



Notice Of Motion – General Electors Council Meeting – Town of Bassendean

That Council consider minor amendments to the Ashfield Flats Master Plan in order to:

Explore and implement alternatives that will enshrine the existing riverside heritage trail linking Ashfield to Bassendean, from the Roy Hookway Fishing Platform to the Sandy Beach Reserve

and furthermore

Acknowledge the distinction between the iconic Ashfield Flats Wetland and the historic dairy farm and pastureland contained within Ashfield Flats, and extending the length of the riverbank from Sandy Beach Reserve to the Chapman Street Drain Timber Bridge.

AshfieldCAN Perspective

As we are aware, recently the Federal Government approved a grant of almost \$2m to the Town to implement key components of the Ashfield Flats Master Plan. The Town is to be congratulated on securing the grant, as AshfieldCAN has a long and abiding interest in the health of the iconic wetlands.

The Master Plan was adopted with full support of Council, following a persuasive presentation by its government proponents and external consultants. The Plan was presented as a definitive document based on exacting science.

However, following the publication and acceptance of the Master Plan, at a strongly supported community meeting hosted by AshfieldCAN, we became concerned when the plan's manager declared the 'Master Plan' should not be considered conclusive, but rather no more than an unfunded concept plan. In light of subsequent events, the implications of these two contradictory perspectives caused our Network concern and should concern our community, and our Council.

For people unaware, there is a vexed past to this issue, as it should be noted that a hastily constructed post and rail fence, constructed in 2018, was immediately removed from the Ashfield Flats pastureland. The removal followed strong community concerns expressed at a packed meeting convened by our local member of parliament and hosted by the Town. This 'Master Plan', at its heart, seeks to reintroduce this pathway and fence designed, not to prevent access to the wetlands as intimated, but rather to fence-off the river, hence the intended fenced and narrow pathways leading to narrow openings on the riverbank. Once removed, our unique riverside experience will be gone forever, forgotten by future generations.



This said, people strongly agree with the objectives of the Master Plan however have concerns about the execution of those objectives, particularly the planned future removal of the riverside heritage trail linking Ashfield to Bassendean, and the inclusion, by inference, of the historic dairy farm pasture as part of the Federal 'Bushland Forever' wetlands heritage site. Until relatively recently this pastureland was harvested and bailed as animal fodder. We would argue this area, stretching the length of the river from Sandy Beach Reserve to the Chapman Street drain timber bridge, is not and never will be part of the wetlands. This is borne out by the recently published and comprehensive Ashfield Flats Wetland hydrological study which concluded the pastureland would not suffer predicted climate change inundation out to the year 2090, and beyond.

We have assurances the existing pathway will remain in place in the short term but note it **will** be removed within the scope and timeframes of the Master Plan project and **will** be replaced by a fenced pathway 100 to 50 metres from the river into the hinterland which will be planted to exclude any view of the estuary. Furthermore, within the plan, the community will lose the existing pathway connection from the Ashfield Parade, Roy Hookway fishing platform to the timber walkway. Yes, this section of pathway is occasionally affected by shallow tidal flooding, but it is an occurrence that has been experienced within living memory.

Paradoxically, research by our members has demonstrated that neighbouring municipalities of Belmont, Bayswater and Vincent have taken a different approach when protecting almost identical riverbanks and trees. They encourage intimate community connection with the river by constructing unfenced foreshore pathways and building bank-side infrastructure whilst implementing innovative and effective riverbank erosion prevention measures. As indicted within the 'Master Plan', the primary cause of erosion remains the destructive effect of waves generated by vessels plying the river. Vegetation, of itself, will not prevent this constant and increasing erosion, as is demonstrated within a section of fenced riverbank, erected in about 2017, to the north of the existing timber walkway on Ashfield Flats. We urge people to inspect the erosion in this section, although this is difficult because of the dense screening vegetation, however, viewed from the water, the level of continual erosion is graphic, with planted trees and shrubs severely undercut.

In Conclusion

I present this notice of motion at this meeting on behalf of Ashfield Community Action Network, an organisation with strong links to the Town of Bassendean and which, since 2008, has fervently supported the community of Ashfield and more broadly Bassendean. We call on Council to consider (without jeopardising grant funding) minor, practicable amendments to the Ashfield Flats Master Plan, thus allowing the long-term retention of our current riverside heritage trail linking Ashfield and Bassendean. In addition, ask Council to recognise that the historic dairy farm pastureland forms no part of our



precious Wetlands but constitutes a valuable recreation reserve with the potential to enhance the Towns large tree canopy, remnant examples of which can be seen flourishing within the parkland.

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