments can be submitted until 8th August 2022.

<https://shape.lakemac.com.au/chb>

IN THE WINTER ISSUE...

CATHO'S PUBLIC TRANSPORT WOES

WALLALONG DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL

DROWNING TRAGEDY IN PINK CAVE

LANDCARE UPDATE

**NEXT MEETING
at Catho SLSC on
17th Sept at 5pm**

The town that public transport forgot

The buses to and from Catherine Hill Bay (99, 98 & 97 timetables) have not been updated since 1970. 52 years ago.

Considering Catho has experienced a massive increase in population in the last five years (many of these being families now having school age children), this is very much a community issue. Bus services and routes for the current century should be a priority.

There is no school bus in the morning to the local private schools both in the south and north directions. Parents are car-pooling and driving their children to schools every day. There is no school bus north from Catherine Hill Bay to Belmont Christian College and nor school buses going south to Munmorah (St Brigids, Lakes Grammar).

After three years of complaints to schools and local operators, local parents contacted Yasmin Catley and the commercial manager of the metro bus operation routes for Transport NSW. They have been informed of a ministerial response from Yasmin Catley. She is pushing for better school buses to the local schools and has passed it on to the State Minister of Regional Transport. State Labor has secured an inquiry into the Liberal Government's privatisation of bus services across the state.

Our community knows all too well the impact privatisation has on our public transport services. Since the Newcastle Transport Network was privatised, we have seen bus services cut right across our electorate. What we haven't seen is the world class transport network Andrew Constance and Gladys Berejiklian promised us.

University of Newcastle Exhibition - 'Be Like Your Place'

Students from the Faculty of Architecture at the University of Newcastle will be presenting a public exhibition of their recent projects about Catherine Hill Bay addressing environmental, cultural and historical matters relevant to the town.

The exhibition will be at the surf club on Friday 15th July 5-9pm and open to all residents. Students will be on hand to demonstrate their projects and answer questions

Thanks to our members who contributed their historical and environmental knowledge to the project.

Wallalong Land Developments – DA recently on exhibition

Wallalong Landholdings Pty Ltd's development application for a 209 lot subdivision to the north of Middle Camp in Catherine Hill Bay was recently on public exhibition with LMCC (DA/2238/2017). Please see the PA's submission to Council attached to this newsletter email.

Update on Catho miner Joey Warren

Joe Warren's case to defend his claim of *Protected Tenancy*, to determine whether he can continue to live in the house in Sawmill Camp that he's called home for more than 50 years, went to mediation in March and failed.

As there are currently less than one hundred Protected Tenancies left in New South Wales, Joe Warren's case has attracted a lot of attention. Three barristers have prepared a case that will go to the Supreme Court in November.

Landcare Update

There's been great growth thanks to the rain, and our Catho Landcare Group is growing too.

The Lake Mac Landcare Green Team came to town on March 14, so we attacked the area between the carpark and cemetery fence at the north end – hand weeding, tools and some cut and paint with glyphosate. Cheers Elise and Wendy. Our photo here was on their Facebook page. They love our morning tea break view.



In April we worked on the foredune area and welcomed Kaz to the group. In June we planted Banksia and Tuckeroo in the area the Green Team weeded.

Proudly, we now have a second team. It sprung up in May to work on our south site from CHB Creek, along the front of Pat Slaven Reserve, past the Surf Clubhouse and up to the Norfolk Island pine where Council's land ends. We worked near the BBQ area – hope it's looking less weedy. Last edition there was a photo of this area from 2014 to show you how much dunal area we had before the 2015 storms. Losing most of that, we moved back to the northern site. And more has eroded since. But it's great to be back, and this is thanks to some dedicated Middle Camp folk and some new Landcarers from the Bay and Moonee. Thanks Clarita, Kaz, Neil & Fae, Pam, Geoff, and Jennie with Max & Isabella – who planted two Banksia down on the ledge to help stabilise it. Fingers crossed.



We met again in June to attack the Morning Glory and Farmers Friend weeds south of the road down to the beach and welcomed Paul this time.

Join us on the first Monday of each month anytime between 2 and 4 pm in winter for the Graveyard Beach site, and second Thursdays 2 to 4pm for the Surf Club end site. Please call Carmel ahead on 0438 499636 and come earlier for a welcome and orientation. Bring your sun safe gear, water, secateurs and a gardening fork and if you can, and a snack for a chat afterwards. All welcome.

Click here to read our new plan on the website.

www.catherinehillbay.org.au/services/landcare/Catherine%20Hill%20Bay%202021%20Landcare%20Agreed%20Action%20Plan.pdf

Drowning tragedy in the Pink Cave

A woman in her twenties from Lithgow tragically drowned in the Pink Cave, near Moonee Beach, in April.

