



Minister for the Environment

Minister for Ports and Waterways

Ian McManus MP

Bundeena Progress Association

Waterway Access Group

National Parks Association

25/9/00

Open Letter: A Proposed Bonnie Vale Boat Ramp

The Port Hacking Protection Society is one of a number of groups which has raised concerns about the proposal for a boat ramp at Bonnie Vale. Each of these groups has raised serious issues, and as yet these have not been addressed.

The central values of Bonnie Vale are generally accepted as its being a safe and peaceful place for families to swim and picnic close to nature. The natural (National Park) context and safe low impact uses are pivotal. It is agreed even by the proponents of a boat ramp that no proposal which compromises these values should be adopted.

Whilst a great deal of heat has been generated in the debate about whether a boat ramp should be located in this sensitive area, there has been very little light cast on whether it is possible to do so in a manner that is consistent with these values.

The Port Hacking Protection Society believes that it is more sensible to deal rationally with the issues and to seek workable compromises, than it is to embark on "all or nothing" fights. From this perspective we want to address the question "are there workable compromises possible or must this be a win/lose situation?"

We believe that most of the matters of concern to most of the groups can be resolved with good faith and common sense.

The views of stakeholder groups

The range of stakeholders in this issue is wide. We have attached extracts from the correspondence we have on file, to indicate the nature of the interests

The Waterway Access Group:

The correspondence has been a series of petitions that have been promoted door to door and in shops in Bundeena and Maianbar. These petitions (and the associated representations) stress the objective of a "low impact boat ramp". The Group has responded to concerns expressed by others by stating that their intention is that:

- the boat ramp would be available only to locals;
- no parking would be required. Users would return their trailers to their houses;
- there would be a management regime to ensure that the facility does not become a centre for jetski or "tinnie" problems (noise, safety and intimidation).
- The physical facility would be a low impact structure;
- There would be no boat access across seagrass beds;



- Boating access would be at low speeds to ensure that there is no adverse impact on swimmers;
- Local residents would be protected from noise or other adverse impacts by the users adopting and enforcing a code of management.

It is not possible to determine the extent of support for a facility based on (as a worst case) unfettered 24 hour public access, no active management, a concrete physical structure, intensive use by jetskis, or access across seagrass beds or through areas used by other stakeholders.

The National Parks Association:

The NPA has expressed concern at two levels. The first is about the significant legal and policy implications of placing a special interest boating facility within a national park. The Bonnie Vale issue is seen within the context of incursion on national parks elsewhere in the state, and on the history of abuse by some boating users (notably unlawful moorings in South West Arm, and irresponsible actions by some boating users in South West Arm and the foreshores of the national park). These important issues will remain regardless of any resolution to management issues at Bonnie Vale. The second level of concern is about the impacts of such a facility. Particular issues include:

- the integrity of the plan of management, which stated that the only way small boats can be launched at Bonnie Vale is by being "carried across the foredune" and that "vehicles and trailers will not be permitted". (p55)
- The politicisation of day to day management of park resources, contrary to proper governance.
- diversion of resources (including the resources needed to create and maintain such a facility) to private users.
- the environmental impact of high speed power vessels in seagrass areas.
- user amenity and conflict problems.
- increase in powerboats and jetskis creating safety (and therefore liability) problems,
- no management program is in place or planned

Residents opposing the facility

A number of residents closest to the proposed facility put forward a request to all parties (including the Waterways Access Group) to adopt a management program to address the bulk of their objections. An extract of this request is attached. The concerns raised were

- Safety - high-speed boats have placed children in danger in the swimming and picnic areas.
- frequent incidents of jetskis ignoring safety rules. There have been significant incidents with jetskis and tinnies that could have resulted in serious injury to children. There are many instances of irresponsible use and abuse and intimidation.
- No management approach has been proposed to overcome safety problems, which will increase with increased use.



