

Minutes of Meeting Held on Site at Stairs Leading to Nelsons Beach – Jervis Street Vincentia
Tuesday, 3 April 2018.

Present Alasdair Stratton- Manager Natural Resources and Floodplain Unit
Ray Massie Coast and Estuaries Officer

The meeting commenced at around 2.15. The purpose of the meeting was to gauge members of the public as well as members of the Vincentia ratepayers' ideas as to the closing of the beach access to Nelson Beach from the White Sands Walk between Jervis St and Blenheim Beach. This informal meeting was attended by 30 interested parties.

Alasdair addressed the meeting stating that in 2016 a large east coast low had hit Jervis Bay impacting heavily on Nelsons Beach. Because of this damage the stairs were deemed to be unsafe for use and would need to either be reconstructed, removed or repositioned. He stated that council had 3 options

- 1. Close those stairs and completely upgrade existing stairs to beach in Jervis Street.**
- 2. Create a viewing platform half way down current stairs.**
- 3. Rebuild the old stairs thus keeping them open.**

Mr Stratton stated that Ray Massie was in charge of all beach access areas, he advised the group that to replace the old stairs would be in the vicinity of **\$60 to \$70,000** as they would not be made of treated pine but would be fibreglass compound which would have a 100 year design life. He also stated that the current Jervis Street access does not meet the current Australian Standards. They also felt that as more of these types of storms are anticipated in the future that there would be too many risks to replace and that Council are moving away from these access paths in risky areas.

Discussion: Members had their turn to ask questions and put forward their opinions. Many felt that the Jervis Street access was good to use the way it was, many also felt that the old stairs were not so much damaged through the storm but more because of lack of maintenance by Council allowing stairs to rust out. People were sympathetic to budget restraints but stated that most people like to walk the whole of the beach either with or without a dog and wanted to be able to access and depart the beach from the existing entrance.

Mr Stratton replied that they have a structural report that says the stairs are not sound and that Council will not simply patch it up but would have to remove it or replace it.

Persons also commented on the fact that there is an existing sign that says Council will replace these stairs in 2018.

As not all of the persons who attended today are members of the VRRRA it was commented on that Council should actually do a mail drop to ratepayers to truly understand the feelings of residents. Persons commented that they would like to still be able to use these stairs in 10 years time.

Fire Exit: It was commented that to close off these stairs would also block that end of the beach to be accessible in the case of a bush fire. This was a proven point in the case of the Tathra fire where persons thronged to the safety of the beach.

Overuse: It was commented on that to close one access would put too much pressure on an already overused entry to the beach. Over the holidays, Easter etc parking is at a premium with dogs and cars filling the surrounding area, this would have a doubling effect if only one access to the beach was available.

Mr Stratton stated that there is not enough money to replace the old access as well as to fix up the Jervis Street access Council could only afford to do one.

It was then discussed that Council spend in excess of \$1million on advertising to the tourist market. Surely if Council can afford to spend the amount of money on advertising it must then be prepared to start to upgrade the facilities in the area. This would include beach accesses (which are highly prized when it comes to things like **the White Sands Walk**) **toilets, paths, gutters and parks.** It would seem that only \$220,000 is allocated to take care of something like 220 beach accesses up

and down the coast in the Shoalhaven.. Council is starting to see the reality with the closure of access roads to Hyams Beach during the peak holiday period.

Close: The informal meeting closed at 2.45 pm with Mr Stratton and Mr Massie to write a summary of proceedings detailing their outcomes he conceded that the consensus of the meeting is that the old access shouldn't be closed. A summary will be sent to the VRRRA which will be sent to members as well as a copy of the structural report issued by Council.