

DRAFT SAFETY AUDIT REPORT

DEEP CREEK RESERVE

Audit Team: Constable Corinne Whitfield, Crime Prevention Officer (Manly LAC), Constable Rob McDonald, Targeted Action Group (Northern Beaches LAC - French's Forest), Constable O'Donnell, Targeted Action Group (Northern Beaches LAC - French's Forest), Susan Gomola, Safe Communities Officer Warringah Council, Michael West, A/Manager HIV and Sexual Health Promotion Unit, Jane Mulroney, Community Development Officer, Pittwater Council.

Date/Time of audit: Wednesday 3- August 2006, 2pm.

Introduction

Key stakeholders including Warringah and Pittwater Council and the HIV and Sexual Health Promotion Unit were invited by Northern Beaches Local Area Command to attend a meeting to discuss the management of issues present at Middle and Deep Creek Reserves. The area has been targeted by police as a result of a complaint from a resident who used the reserves who are concerned about his/her safety. The two main issues concerning police relate to drug activity and the fact that the reserves are known as "beats" attracting men who go to the reserve to meet other men for sex. To address the issues arising from these concerns it was decided that a safety audit should be carried out in both reserves.

Audit team members met at Middle Creek Reserve and then conducted an audit of both Middle Creek and Deep Creek Reserves. Team members were required to address the questions outlined in the safety audit checklist (see Attachment 1) and record their observations. At the conclusion of the audit, the team met as a group to discuss their observations and confirm recommendations.

The following report summarises the observations of the team at the time of the safety audit conducted at Deep Creek Reserve. A similar report has been compiled for Middle Creek Reserve.

Location:

Deep Creek Reserve is located at North Narrabeen on the right hand side of Wakehurst Parkway heading from Narrabeen to the Sports Academy. Entrance to the Reserve is largely via a main entrance road way clearly signposted as Deep Creek Reserve. Deep Creek Reserve consists of two car park areas, a series of picnic tables scattered along the waterway and has a designated field near the toilet block which is a dog training area. A storage room/office forms part of the toilet block and this is used by the dog training group. The Reserve itself is bordered by the Wakehurst Parkway, the waterway and natural landscape. There are no houses or other structures in close proximity to the Reserve.

On entrance to the Reserve, the car park and natural landscaped areas including the dog training area appear to be well maintained and well cared for. There is no apparent litter or graffiti within sight.

Lighting

There is no lighting in the car parks or toilet block area. It is the opinion of the audit team that no lighting is required in the general area of the Reserve but installing lighting directly behind the toilet block area could be beneficial. The area behind the toilet block has been cleared and a concrete area and low retaining wall have been

constructed. A condom and vaseline jar were observed on the ground in this location and it is suggested that lighting may prevent activity from occurring in this area.



Isolation

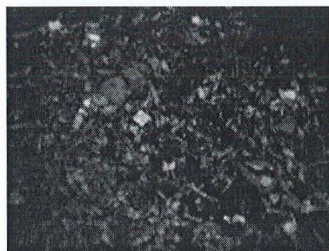
At the time of the audit the Reserve had few visitors to the area. There was a fisherman on the bridge under the roadway and near the end of the audit people arrived with dogs to walk them off the leash in the dog training area. Observations from the audit team noted that Deep Creek Reserve is a more isolated area than Middle Creek Reserve.

There are no paid parking metres at Deep Creek and therefore patrols by Council Rangers are random. Police from the Northern Beaches Targeted Action Team are performing regular patrols at the time of the audit. Cleaners and maintenance staff from Pittwater Council attend on a regular basis which is demonstrated by the well maintained lawn areas and cleanliness of the toilet facilities.

Sightlines

In the car park and dog training areas there are clear sightlines. However once a person is away from these areas there are many pockets of bushland and rocky outcrops that are particularly secluded. There are two main areas of concern:

1. The area to the far end of the dog training area becomes very secluded once people cross the timber bridge. The walking track beyond this bridge passes into bushland with rock formations and steep escarpment on the right. There were three rock formations observed by the audit team that could be said to operate as small caves. All three formations had been utilised by users of the reserve with condom wrappers, condoms, a pair of underpants and drug paraphernalia littered throughout the three locations.