- Legal cases highlight the liability for the National Park and Waterways Authorities if they tolerate conditions of danger for users of a recreational area.
- Noise of jetskis in Simpsons Bay can be unbearable. Existing noise controls on jetskis do not work effectively for the conditions in Simpsons Bay, particularly given the practice of wave jumping and the noise transmission characteristics of the bay.
- Waterway regulations are not effectively enforced, particularly those concerned with noise and safety.
- A boat ramp at Bonnie Vale, unless accompanied by strong and effective controls, will increase this problem.
- Boat ramps are inconsistent with a low key family recreation area due to parking, the risks to young children from manoeuvring, boating rubbish (including bottles, barbed hooks and other items often associated with recreational fishing), fish cleaning and fishing waste.
- The risks of conflict between boating users and other users are substantial with this proposal.
- An increase in trailers through the park will add to road safety and nuisance.
- No proposals have been put forward to control any of these problems.
- Seagrasses are at risk of scouring by power vessels and damage by anchoring. Photographic evidence of scouring in the area has been produced.
- No management approach has been proposed to protect the seagrasses or sensitive areas nearby from the effects of increased use.
- Bonnie Vale is a National Park area. Simpson's Bay has always been a low key, safe recreational area with national park characteristics.

Residents supporting the facility:

Letters in support of the facility have been lodged with National Parks and Wildlife Service. We do not have access to these. We assume that they span the range from absolute support regardless of impacts, through support on the assumption of an effective management program, to support only under specified assumptions.

Port Hacking Protection Society.

Port Hacking Protection Society believes that a boating facility under the conditions that have been proposed to date is unacceptable. Copies of our correspondences and policies are attached. Particular concerns include:

- That the provision of this facility will attract increased usage, particularly by jetskis, and this will add to the already substantial problems of safety and amenity for other users and nearby residents.
- Increased pressure on the Basin and on Constable's Point;
- Reallocation of scarce resources away from other needs in the area, whilst increasing pressure on these resources;
- Environmental impacts on seagrasses and other natural attributes;
- The failure of Waterways to create effective protection for swimmers and low impact users, makes it impossible to be confident that the values of this area will be protected, resulting in the likely alienation of the area from low impact uses.



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- The policy and legal barriers to allocating National Parks' sites and resources to special interest uses that are outside its charter.

The Port Hacking Protection Society has three times put forward positive proposals, and offered to work with the Waterways Access Group to see whether a management approach can be created which will reduce the identified problems. There has been no response to these offers.

Seeking resolution

The Hacking River Catchment Management Committee in mid April 1999, with the support of the Port Hacking Protection Society and local residents, sought resolution to the issues. It was agreed between stakeholders that any boat ramp would:

- have to be constructed of very low impact materials;
- be subject to a code of conduct and management regime which would prevent adverse effects on other users or the environment;
- be sited so as to cause no adverse effects on seagrasses or on swimmers;
- be subject to review based on the above;
- be closed outside daylight hours.

It was not possible to reach resolution of the major waterway based issues at that time.

The environmental and resident groups highlighted that failure to implement past agreements (notably the Memorandum of Understanding on Navigation Dredging) and to enforce existing laws had undermined trust in promises made by boating interests or agencies¹ and that the management program would have to be in place prior to placing a boat ramp.

What future can we expect for Bonnie Vale?

The alternative futures for Bonnie Vale that we are facing would seem to be either:

- a Bonnie Vale in which there is a largely un-managed and un-maintained boat ramp, with consequent ongoing problems and adverse effects on the environment and other users; and with a high likelihood of legal problems into the future;
- A Bonnie Vale in which there is no boat ramp, but ongoing local political pressure, residual anger, and ongoing 'informal' (ie un-managed) boat access arrangements, with no management program in place to deal with the already serious and increasing problems of the area.

Neither of these futures achieves what any of the parties to this thorny set of issues wants. Both of these outcomes represent a loss for everyone!

This is neither a logical or desirable outcome.

¹ The public statement by the Commodore of the Royal Motor Yacht Club that it was the 'greenies own fault' if the MOU was not enforced, as they had not forced the agencies and boating interests to comply with their promises, was cited.