The PA has been vocal about the dangers posed by the cave, which has been drawing increasing numbers of out-of-town visitors to this highly exposed coastal rock shelf.

We recently enquired with National Parks & Wildlife Services, one of the stakeholders that manages access to the area, about safety measures related to the cave. They advised us that, in response to the drowning, they are upgrading existing safety signage, upgrading existing pedestrian access, and consulting with the Emergency Management Committee for Lake Macquarie with the aim of establishing emergency vehicle access on to Moonee Beach. NPWS is also reviewing the information provided on it's website for the Munmorah SCA.

Catho local appears in ABC TV Program Space 22

Local Catho surfer Tracey Andrews recently appeared in the ABC TV show Space 22, on Tuesday nights at 8pm. Space 22 is a documentary about the mental health benefits from participating in the creative arts. Tracey has experienced Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) after serving for many years in the Police Rescue Squad.

"It was a big call to go on the show," Tracey said. "... but I'm so glad I did. It's been a life-changing experience."

Space 22 is currently available for streaming online at ABC iview.



Catho local Tracey Andrews on the set of ABCTV's Space 22 (centre at back).

Proposed Coastal Walk from Caves Beach to Budgewoi

The construction of a walking & cycling trail between Caves Beach and Budgewoi, via the Munmorah State Conservation Area, is on the cards as Central Coast Council (CCC) have recently endorsed the Central Coast Green Grid Plan: Our Place.

The Plan outlines the framework for future developments on the Coast that will promote healthier lifestyles and protect the local environment. The idea to construct the trail was initially developed by CCC, LMCC and NSW NPWS with the support of Yasmin Catley MP – Member for Swansea.

The trail would connect the Lake Macquarie and the Central Coast LGAs, as well as provide a unique opportunity to link the Fernleigh Track to the Central Coast through the Munmorah State Conservation Area.

During the public exhibition period, which was held between September and October 2021, the proposed walking and cycling trail was included on a draft list of potential projects to be completed. CCC's endorsement of the Plan has further added to the likelihood that this project will take place. CCC have also advised that future funding for projects will be sought from internal Council and Government agency funding and from grants.



Yasmin Catley said 'it is pleasing to hear that Central Coast Council have endorsed their Green Grid Plan. We are a step closer to seeing the construction of a walking and cycling trail between Caves Beach and Budgewoi'.

There is the potential for the proposed coastal walk in Catherine Hill Bay - an element of the Catho Master Plan currently under development - to form a section of the larger Caves Beach to Budgewoi walk.

The joys of bus travel throughout the decades ...

Catherine Hill Bay used to be on the way from Sydney to Newcastle and the main road through town was called the Sydney Road. One resident, who lived in what we now know as Clarke Street, said her address was just 'Main Road Catherine Hill Bay'.

Heading north, the road ran down through the Bay and Middle Camp, then up through Mine Camp and a section called Seven Bends Road, then onto Swansea. That changed in 1927 when a new road was built along the ridge behind the Bay, now called the Pacific Highway. The old Sydney Road through Mine Camp, however, remained the only way for people from Catherine Hill Bay to travel north between 1926-1952.

Flowers Drive, which now connects Catherine Hill Bay to the Pacific Highway, bypassing Mine Camp, was opened on the 28 November 1952. The old road was never sealed, and it made for some harrowing journeys. Double decker buses brought miners into town who lived elsewhere. It was a hair-raising journey, with the bus often leaning dangerously to one side or the other. As recounted by one miner, the bus toppled over one morning. No one was injured, fortunately, however one of his mates refused to ever get on the bus again.

Between 1930 and 1958, a government bus service connected Catherine Hill Bay to Broadmeadow, changing at Swansea. Students lucky enough to go to high school had to catch a bus all the way to Newcastle.

"There was a double decker bus used to leave from the Bay and it was practically full... they used to put the girls upstairs to stop any shenanigans. The boys downstairs used to urge the driver to go faster. We were a wild mob, I tell you", one old Bay boy recalled.

During the 50's and 60's, high school students from the Bay travelled to Belmont High School on the extremely over-crowded school bus. The bus aisle would be stacked with globite school bags. As the bus heeled this way and that around the awful Mine Camp bends, and S-bends heading into Swansea, students juggled for a spot to put their feet as they desperately hung onto the overhead hanging rails.

Those students lucky enough to nab a seat often received an unwelcome knock on the head from elbows up above, or a sudden unexpected person in their lap when the bus rolled around s bends. When the driver hit the brakes hard it always created a domino effect forward for all those standing, sometimes with some serious results.

