

Management of Deep & Middle Creek Reserves

Service Partnership Agreement

Between

Primary Partners

- NSW Police – DeeWhy Local Area Command (LAC)
- NSW Police, Gay & Lesbian Liaison
- Pittwater Council
- Warringah Council
- Lesbian & Gay Anti-Violence Project, ACON
- NSCCH HIV & Sexual Health Promotion

Secondary Partners

- NSW Attorney General's Department
- National Parks and Wildlife

13th September 2006

DEFINITIONS

Acknowledging Diversity

Is a commitment to the prevention of discrimination affecting people across gender, sexuality, race, culture, marital status, ethnicity, physical & intellectual ability.

Community Safety

Safe communities relates to the home, to the workplace and public environments and encompasses the physical, social and emotional needs of people. It is achieved by working in multidisciplinary teams alongside the relevant communities.

Harm Minimisation

Is an approach which aims to reduce the adverse health, social and economic consequences of alcohol and other drugs by minimising or limiting the harms and hazards of drug use for both the community and the individual without necessarily eliminating that use (Lenton & Single 1998).

Health Promotion

Aims to improve the health standard of the population (or sub-populations) by affecting the determinants of health and well being. Effective health promotion relies on creating opportunities for change to systems, environments and behaviours, as well as building the capacity of the workforce to act on these opportunities.

Homophobia

Homophobia is the irrational fear (&/or moral/religious prejudice) of sexualities other than heterosexual. This phobia may result in harassment and violence directed at a person because they are or thought to be GLBT.

Heterosexism

Is the privileging of heterosexual relationships, that is, relationships between people of the opposite sex over all other types of relationships. This creates a discriminatory environment in which people make the assumption that everyone is heterosexual and those who are not, are abnormal.

Sexual orientation refers to a person's basic attraction to other people. This attraction may be to members of the opposite sex (heterosexual), members of the same-sex (homosexual) or members of both sexes (bisexual). There has been considerable debate around whether a person's sexual orientation is fixed or if an element of choice is involved. No objective conclusions have been reached. It would appear that many people believe their orientation to be fixed or inherent, with others reporting a change in orientation at a particular stage in their lives.

Sexual behaviour refers to what a person does sexually. In many cases this behaviour matches people's sexual orientation but in many cases it does not. In this sense a person may be involved in heterosexual behaviour but feel their orientation is homosexual or vice versa.

Sexual identity refers to how people see themselves and how they present themselves to others. At times, sexual identity can be different to people's sexual orientation and sexual behaviour which can cause a high level of personal stress. This is especially important in terms of the dominance of heterosexuality.

Working Collaboratively

Working collaboratively with key state government, local government and non-government agencies to facilitate opportunities for change by working towards a common goal. Working in partnership should acknowledge & seek to minimise differences in power and influence that each partner brings.

1. Context

Beat, n. slang – a public meeting place for social connection, sex and/or intimacy between men who have sex with men (MSM) either gay identifying or non-gay identifying, often public toilets but not exclusively.

Public displays of explicit sexual acts whether between same-sex attracted or opposite sex attracted people are illegal in NSW under the Summary Offences Act, 1988.

Attitudes towards sexuality in Australia have undergone remarkable changes in the last 30 years. Gay men and lesbians in particular experience less social stigmatisation and personal hatred than what was once prevalent, and, there is increased visibility of people who are same sex attracted in mainstream social arenas. Despite these positive changes, a person who is same sex attracted cannot take their acceptance for granted-whether from their family, in local shopping centres, in their working lives, or from their health care provider. National research shows us that the rates of homophobia, despite a growing sense of public equality, have not diminished at all – over the past 15 yrs.

Beats, particularly in suburban and rural areas where there are no safe social or community venues for same sex attracted men to meet, will by default perform this function. Beats in such regions are often frequented, not only by gay identifying men but also by heterosexual identifying men, who are also same sex attracted. (See **Definitions** for the difference between sexual orientation, sexual behaviour and sexual identity). The beats at Middle Creek Reserve (Pittwater LGA) and Deep Creek Reserve (Warringah LGA) tend to be frequented by heterosexual identifying men.

2. Background

On 15th of July and then on August 14th 2006 two multi-agency meetings were held at DeeWhy Police station to discuss the medium to long term management of Middle Creek Reserve (Pittwater LGA) and Deep Creek Reserve (Warringah LGA) in relation to MSM activity. Prior to these meetings an assault had been perpetrated at a Brookvale toilet block that may have been in relation to MSM activity. This incident prompted Warringah LGA to contact NSCCH and initiate dialogue in relation to the management of community safety and council assets. Additionally, one complaint had been received by DeeWhy LAC from the public concerning MSM activities. These incidents formed the basis for the discussion at the meetings. The discussion at the July 15th meeting primarily focussed on 'managing beats' within a harm minimisation framework drawing on the resources of local council, police and health, rather than simply closing council assets, and/or arresting MSM.