Creating a preferred future for Bonnie Vale

The preferred future for Bonnie Vale has a number of elements that are the common interests of all parties, regardless of the provision of a boat ramp. The common interests become more critical with the potential impact of a boat ramp.

The following page sets out the issues, with an identification of the stakeholder groups who are likely to be affected, and provided some possibilities for resolution of each issue.

It is clear that for the bulk of the issues, there are possibilities for resolution which are consistent with the expressed wishes of the stakeholders. What is less clear is whether there is a willingness to find a solution that is optimal for most, if not all, stakeholders.



Pathways to resolution

Issue	Stakeholders affected	Possibilities for resolution
Land based issues		
Growth in use beyond intended low key, local use status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All users but particularly non-boating users of Bonnie Vale - Residents adjacent to the ramp - Other residents and users affected by power boating impacts 	<p>The major barrier to controlling access is that the proposed facility is on National Park land, and cannot be restricted to resident use. Possible resolution includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Relocation to areas under SSC control. - Lease or license of the area to Sutherland Shire Council - Land swap with Sutherland Shire Council - Barriers to access across Bonnie Vale and a keyed access gate via (council's) Simpson's Road. - Limited area for parking and no-trailer parking in adjacent streets and National Park's area <p>Coupled with keyed access with security costs possibly covered by an annual fee for use.</p>
Boating or fishing waste (including safety issues from fish hooks etc)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All users of Bonnie Vale - Residents adjacent to the ramp 	<p>The major problems here are a mixture of potential over-use by those with no interest in caring for the area, and lack of management resources. Possible resolution includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Limiting use to members of a club, with responsibility for maintenance; - Maintenance being agreed to be a responsibility of an agreed agency; - Making ongoing use subject to maintenance of agreed standards. - Performance bonds for licensed user group(s) - A genuine code of conduct for a restricted class of users, who have the risk of losing the right of usage if the code is not followed.



Pathways to resolution (cont'd)

Issue	Stakeholders affected	Possibilities for resolution
Trailer parking (either within the Park area or local streets).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All users but particularly non-boating users of Bonnie Vale - Residents adjacent to the ramp 	<p>The problem here is a mixture of user numbers and usage practice. Trailer parking problems can be minimised by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Limiting parking at the site by physical barriers to parking off the site (signage will not work); coupled with - Prohibition on trailer parking outside the defined area, including residential streets.
Rowdy or irresponsible use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All users but particularly non-boating users of Bonnie Vale - Residents adjacent to the ramp - Police and National Parks management 	<p>This is mainly a problem of user irresponsibility. The combination of use controls noted in relation to waste management and control on user numbers could be extended to deal with this issue, plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Regular police and ranger patrolling; - A complaints hot-line to police and/or the responsible user group or club; - The sanction of removal of use rights if there are resident or other Bonnie Vale user complaints
Noise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All users but particularly non-boating users of Bonnie Vale - Residents adjacent to the ramp 	<p>See above, plus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Noise regulation and signage indicating low-noise area and penalties for breach - Active Waterways Authority and Police, Council and National Parks policing of boat and user noise



Pathways to resolution (cont'd)

Issue	Stakeholders affected	Possibilities for resolution
Night time use	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- All users but particularly non-boating users of Bonnie Vale- Residents adjacent to the ramp- Police and National Parks management	<p>See above plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Nigh-time locking of the access gate to prevent out-of-hours access.
Safety issues in manoeuvring of trailers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- All users but particularly non-boating users of Bonnie Vale- Police and National Parks management	<p>See above plus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Physical barriers to prevent trailers/vehicles moving outside defined area;- Physical barriers to children wandering through the area- Signage for other users warning of hazard- Defined footpath



Pathways to resolution (cont'd)