During these journeys, trucks on the old Mine Camp Road were sometimes the cause for the hard breaking. The quarry at the top of the hill above Mine Camp was operating, and trucks were a hazard when passing the bus on the notorious gravel road. It is unknown if there was ever a serious incidents, but numerous student domino piles occurred.

Exam times or sickness created a few issues for students from the Bay when they needed to get the bus home outside the usual pick-up times. This usually meant catching the government bus at Belmont, then hoping they made it to Swansea in time to catch the Sergeants bus that would be heading to Wyong and passing Flowers Drive. If you were lucky enough, you had to hop off at the highway and walk down into the Bay along Flowers Drive....and if you were really lucky one of the locals would come by and give you a lift. Those were the days when every face was a familiar one and stranger danger was not such a big issue.

One of the benefits of the bus service to the Bay for any student at Belmont High was that any after-school detention time was shortened. Students had to be dismissed from the class in time to board the bus which meant only a 20-minute maximum detention. It was always a good feeling when you could say to the detention teacher "I have to leave early because I come from Catherine Hill Bay".

Before bus times and school times were co-ordinated, students would walk to and from the local school in Middle Camp. That meant the daily long walk from Mine Camp and the Bay end but usually it was done like a great social gathering with laughter and some nonsense along the way. The bus always picked up the Nords Wharf students first, so they always had the best seats; and back seat was always a favourite with the 'wild' boys.

The bus driver always had a problem with these boys, in particular for being rowdy and mischievous and causing mayhem. So, on many occasions he would stop the bus and the offending boy would be disembarked very quickly to continue his journey to Nords Wharf or the Bay on foot.

Did you know ...

"... the story of schools in Catherine Hill Bay is typical of many mining towns. The Government was reluctant to build proper premises as it was expected that mining ventures would collapse. Indeed, the first mining venture in Catherine Hill Bay, the New Wallsend Coal Company, did fold and the town was abandoned.

In 1888-1889 Catherine Hill Bay was re-settled by the Wallarah Coal Mining Company, a well-capitalised English owned mining company.

Every service or organisation in Catherine Hill Bay's history has come about because of the residents' own efforts. In 1875 a committee was formed to try to get a proper school building built. Twenty-five years later they were still trying.

A formal application for the establishment of a public school was made in September 1889. The number of children expected to attend was 39 with expectation that numbers would increase. However, the education department had reservations about the future success of the coal company and chose to accept an offer from the Church of England to operate a school rather than purchase the land from the coal company to build a school themselves. A lease was signed in 1889 with the Church of England reserving the right to hold divine service in the building. The church was not on the top of the hill as it is today, but rather tucked north of Lindsley Street.



It wasn't long before increasing enrolments outstripped capacity and new premises were sought. In 1892 the school was relocated to a large hall on Montefiore Street. Again, these were rented premises. However, many children lived in the Middle Camp and Mine Camp areas, and it was too far for the children to walk each day.

Once more, townspeople requested the department of Public Instruction to construct a more permanent and centrally located school. In 1895, a third school and teacher's residence were built on a three-acre site on the left side of the hill going north between the Bay and Middle Camp. This was not a happy time, as residents still complained. Children still had too far to walk. Some residents sent their children to the Nords Wharf Provisional school as the wife and daughter of the Headmaster, Mr. Hennessey, were ill with consumption. Further to that, he was a "Roman Catholic", which was an issue in a protestant town, and he owed many debts around town. However, in 1897 the Inspector of District School Board praised the progress of the students. Meanwhile, this third school was quietly being destroyed by white ants.



In around 1908, the department of Public Instruction began planning to move the school to a new site further north, between Middle Camp and "E" tunnel. The department arranged with the coal company to exchange their existing site for the new one at Middle Camp. By 1913, plans for the new teacher's residence were complete as well as plans for the new school were completed by June 1914. The fourth and last school was opened in October 1915 when the headmaster Henry Tooth took charge.

Sadly, due to falling enrolments, the Bay School was closed in 1985. Like the Post Office, Police Station, Uniting and Church of England churches, and the Maternity Hospital, the building remains but has become a private residence. Tantalising to a new group of school aged students and their families. If only ...

How to become a PA member

Would you like to become a member or friend of the CHB Progress Association?

The annual membership fee is \$20, or \$10 for pensioners.

The membership form is attached to this newsletter email. Please email membership forms to accounts@catherinehillbay.org.au. Thank you to all our members and friends that have already renewed their payments.

To join the Catho Chronicle mailing list, please email us at newsletter@catherinehillbay.org.au

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