

City of Melville – Deputation 13 September 2022

Presentation by Dr Graham Mahony, Resident, 69 Warragoon Crescent, Attadale WA 6156.

Greeting

Your Worship the Mayor and Councillors thank you for allowing me to address you this evening.

The Purpose of the Deputation

This deputation arises from our Petition submitted on 24 June and address three matters:

- Location of a boardwalk
- Foreshore restoration and vegetation
- Public access along the river foreshore

The specific locations referenced are the Attadale bushland, the dieback area, the adjoining pathway and/or river foreshore.

The Foreshore Master Plans

The Attadale Alfred Cove Foreshore Master Plan October 2021 included diagrams accompanying what was proposed. The February 2022 Master Plan report was more complex which the Attachment in our Petition hopefully addressed – I will not discuss it this evening.

What do we know?¹

1. A boardwalk is proposed through the Attadale bushland and the die-back area with a provisional sum of \$1.3 million (ABR-01).
2. Repair of the foreshore along the Attadale Bushland is nominated as a ‘priority’ and includes removal of the existing foreshore pathway as part of the provisional sum of \$7.4 million (ABR-02).
3. Two viewing platforms are proposed for a provisional sum \$700k. (ARB-05), and
4. A Foreshore Boardwalk as part of Attadale Reserve foreshore rehabilitation in the longer term, provisional sum \$1.6 million. (ABR-03).

¹ The ‘elements’ Attadale Alfred Cove Foreshore Master Plans report October 2021, and the February 2022 report presented to Councillors.

The public seeks a boardwalk access to the river foreshore in lieu of a proposed boardwalk through the bushlands.

Petition proposed the Boardwalk be Relocated

Our petition aligned the boardwalk along the exiting foreshore pathway; however, a wider buffer can be created if it was located on the southern side of the existing foreshore pathway just inside the bushland fence line. This would enable the exiting pathway to be utilised during construction to prevent environmental damage. Some vegetation would be removed from the bushland edge.

The objections from DBCA to a boardwalk *in this location* include:

1. The cost for such a walkway would be excessive.
2. A boardwalk in the proposed location would need to have a lifespan of up to 50 years.
3. Trees cannot be removed from the bushland area.
4. The buffer to the river edge is not sufficient.
5. Vegetation will not grow under an elevated boardwalk.
6. The boardwalk would end up over water due to sea rise from now to 2100.
7. This entire riverfront is susceptible to prevailing winds and wave surge during storms, as is Point Walter, the wet dog/wind-surfing area and entire Attadale foreshore.

Almost all of these objections apply equally to a boardwalk routed through the bushland.

1. The boardwalk proposed adjoining the river requires removal of much less vegetation and using the exiting pathway during construction reduces environmental damage and provides access for foreshore refurbishment.
2. A contoured boardwalk through the bushlands would requiring considerable removal of vegetation. Damage would inevitably occur during construction and could exacerbate spread of dieback.
3. Removal of vegetation in the bushland is increased by two proposed viewing platforms on the river foreshore resulting in fragmentation of the reserve
4. The bushland, foreshore pathway and dog exercise area *are about the same elevation* so sea rise would impact the boardwalk wherever it is installed.
5. Eventual demolition of the existing foreshore pathway provides room for planting foreshore vegetation along it.

6. It seems the Bush Forever status does not apply to the removal of vegetation for a boardwalk through the bushland and die-back area, (or boardwalk installed along the fence line).
7. The buffer between the river and the proposed boardwalk alignment varies along the foreshore pathway from 21-22 metres east end to 6-7 metres along the damaged section down to the existing boardwalk. Planting sedges and vegetation on the pathway itself provides 3-4 metre buffer.

The issue is not the boardwalk, the issue is where it is *located*.

Boardwalk Design

The cost and life of any asset depends on the design, materials, location, and through-life support – a 50-year life span for a boardwalk would be based on these design considerations. The foreshore boardwalk is about 350 metres, the contoured bushland boardwalk would be more than 350 metres. The boardwalk should be elevated, say, 1.2 metres with two viewing platforms allowing access by families with prams, children on bikes, people in wheelchairs and walking frames (*AS1428-2009 General requirements for access*).

Climate change – Sea water rise

Due to climate change and sea water is predicted to rise. “The projected global sea level rise by 2100, including 'scaled-up ice sheet discharge', is between approximately 0.2 to 0.8 m”.² As these changes are realised strategies for protecting the Attadale foreshore will undoubtedly be revised many times.

The foreshore pathway

By way of background, a decade ago the foreshore pathway extended through to the western end of the Marine Park (dog/wind surfing area). A section was demolished adjoining the die-back reserve, foreshore protective barriers were installed, washed away, reinstalled again, deteriorated and in June 2020 were removed together with other protective barriers along the foreshore pathway east. This resulted in massive foreshore erosion.

² Reference: Sea Level Change in Western Australia - Application to Coastal Planning, Charlie Bicknell, Department of Transport Coastal Infrastructure, Coastal Engineering Group, Feb 2010, p.12 AR4 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Fourth Assessment.

The remaining section of the foreshore pathway was upgraded to AusRoad standards (3.3m wide) coincident with the new pathway diversion around and adjoining Burke Drive.

Also, in July 2020 the logs embedded in the sand and protecting the foreshore pathway were removed leading to immediate erosion.

Fast forward: In July 2022 DBCA engaged Natural Area Management Services (NAMS) to install sandbags along a storm damaged section and reinstated the pathway. Sedges were also planted in the adjoining damaged sections - they were planted one day and being unprotected were uprooted by a river surge the next day.

Over the last decade the stabilising impact of trees on the river edge along this foreshore have been eroded falling into the river because protective barriers failed.

The issue is not only the boardwalk the issue is where it is *located* AND the *sustained foreshore remediation* along the river foreshore.

What is it about walking along the river foreshore?

There is an 'unquantifiable' and indescribable feeling of peace and joy walking along the river foreshore early in the morning as I and many other people experience every morning – the vista, the stunning views available from the pathway - the sun rise, the Swans, Pelicans, migratory birds, and occasionally dolphins and calves, accompanied by the pleasing of sounds from birds waking up and the sound of waves gently lapping on the shoreline.

The location of the boardwalk on the riverfront enables the public to view and monitor the foreshore; a bushland boardwalk becomes 'out of sight out of mind'.

This is a highly valuable natural area that provides a snapshot for posterity and for future generations to appreciate how our river shorefront used to look. It is a natural asset and a valuable tourist attraction.

Proposed Foreshore Boardwalk Alignment

A boardwalk aligned along the inside of the bushland fence line adjoining the foreshore pathway:

1. Provides access along the river foreshore to the bushland one side, river the other.
2. Provides valuable access when constructing the boardwalk as well as access to the foreshore for refurbishment - restoration and re-vegetation.
3. Should not be demolished in haste because of the benefits it provides to assist planning and planting.
4. The installation of two viewing platforms off the boardwalk requires virtually no removal of vegetation.
5. The community observes and keeps an eye on the condition of the foreshore and its vegetation – it cannot continue to do this if it does not have access along the foreshore.

Summary

Firstly: The public amenity to the river foreshore and protection of the foreshore should be paramount in our planning and thinking.

Secondly: The issue is not the boardwalk, but where it is located.

Thirdly: The restoration and vegetation of the foreshore is designated a 'priority' BUT nothing will happen unless a coordinated workable plan of action is formulated, financed, and *actively managed*.

Finally, Mike Nicol, and I extend an invitation for you at any time to visit with us this foreshore area.

Thank you, particularly the slide projectionist, and I welcome any comments and questions from Your Worship and Councillors.

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