Issue	Stakeholders affected	Possibilities for resolution
Costs of construction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - National Parks management - Other users of National Park facilities 	<p>NPWS does not have the funds (or a brief) to construct such a facility. In addition, installation of this facility should be part of the overall implementation of precinct redevelopment by NPWS, given other issues (Sydney Water pumping station, redevelopment of Maianbar track, removal of huts, relocation and redevelopment of camping area, the Simpson's Hotel site restoration, and general degradation)</p> <p>Possible solutions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Council license use of the area and construct the facility; - Council pay NPWS for provision of the facility; - Council/NPWS/users seek government grant funding; - A joint precinct development plan between NPWS, Dept of Sport and Recreation, Sutherland Shire Council and Sydney Water.
Costs of upkeep/maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - National Parks management - Other users of National Park facilities - Users of the boat ramp - Residents adjacent to the boat ramp 	<p>The issues here are both financial and administrative. Possible resolution could include all or a combination of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Management responsibility to a community group, with use rights dependent on maintenance effectiveness; - Council operated facility on either leased or licensed site; - Levied management fee on users.



Pathways to resolution (cont'd)

Issue	Stakeholders affected	Possibilities for resolution
Increased movement of the Constable's point sand into the Basin Channel (due to increased un-controlled erosion of the dune grasses from increased use)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - National Parks users who use the Basin - Researchers who use the Basin - Fishermen and others who rely on fish breeding habitat 	<p>This problem is due to (mainly) boating users colonising Constable's Point on weekends, causing physical damage to the stabilising grasses, coupled with wind blowing sand into the Basin channel. Possible resolution includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Transfer to National Parks management, and - Fencing off/signage to protect sensitive areas and/or - Designation of picnic areas.
Water based issues		
Potential increases in jetski and tinnie noise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Residents from Bonnie Vale to Bundeena Wharf - Visitors to Bundeena, Bonnie Vale, the Basin and Constable's Point 	<p>The nature of Bonnie Vale is such that it is likely that with easy trailer access, such vessels will increasingly use it. This use is associated with wave jumping and unauthorised racing, and noise and safety concerns. Possible resolution of this issue includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Zoning of Simpson's Bay through Bundeena Wharf as low speed zones; - Site specific noise regulation, signage and active enforcement; - Recognition that jetski / tinnie noise in this area is offensive to residents and other users (the test in the Offensive Noise Regulation 11 under the Noise from Vessels Act). Active enforcement of the Noise from Vessels regulation (not currently enforced).



Pathways to resolution (cont'd)

Issue	Stakeholders affected	Possibilities for resolution
Fear or risk of high speed vessel impact on swimmers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Visitors to Bundeena, Bonnie Vale, the Basin and Constable's Point - NPWS/Waterways management. (management complexity and liability risk) - Boating users (liability risk) 	<p>Many users of Bonnie Vale do so because it is non-threatening from a safety perspective. The realities of, and the perception of, risk from high-speed vessels prejudices the amenity of this area for these users.</p> <p>There is legal precedent that would make Waterways/NPWS liable for swimmers injured by powered vessels in this area, as the risk is known to these agencies.</p> <p>Possible solutions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Low speed zoning for all of Simpson's Bay; and - A defined boat landing/parking area next to the boat ramp; and - A buoy defined access lane for boats into the boat ramp and the adjacent boat landing/parking area.
Physical impacts on seagrass beds.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Visitors to Bundeena, Bonnie Vale, the Basin and Constable's Point - Researchers who use the Basin - Fishermen and others who rely on fish breeding habitat 	<p>The issue here is to limit harm to seagrass beds. The possible solutions include the low noise and controlled access protections noted above, coupled with location of the ramp and boat landing/parking area so as to avoid boats travelling across seagrass beds.</p>



Pathways to resolution (cont'd)

Issue	Stakeholders affected	Possibilities for resolution
Adverse effects on the Basin from increased small boat access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Researchers who use the Basin - Fishermen and others who rely on fish breeding habitat - Visitors to the Basin 	<p>The Basin is a very sensitive area with vulnerable species. Noise (with its effect on nesting birds) and oil in the water (due to constrained tidal flushing) are potentially harmful. The area is also valued for its beauty and peacefulness. Safe access for boats is also a problem. This area should be off-limits for all powered vessels.</p>