To be reviewed March 2007 and October 2007

At meeting on August 14th where the Attorney General's Department, the NSW Gay & Lesbian Anti-Violence Project and the coordinator of the NSW Police Gay & Lesbian Liaison Officers were present and much of the same territory was again covered. Since the July 15th meeting a further twelve arrests were made by under cover officers, making a total of fifteen. Information about these arrests and the locations made front page news of the Manly Daily. As was discussed at the meeting, media attention of this nature can significantly escalate the risk of homophobic violence at such sites.

At the conclusion of the second meeting a number of partnership strategies were agreed to relation to the environmental and community safety management of these sites.

3. Violence and Safety

A study commissioned by the Attorney General's Department of NSW (2003), "You Shouldn't Have to Hide to be Safe", reported an alarming rate of violence towards lesbians and gay men in NSW. The results include:

- 56% of respondents reported having experienced one or more forms of homophobic abuse, harassment or violence in the past 12 months. This was almost exactly the same as found in the NSW Police Service's "Out of the Blue" survey in 1995.
- 85% had experienced such abuse sometime in their life.
- Gay men and lesbians were 4-6 times more likely to be assaulted in a 12 month period than other Sydney men and women.
- A total of 69% of respondents felt vulnerable to violence or harassment from strangers. Additionally, 19% felt vulnerable to violence or harassment from people they knew.
- 80% of respondents said they would feel confident about reporting abuse to the Police if they thought it was warranted however, most indicated they would prefer to deal with a Police Gay and Lesbian Liaison Officer (GLLO). However, there are still factors which contribute to some hesitation about approaching the police, leading to an overall under reporting of abuse and violence.
- There is often a trade off between "being yourself" and open about your sexuality, and reducing the risk of abuse and violence. This has far reaching effects on the way lesbians and gay men live their lives.

Public recreational sites, such as Deep and Middle Creek, which also function sub-culturally as beats are potentially dangerous places for anti-gay or 'poofa bashing'. The potential risks for

MSM using beats include: homophobic or 'anti-gay' physical and/or verbal harassment or violence; arrest by police under the Summary Offences Act.

The common experience of homophobic discrimination means that the health of MSM populations differs from that of the general population. For MSM individuals the impact of discrimination can lead to a poorer general health status, an under reporting of harassment or violence, break down in personal and familial relationship and diminished utilisation of public (govt. and non-govt.) facilities that could be accessed for support.¹

4. Purpose and scope

The purpose of the Agreement between the Northern Sydney Central Coast Health HIV and Sexual Health Promotion Unit, DeeWhy Local Area Command (NSW Police), Pittwater Local Government Authority and Warringah Local Government Authority is to coordinate the implementation of harm minimisation strategies aimed at improving the environmental and community safety management of Deep and Middle Creek public recreation areas in relation to MSM and the broader public utilising these sites.

5. Principles that underpin this Agreement

Working Collaboratively; Harm Minimisation; Health Promotion; Community Safety; Acknowledging Diversity

This agreement is established within the following principles and activities:

- The Key Partners agree to establish and support a mutually beneficial process to achieve agreed upon objectives. The objectives will be reviewed and evaluated biannually, ending in October 2007.
- This is a multi-agency partnership, seeking to make the most effective use of resources available to the Key Partners.
- All Key Partners agencies agree to pursue a range of planned and integrated activities, including workforce development initiatives, risk auditing, outreach, community awareness, policy adherence and community and environmental safety strategies.

¹ Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Health: Findings and Concerns, Gay & Lesbian Medical Association (USA) and Colombia University School of Public Health, January 2002
To be reviewed March 2007 and October 2007

6. Objectives of the Service Partnership Agreement

- A. To establish and maintain an effective model of working collaboratively to deliver services within a harm minimisation framework that promotes community safety (inclusive of MSM who use beats) and environmental management of Middle Creek Reserve (Pittwater LGA) and Deep Creek Reserve (Warringah LGA).
- B. To work in partnership to prevent harm associated with homophobia for MSM in the Pittwater and Warringah LGAs.
- C. To develop the work force capacity of Key Partners (i.e. DeeWhy LAC and LGA rangers) with regard to working with clients and implementing community safety interventions for MSM at Middle Creek Reserve (Pittwater LGA) and Deep Creek Reserve (Warringah LGA).

Each Key Partner will have responsibility and accountability for the implementation of the strategies outlined within the partnership agreement, in line with the **Action Plan – Appendix 1**.

Resources

It is agreed that all issues regarding use of administrative, human and financial resources will be negotiated between the Key Partners.

Monitoring and evaluation

It is agreed that strategies within this document will be monitored via an agreed set of impact evaluation indicators, such as conducting the risk audit, number of outreach sessions, training of employees, adjustment to relevant LGA community safety plans, installation of signage, environmental management of the sites etc. Additional to this a brief evaluation report will be written that reviews the effectiveness of this pilot multi-agency partnership.

Biannual meetings will be held for a period of one year between all Key Partners to review the Agreement and agreed to activities.

Review

This agreement will be **reviewed biannually**, or prior to this, if either party has serious cause to request an earlier revision.

We the undersigned hereby agree and commit our respective services/ organisations to operating according to the Principles of this Service Partnership Agreement.