2. The second area of concern is located at the southern end of the reserve. Users of the reserve can walk by the creek and continue on the walking trail that proceeds under Wakehurst Parkway roadway above. This walking trail continues towards Bilarong Reserve with fencing on the right hand side of the walking trail. There are two gates in the fencing which lead to secluded natural bushland. The fencing has been installed to keep visitors to the walking track. Two gates have been installed within the fencing as it has been the experience within Council that the fence will be damaged if visitors cannot pass through the fence if they need to.

Within this bushland area behind the fence, there were numerous areas of bushland with small clearings where people could hide unnoticed. Police refer to this area as the 'Bower' area and it is obviously well utilised with evidence of condom wrappers and toilet paper left behind.



Nearby Land Uses

In the centre of the Deep Creek Reserve a cleared area of lawn has been allocated as a dog training area. A small office in the toilet block is also available for dog training club members. A number of picnic tables are located along the creek to users of the reserve to sit and eat during their visit. There are many spots where fishing can be undertaken along the creek foreshore and bridge under the roadway. The walkway that proceeds under the roadway is being developed as a walking trail that links to Bilarong Reserve. Construction is currently underway to build a playground at Bilarong Reserve. It is anticipated that this will bring an increased number of visitors to the walking trail that may be a natural deterrent from visitors using the 'Bower' area.

Deep Creek Reserve is clearly separate from surrounding bushland and visitors to the Reserve do so by turning off Wakehurst parkway. The Reserve is quite isolated as it is not surrounded by housing or other populated areas.

Management of the reserve by Pittwater Council is clearly indicated by signs with the Council insignia. This can be observed as visitors enter the reserve and car park. There appears to be a clear sense of ownership as the entire reserve (apart from the two areas of concern) is free of graffiti, rubbish and has a very clean appearance.

Entry to the Reserve is via the car park areas with one way in and out.

Signs

There is signage to identify the dog training area but little signage to assist others find their way around other areas of the Reserve.

Public transport

The nearest public transport route is located along the Wakehurst Parkway near the Narrabeen Sports Academy. It is unlikely that due to the busy roadway and isolation of the reserve that many visitors to the reserve would walk to this location. All visitors to the Reserve are likely to travel by car.

Maintenance

As referred to earlier the Reserve is extremely well maintained. There are no broken windows or repairs needed to be undertaken on signage or the toilet block. While the toilets were clean it was apparent that fires had been set to the toilet roll mechanism in both the men and women's toilet. Charring to the brick wall was evident but the toilet roll mechanisms were still operational.

Recommendations:

The audit team identified a number of recommendations for implementation that are targeted to increasing public usage of the area and decrease the isolation that currently exists. There is also a desire for responsibility to be taken for regular clean-up of the two areas of concern.

It is recommended that:

1. Signage is erected that promotes the walking track to Bilarong Reserve and encourages walkers to keep to the walking track rather than enter the bushland area beyond the fences.
2. The walking track over the bridge at the northern end of the dog training area is a potentially dangerous area due to its seclusion and nature of activities performed there. Signage could give an indication of the length of the walking track and explain where the walking track leads to as a guide to visitors walking within the park.
3. Rubbish (condoms, condom wrappers, tissues etc) left in the identified secluded areas is a problem. Signage placed along the fence on Bilarong walking track could emphasise the importance of looking after the environment and ask visitors to be mindful of the environment and dispose of their litter carefully. Additional signs located along the walking track near the rock formations (Caves) with this message are also recommended.
4. Regular cleanup of these areas is undertaken. Overall, the reserve appears to be very well maintained but litter in the two secluded areas is obvious and an eyesore to observers who venture into this area. Clarification is required about whether Council or National Parks and Wildlife have a responsibility for this.
5. Regular uniformed or high visibility patrols by police should continue in the Deep Creek Reserve area and should target the areas of concern.
6. Establishment of limited periodic outreach services by the HIV and Sexual Health Promotion Unit and the DeeWhy PGLLO for the 2006 – 2007 summer season to inform users about at risk behaviours and provide information about health and other support services.
7. A review should be undertaken in three months at a meeting involving the key stakeholders to assess the implementation of recommendations.

September 2006