Policy issues

Alienation of National Park assets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - National Parks management - National Parks Association - National Park user - Environmental stakeholders 	<p>From a legal and managerial point of view redirection of National Park resources is a concern. It is also a precedent that is politically and managerially problematic. Potential resolution includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Negotiated trade-off to enhance Bonnie Vale national park assets (such as adding Constable's Point, habitat protection zoning for the Basin); - Additional resources to implement a precinct plan for the Bonnie Vale/Basin area; - Careful restriction of affected area to minimum requirement; - Additional management controls to protect the national parks values of the area; - Ongoing management resources for the area. <p>In effect, any move to place a boating facility within this area could only be justifiable within the framework of a program that enhances the national park values of the area, and entrenches these against further erosion.</p>
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Pathways to resolution (cont'd)

Issue	Stakeholders affected	Possibilities for resolution
Violation of Royal National Park Plan of Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - National Parks management - National Parks Association - National Park user - Environmental stakeholders 	See above. In addition, consultation on the amendments to the Plan will be required to implement a precinct plan.
Failure of Waterways management	Visitors to Bundeena, Bonnie Vale, the Basin and Constable's Point Adjacent residents National Parks Management	Waterways have failed to deliver effective management in this area. In particular they have failed to give effect to the "offensive noise" provisions of the Noise from Vessels Act, and to prevent jetski and tinnie hazards in this area. Potential resolution of this issue includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Regulation requiring Waterways to give priority to environmental and low impact uses of the waterway; - A substantial protective, low speed zoning across the Southern side of Port Hacking, which will make the evidentiary aspects of policing easier; - An effective community issue reporting and action program; - Annual community review of Waterways effectiveness.
Absence of review mechanism	All stakeholders	Unless there is a mechanism for review of the operation of the facility and the possibility of it being withdrawn if it cannot be made to work within agreed guidelines, there is little incentive for some stakeholders to give effect to these agreements. A possible resolution would be a 2-year trial period with review against defined measurable benchmarks, followed by 5-year renewals (subject to reviews) of the facility.



The reality is that:

- most of the issues need to be addressed regardless of a boat ramp;
- many of the problems will almost certainly get worse if there is a boat ramp, if only because of the greater intensity of use; and
- resolution of these issues will leave the thorny matter of policy about the proper use and management of national parks as the residual issue to be resolved at ministerial level.

It is hard to see any justification for even considering a boat ramp if it will aggravate these problems. The common ground is that all want to see the environmental values and low impact recreational use amenity of Bonnie Vale protected and preferably enhanced.

Achieving a win for most (if not all)

Port Hacking Protection Society can envisage a program which could yield a win for all parties and for the environment, given good faith and a willingness to seek a solutions that will deliver the most value to all parties.

Level 1: A precinct plan

A precinct and environmental protection plan could be agreed centred on the Bonnie Vale area encompassing the Basin, through to the Bundeena Wharf and out to a line running roughly East/West from the end of Constable's Point.

That plan could include:

- a protection program for other users and residents with particular regard to safety and amenity (noise and freedom from anxiety), which would include low speed zoning for a substantial part of this precinct and zone-specific noise regulation;
- a protection plan for ecological values, notably of the Basin and seagrass beds, which would involve prohibition of powered vessel access across these sensitive areas;
- a precinct management plan for the area, encompassing the reorganisation of Bonnie Vale, the protection of the Constable's Point dunes, the management of the Simpson's Hotel site, the Bonnie Vale/Maianbar track; and
- a resourcing and joint management/coordination/review program, which would ensure that adequate resources are made available to implement a meaningful program.

Level 2: A boat launch facility

Within this framework it is possible to envisage a boat launching facility with the following characteristics;

- a physically defined area with limited trailer parking, and with a limited (temporary stay) boat parking area;
- careful attention in design and operation to safety of both users and others in the area (particularly children);
- a defined access channel which kept boats away from swimmers and sensitive habitats;
- access controlled by a keyed gate, which would require that Council control at least the road access;
- a management regime which ensures that problems are controlled;
- a review structure that makes sure that familiarity does not need to neglect (if not contempt).



