

1 September 2020

The President  
St Huberts Island Residents Association

Dear Mr Ken Stewart

**St Huberts Island Bridge Safety Barrier Upgrade - Meeting 28 August 2020**

Thank you for the opportunity to meet with yourself, Vice President Ron Stapleton and Secretary Geoff Flynn to discuss the issues raised via community consultation for the proposed St Huberts Island Bridge Safety Barrier Upgrade project. This letter provides a summary of issues discussed and it is understood that the letter may form part of the Residents Association's newsletter that is distributed to the community.

Council is in receipt of many requests for safety improvements on the St Huberts Island Bridge which predominantly relate to restricting the opportunity for persons to jump from the bridge. Dating back many years the Residents Association, residents, community members and boat users along with Members of Parliament and the media have been vocal in having safety improvements undertaken to restrict jumping from the bridge.

In consultation with the Residents Association in the past, Council installed prominent warning signage on the bridge to prohibit jumping and arranged Ranger patrols of the area in an attempt to discourage the activity. Additionally, Council wrote to the NSW Police to request increased patrols of the area particularly in the summer months.

Following further advocacy from the Residents Association, Council investigated a wide range of options to further restrict bridge jumping resulting in the identification of suitable safety barrier. The project was successful in gaining funding via the Central Coast Roads Package which was announced by the Australian Government through the Urban Congestion Fund and as result Council is now able to finalise design and implement the project.

Council commenced public consultation on the project through the Residents Association on in April this year. In response to the feedback, the consultation period was extended and closed on 18 May 2020. There was a total of 223 submissions on the project with most responses concerned about the visual impact of the fence. Other issues raised related to obstruction of views, devaluation of property, requests for CCTV in lieu of a fence and the ability of the proposed barrier to deter bridge jumpers. There were also a large number of submissions that supported the proposal. Council will be providing a direct response to each person who made a submission.



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### Safety Barrier Options and Visual Impact

Council considered a wide range of safety barrier options in the initial development of this project in 2010. Additional investigations were also undertaken once the grant funding was announced to see if there were any new viable options on the market. The options considered included safety glass, perspex, plastic-coated chain wire, fabricated steel barriers (similar to a pool fence) as well as the proposed galvanised steel mesh.

The assessment process considered the condition of the bridge, construction methodology, structural loadings, Australian Standards and best practice guidelines, visual impacts, construction costs, vandalism potential and ongoing maintenance requirements.

It was quickly recognised that a primary consideration was the structural capacity of the existing bridge. Structural engineering reports recommended that the weight of the new safety barrier should not exceed the weight of the existing fence. This immediately ruled out the use of heavier fabricated steel barriers and also solid fence options like safety glass or perspex which increase the wind loading that is transferred to the existing structure.

Of the remaining safety barrier options, the galvanised steel mesh was considered the best as it is industry standard, requires the least amount of structural reinforcement and provides the most effective barrier to prevent climbing.

### Obstruction of Views and Property Valuations

The obstruction of view from the bridge for road users and adjacent residences is not expected to be significant. The mesh panels between each support post will still allow those using to bridge to experience the view of Brisbane Water and St Hubert's Island itself.

The proposed fence is approximately 2.4m high and would be same height regardless of which fence option was used. The proposed galvanised steel mesh requires less structural support than the other fence options and no cross-beams whatsoever. As a result, the galvanised steel mesh has the least amount of view blockage from solid structural supports.

Council is currently developing concept images to demonstrate the type of indicative views each fencing option would provide. This will be included in the response letter to each community member who made a submission.

The devaluation of property was not discussed during our recent meeting, but Council does not consider that the replacement of the bridge fencing with an alternate barrier fence will impact on improvements to individual properties and therefore will have no affect on property valuations.

### Closed Circuit Television (CCTV)

Remote surveillance via CCTV was considered as part of the initial project development. This option was not supported as Council's CCTV network is not permanently monitored meaning



bridge jumping activity would continue to be unregulated and as a result would not deliver on the core project objective.

Council is in the process of reviewing its CCTV strategy to better understand how and where to deploy CCTV surveillance. The new strategy will establish a framework to prioritise sites for new CCTV installations and define service levels in relation to active or passive monitoring. CCTV on St Hubert's Island bridge will be reconsidered once the Strategy has been finalised.

#### Bridge Jumping Restriction

The primary objective of this project is to address the safety issues associated with bridge jumping. If left unmitigated there is a high risk of a person being seriously injured or killed. That risk is not only to those jumping from the bridge but also adjacent road users and those that may be on the water in the landing zone. Council now has an opportunity, and legal obligation, to mitigate that risk.

The proposed safety barrier is considered the best option to deter bridge jumpers due to the difficulties presented with climbing the proposed barrier. Measures will also be put in place to prevent people from climbing along the outside of the proposed safety barrier from each end of the bridge.

#### Project Delivery Timelines

Tenders for supply and installation of the safety barrier is expected to be complete by the end of the 2020. Construction work to install the safety barrier on the bridge is expected to commence in February 2021. The existing steel pedestrian fence will be removed and recycled as part of this process.

Removal of the existing fencing and installation of the new safety barrier will impact on pedestrian and vehicle traffic access. Impacts will be minimised by the implementation of appropriate traffic and pedestrian controls during construction. The exact nature of those control will be established in consultation with the successful contractor for the works.

The Residents Association and community feedback on this project has been important to Council as it has been over many years. The opportunity to have a robust and constructive discussion as we worked through the issues raised by the community feedback was extremely valuable and has helped to refine the final project scope.

Yours sincerely



Jay Spare

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Central Coast Council**