

Speech on Life Saving Hall - 18th August 2025

Dear Mayor, Deputy Mayor, Councilors and Council Staff,

My name is MARELLE BURNUM BURNUM, Secretary of the Woronora Valley Residents Association Inc. (WVRA Inc.), and I speak on behalf of our WVRA Inc. members and wider community.

Firstly, I would like to express our support for the motion put forward by Deputy Mayor Laura Cowell regarding the future of Woronora River Life Saving Hall. We also wish to sincerely thank our E Ward Councilors, for their collaborative teamwork and shared commitment to finding a constructive, community-focused solution.

The Woronora River Life Saving Hall is more than a building—it is an important part of our village identity, built by the hands of locals from reclaimed materials, in the 1940's and embodies the spirit of resilience and service.

Before the Hall existed, life-saving activities were already being carried out on the river. Seeing a need for a gathering place, residents salvaged timber from an old jetty with approval from the then council and built the Hall themselves. That spirit of repurpose, volunteering, and community-led action is central to the Hall's heritage and must guide future decisions.

There is no doubt that the community needs a hall space which could be renamed "Woronora River Community Hall" considering the lifesaving activities have not been in operation since Doreen Noonan and Norm & Betty Dixon (my parents) have passed over. Clare Carroll (my sister) who then took on the responsibility of saving life for many years, was forced to stop activities over the covid period and has currently moved to the south coast. Life Saving Activities have since ceased for over 5 years as no community member has been willing to take on the responsibility since.

With that in mind, WVRA Inc. respectfully presents the following four options for Council's consideration which were included in the WVRA Inc., submission previously emailed to our E ward councilors: This Now includes additions to Option 1.

Option 1: Rebuild the Hall on Higher Ground

Construct a new community facility above the flood zone, incorporating salvaged heritage elements. The building has always been in a flood prone position.

Should option 1, be considered, it is an opportunity for Council to recognize our FIRST NATION INHABITANTS. The original construction of the hall was predominantly tied to European settlement at that time. However, recognition of the deep-rooted presence AROUND the hall, River and Bushland is evident and continuous. E.g. The Name Woronora,

Middens along the riverbank, and Engravings and Artifacts. A renew, rebuild and / or rename of the Hall opens an opportunity for Council to include and acknowledge the previous care takers of Darawhal Country.

Incorporating Benefits are: Public safety, flood resilience, modern standards, heritage preservation, and an opportunity to acknowledge First Nation Inhabitants.

Option 2: Relocate and Repurpose Hall Materials

Reuse the Hall's materials to construct a heritage-inspired facility in a safer nearby location, such as the current amenities block in Prince Edward Park Woronora.

Benefits: Continues legacy of reuse, flood-safe location, preserves character and uses recyclable materials.

Option 3: Create a Scaled-Down Heritage Pavilion or Outdoor Space

Use original materials to create a small pavilion or shelter in a safer location.

Benefits: Low cost, flexible use, meaningful heritage retention.

Option 4: Restore and Retrofit the Existing Hall in Situ (If Viable).

Improve drainage and upgrade structure while retaining the Hall on site.

Benefits: Familiar location, safety upgrades, potential cost savings.

We also respectfully request that Council provide any recent structural or environmental reports, especially on the condition of the mortar between the bricks. This concern was raised by our former President, Mr Don Page, and was addressed by his article in the St George & Sutherland Shire Leader.

This is more than a structural matter—it is a question of heritage, resilience, and identity. The Hall is a living monument to Woronora's values.

WVRA Inc. welcomes ongoing collaboration with Council to help deliver a solution that respects heritage, meets safety, cultural and environmental needs, and reflects the changing conditions our village now faces.

Thank you for your time and dedication to our community.

Woronora Valley Residents Association Inc. (WVRA Inc.)

Marelle Burnum Burnum