We do not believe that any one will be thanked for creating an outcome that eventually results in serious injury to a child or a swimmer, and very few will be happy with an outcome that decreases the amenity for other users or residents. Similarly we do not believe that anyone wants to prevent responsible boaters from being able to enjoy the Port. There is a substantial degree of shared interest in an outcome that will work for all stakeholders.

Surely it is time we concentrated on how to achieve the best outcome, rather than continuing to pretend that any of us will be happy with a short term win that will result in a longer term harm to others.



Attachments:
Extracts of some of the correspondence about Bonnie Vale



20/8/00 PHPS Letter sent to various politicians (extracts)

The adoption of a Plan of Management for the Royal National Park, after many years of inaction, was welcomed by the Port Hacking Protection Society. Whilst we, like other groups, had preferences that were not reflected in the plan, we were pleased that decisions had been made and were now embedded in a binding program. It has now come as a shock to find that officers of NPWS have apparently agreed to a facility within the Royal National Park, in contradiction of the clear statements in the Plan.

A private agreement to ignore the plan, and to provide a boat ramp at Bonnie Vale, gives us little confidence in the governance of National Parks. This is a matter of legal and political importance in its own right, regardless of the rights or wrongs of the issue of boating access through the Royal National Park at Bonnie Vale. We ask that you intervene to prevent this clear breach of the legislation governing the operations of the National Parks Service.

The area proposed for the addition of a boat ramp is environmentally sensitive and well used by swimmers and families with children. It is an area with a history of incidents and complaints about jetski and boating safety, and interference with low impact use. It is an area where there are sensitive habitats which have been damaged by ill-managed boating. Local residents have repeatedly expressed concern about the impacts of increased boating on the amenity, safety and environmental values. It is also part of the National Park estate.

We believe that there are possible solutions that would protect the National Park and other values. However, any solution should be based on genuine consultation, reflecting the priorities properly embedded in the Plan of Management. Certainly no boating facility should be contemplated until there is a genuine solution to the adverse effects and policy problems that it potentially creates.



3/11/97 PHPS letter to Minister for Ports and Waterways (extracts)

Today a child was hit and seriously injured by a PWC at Bonnie Vale, in precisely an area that we have previously told your department requires a protective regime to be in place. The child was hit notwithstanding an attempt by a concerned parent of another child trying to contact your department to get someone to remove a group of PWC users who were terrorising the children in Simpsons Bay. Their attempt to contact the relevant officer found him at a motor vehicle race meet in Queensland (remarkable irony given the noise complaints we have frequently lodged which have been consistently ignored by your department). The offensive and dangerous conduct continued, and users of the foreshore who asked for the PWC users to move away from the children were met with confrontation. Eventually the inevitable happened. Given that we have specifically warned of this hazard, we trust that your department will accept full responsibility for the injury caused.

The background

Early in 1997 you indicated your intention to create limited protected areas, within which high speed jetcraft would be restricted. At a meeting of the combined Port Hacking Planning and Advisory Committee and the Hacking River Catchment Management Committee (May 27, 1997) the proposed areas were disclosed. Our President, Paul Martin raised the concern that the limited area did not protect the swimmers and others in Simpsons Bay, nor at Cabbage Tree Point, both areas where we were aware of previous reported incidents of danger to other users from PWCs. In response to questions about how the limited areas were specified, we were told that they were specified on the basis of the complaints records. We were surprised, as the pattern of complaints of which we were aware would not align with the areas indicated for protection. A fax was sent at around 6am the following day to your Boating Officer at Miranda, raising these concerns. A further facsimile was sent a few days later when there was no response.

When we eventually received the package of incident reports, we were shocked at what was not in that package.