Commander - DeeWhy LAC

NSW PGLLO Coordinator

Pittwater Council

Warringah Council

Coordinator NSW AVP

A/Manager NSCCH HIV SHPU

Date: 8th September 2006

References

- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Health: Findings and Concerns, Gay & Lesbian Medical Association (USA) and Columbia University School of Public Health, January 2002
- Attorney General's Department of NSW (2003), "You Shouldn't Have to Hide to be Safe"

APPENDIX 1 – ACTION PLAN 2006 - 2007

OBJECTIVES, STRATEGIES, RESPONSIBILITIES & TIME FRAME

Objective 1: To establish and maintain an effective model of working collaboratively to deliver services within a harm minimisation framework to promote community safety (inclusive of MSM who use beats) and environmental management of Middle Creek Reserve (Pittwater LGA) and Deep Creek Reserve (Warringah LGA).

Strategies	Responsibility	Time Frame
Convene a meeting with key agencies to discuss the management of Middle Creek & Deep Creek Reserves.	DeeWhy LAC & Warringah Council	July 15 th 2006
Convene a broader meeting with all key partners represented to discuss and agree to a range of collaborative 'beat' management strategies for Middle & Deep Creek Reserves.	DeeWhy LAC and NSCCH	Aug 10 th 2006
To draft a partnership agreement to be agreed to and signed by all Key Partners.	NSCCH HIV SHPU	September 8 th 2006
Review of safety-audit recommendations & implementation of collaborative strategies to occur three months post site assessment.	DeeWhy LAC + all Key Partners	November 28 th 2006
To increase signage at Middle & Deep Creek Reserves to promote environmental management and increase public use (decrease isolation) of the sites.	Warringah Council & Pittwater Council	November 28 th 2006
To clear undergrowth at Middle Creek Reserve to improve sight lines.	Warringah Council	November 28 th 2006

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (Indicators in Red mean they have been achieved)

- Meeting of interested stakeholders convened July 15th 2006.
- Meeting of all Key Partners convened August 10th 2006.
- Partnership Agreement drafted, sent out for comment and ratified.
- Safety audit recommendations reviewed three months post audit at a meeting with all Key Partners present.
- Signage increase at Middle & Deep Creek Reserves to promote environmental management and increase public use of the sites.
- Sight lines improved/cleared at Middle Creek Reserve.

To be reviewed March 2007 and October 2007

Objective 2: To work in partnership to prevent harm associated with beat activity for MSM in the Pittwater and Warringah LGAs.

Strategies	Responsibility	Time Frame
NSW Gay & Lesbian AVP to release a safety and awareness statement to on-line 'beat' networks concerning media coverage of arrests at Middle & Deep Creek Reserves.	NSW AVP	August 20 th 2006
Conduct limited seasonal outreach to MSM networks at Middle and Deep Creek Reserves to promote safety and raise awareness of new management strategies.	DeeWhy GLLO and NSCCH HIV SHPU	October – December 2006
To conduct an audit of Middle & Deep Creek Reserves to assess safety & environmental integrity.	Pittwater LGA, Warringah LGA, Manly LAC, NSCCH and French's Forrest TAG	August 30 th 2006
Conduct regular uniformed patrol of Middle & Deep Creek Reserves.	French's Forest and DeeWhy LAC	Ongoing
To implement recommendations from the risk audit.	Relevant key partners	Review Nov 28 th 2006
To not release information to media that identifies the location of the beats.	DeeWhy LAC	Review Nov 28 th 2006
To have transparency of process and include Beat Management in the Community Safety Plans of both LGAs.	Pittwater LGA, Warringah LGA	Review Nov 28 th 2006

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (Indicators in Red mean they have been achieved)

- NSW Gay & Lesbian AVP to release a statement to on-line beat networks.
- Conduct limited seasonal outreach at Middle & Deep Creek Reserves.
- Conduct a safety audit of Middle & Deep Creek Reserves.
- Conduct regular uniformed patrol of Middle & Deep Creek Reserves.
- Review implementation of recommendations from safety audit in November 2006.
- Any information release to media concerning arrests at Middle & Deep Creek Reserves will NOT identify the location of these sites.
- Community Safety Plans updated to include management of Beats, this could also include working with NSCCH to promote the health & well being of MSM at these (& other) sites.

Objective 3: To develop the work force capacity of Key Partners (i.e. DeeWhy LAC and LGA rangers) with regard to working with clients and implementing community safety interventions for MSM at Middle Creek Reserve (Pittwater LGA) and Deep Creek Reserve (Warringah LGA).

Strategies	Responsibility	Time Frame
To host 'beat management' training for DeeWhy LAC, Pittwater and Warringah LGA employees.	DeeWhy LAC, NSW PGLLO Coordinator, NSW Attorney General's Department, NSW AVP and NSSCH	TBA By end Nov 2006.

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (Indicators in Red mean they have been achieved)

- Beat workforce development conducted for DeeWhy LAC, Pittwater and Warringah Council employees.
- Evaluation of this training conducted.