Notably, there was no assessment of incidents as the basis for consideration of protective zonings. There was no reference to such an analysis (which you will note we specifically requested). And when we looked at the data provided it became apparent why - there are no data on which to base such an analysis. The recording of complaints (which we have been repeatedly assured is done) is virtually non-existent. Complaints from the foreshores (whether safety, nuisance, or noise) have not been logged by your department.

In particular, we can point to a number of complaints from residents in Maianbar and Bundeena, including noise complaints, reports of PWC 'buzzing' swimmers and wave jumping young children, and aggressive behaviour, none of which have been logged. We can point to written submissions by a number of residents to your officers which have not emerged. We can obtain statutory declarations from responsible community members attesting to all that we are saying in this letter.



24/4/99 Hacking River Catchment Management Committee Press release

The Hacking River Catchment Management Committee today released the minutes of a meeting of stakeholders with an interest in a possible boat ramp at Bonnie Vale. "The catchment management committee has a commitment to assisting in the resolution of difficult management issues, through consultation and seeking consensus" stated Peter Wells. "Whilst in this case we are still a long way off achieving consensus, we have at least got the issues on the table and some of the parties talking about how they might be resolved"

The proposed Bonnie Vale boat ramp has been contentious for many years because it involves so many issues and so many interests. It involves the management of an important National Park area, the needs of boat owners who want access to the water, the concerns of residents about personal water craft and swimming safety, and a number of other issues. There are also issues of interdepartmental responsibility, budgets and compliance with the National Parks legislation. A final decision from the NPWS is still to be made.

"By bringing the parties together we have been able to agree some principles that would be applied if the Minister gives the approval for a ramp to proceed. However, there are still many issues which are not yet resolved. Mostly these concern how residents and foreshore users, and the seagrasses, can be protected from the effects of increased use of power boats and personal water craft close to the picnic and swimming area, and homes"

Following the meeting a number of residents had approached those seeking the boat ramp with a proposal about how these issues might be addressed. "Whilst the Catchment Management Committee is keen to assist in any way we can" stated Mr Wells "in the end it is up to those who are directly concerned to work out how to reach a fair agreement that will work for everyone. A unified and accepted proposal will always have a better chance of being implemented than one that is contentious and disputed. "



26/7/99 Residents' letter to Bundeena & Maianbar Waterway Access Group, Port Hacking Protection Society Inc, Bundeena Progress Association, Maianbar Progress Association.

We are residents who expect to be affected by the proposed boat ramp.

We believe that

- a. most residents would welcome a solution that protects us from increases in safety problems, noise and environment damage arising from irresponsible use or simply the possible growth in user numbers;*
- b. most locals who want boating access would welcome a low key boat ramp and a management program which achieved the same ends;*
- c. most of the issues could be resolved in a manner that improves local conditions, but without in any way restricting responsible use of a boat ramp.*

An ideal solution would provide a low key boat access point but at the same time;

- a. prevent harm to the seagrasses and the Basin;*
- b. prevent risk to other unprotected users of Simpson's Bay;*
- c. prevent offensive noise, particularly from jetskis wave jumping on the shoals;*
- d. provide management controls and review mechanisms to ensure that if problems do arise, they are identified and forcefully corrected.*

Most of the local objections could be overcome with a proposal under which:

- i. Simpsons Bay around Bonnie Vale, north to around three quarters of the length of Deeban Spit and east to the end of Pulpit Rock, be declared a swimming beach and subject to the normal waterways controls for such beaches. Assuming proper policing this would overcome most of the swimmer safety concerns.*
- ii. The seagrass beds of Simpsons Bay, and the Basin, to be declared power boat exclusion zones, to protect the seagrasses and natural assets of the area.*
- iii. Boats could be provided a defined channel to and from the ramp, out for 100 metres from the shoreline, which would prevent damage to seagrass beds and to ensure that swimmers can be confident of their safety.*
- iv. A 4 knot speed restriction would be created for all of Simpsons Bay, including the shoals which would otherwise be used for wave jumping. This would overcome the jetski noise problems.*

These four measures should be additional to the on-land measures already proposed at the Catchment Management Committee, and the commencement of the ramp should be subject to the agreement of Waterways and other authorities to these management controls.

We believe that it is in the interests of all to put forward a complete proposal, incorporating these measures, so that the already complex issues are not made more difficult by in-fighting in our small communities. We do not believe that it is sensible for political agendas or personality conflicts to prevent us creating a proposal that would be widely acceptable locally.

We ask that you incorporate this in your proposals, in the interests of the whole of the resident population of Bundeena and Maianbar.



7/99 Residents' letters to management, RNP

I am a resident who will be effected by the proposed Bonnie Vale boat ramp. Others may have the choice to visit Bonnie Vale, or to use Simpson's Bay, but residents will live with the impacts of the boat ramp, with little alternative short of selling our homes, disrupting our family lives and moving elsewhere. For this reason I ask that my concerns and those of my neighbours be given the serious consideration that they deserve, because of the major impact that the decisions about this boat ramp might have.

I am opposed to the boat ramp at Bonnie Vale, as it is presently proposed. Nothing is planned to prevent the problems which are likely with growth in use, particularly by jetskis and "tinnies". The number of jetskis is increasing rapidly. They are being prohibited in estuaries South of Port Hacking. Launching facilities to the North are not as convenient to users from South of Sydney. This raises the likelihood of a major growth in the number of jetskis using Bonnie Vale as a base.

Safety: *There has been a spate of incidents in Simpsons Bay, where high speed boats have placed children in danger in the swimming and picnic areas. In one a jetski hit a child, after careering through the swimming area. In another, a power boat went out of control in the same area. There are frequent incidents of jetskis ignoring safety rules in the area whilst wave jumping and placing swimmers and others at serious risk. No management approach has been proposed to overcome these problems, which will increase with increased use.*

Many of us fear a serious injury or fatality. Legal cases highlight the liability for the National Park and Waterways Authorities if they create conditions of danger for users of a recreational area. Officers of your departments will not be able to claim a lack of knowledge of the risk that will be created by encouraging high speed boats into a swimming and family recreation area.

Noise: *The noise of jetskis in Simpsons Bay can be unbearable, particularly on holiday weekends. The combination of wave jumping, jetskiers congregating in the area, and the conduct of unofficial races and rallies in the waves, creates a high level of noise. Existing noise controls on jetskis do not work effectively for the conditions in Simpsons Bay, and the Noise from Vessels Regulations are not effectively enforced. Nothing has been proposed to prevent these problems increasing with increased use.*

This will result in a totally unacceptable situation in Simpsons Bay, and the along the Southern shore. A boat ramp at Bonnie Vale, unless accompanied by strong and effective controls, will attract this problem.

Land effects: *Bonnie Vale is predominantly a low key family recreation area. Boat ramps typically create conditions that are inconsistent with this. These include the substantial parking required for vehicles and trailers, the risks to young children from boat or trailer manoeuvring, the problem of boating rubbish (including bottles, barbed hooks and other items often associated with recreational fishing), fish cleaning and fishing waste. The risks of conflict between boating users and other users are substantial with this proposal.*

An increase in trailers through the park on weekends is also likely to add to the safety issues on the roads leading into Bundeena and Maianbar.

No proposals have been put forward to control any of these problems.

Seagrasses: *The seagrasses of Simpsons Bay and the surrounding areas are at risk of scouring by power vessels and damage by anchoring. They will be further threatened by an*



increase in boats travelling through them and anchoring within them. No management approach has been proposed to protect the seagrasses or sensitive areas nearby from the effects of increased use.

National Park: *Bonnie Vale is a National Park area. Simpsons Bay has always been a low key, safe recreational area with national park characteristics. We are entitled to expect that these natural values will be protected under the laws governing National Parks.*

Since residents are the people on whom any adverse impacts of this proposed ramp are likely to fall most heavily, I ask that we be kept informed of and involved in any decisions which might have an impact on our lives and the area in which we live.