

MEDIA RELEASE

Thursday 11 July 2019

WAVERLEY COUNCIL PATH PUTS SCULPTURE BY THE SEA, BONDI IN JEOPARDY



Image showing how the new lookout and concrete path would affect previous, the greatly enjoyed work, 'Who Left the Tap Running' by NSW artist Simon McGrath in Sculpture by the Sea, Bondi 2011.

MEDIA CALL – 11AM IN MARKS PARK, TAMARAMA

Waverley Council's decision to build a 279m long by 1.8 metre wide concrete path around Marks Park on the south Bondi headland is set to put the annual *Sculpture by the Sea, Bondi* at risk, causing the popular exhibition to lose forever eight of the 10 best sites that have helped make it a unique, world-class event enjoyed by over 450,000 people each year.

Said founding director of Sculpture by the Sea, David Handley AM: "Waverley Council's decision is devastating for Sculpture by the Sea and destroys Marks Park as a window to the world for the hundreds of thousands of people that come to see the artworks set against the iconic backdrop every spring."

"We have informed Council this is likely to be the last exhibition. It is too late to cancel for 2019, although nine sculptures will no longer be able to be exhibited and 12 will be greatly compromised. Artists have already done so much work and spent hundreds of thousands of dollars while our team has been working for over eight months preparing for the 2019 exhibition using sponsor, donor and government funds, so we will forge ahead but then it will probably be the end of *Sculpture by the Sea, Bondi*. Marks Park will no longer offer the pristine backdrop suitable for a major international exhibition."

Handley continued, "In order to continue providing the cultural, social, education, access, tourism and economic benefits that Sculpture by the Sea offers each year we are calling for expressions of interest from coastal councils in Sydney and around Australia to be considered as a new home for the exhibition."

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Bondi
24 October - 10 November 2019

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The Chair of Sculpture by the Sea, Alice Spigelman AM, added, “The world’s largest, free-to-the-public outdoor sculpture exhibition will be significantly diminished for all visitors forever.”

Artists are so inspired by the Marks Park ridge they spend an average of \$25,000 of their own money to create works to exhibit on these prime sites. In total some 40% of the sites for sculptures in Marks Park will be lost or greatly compromised by the Council path.

The path, which has faced fierce opposition from Sculpture by the Sea, residents and several disability advocates, was signed off by Waverley Council without any meaningful consultation with Sculpture by the Sea or the local community.

Further, two of Australia’s leading risk management consultants have found key aspects of Council’s plans are unsafe and that having an access path on a very exposed ridge with steep slopes just metres away exposes people in wheelchairs, using prams or other mobility aids to strong and gusty winds that would likely result in injuries requiring hospitalisation.

“Sculpture by the Sea, which has provided an Access & Inclusion program for 10 years, strongly supports the idea of making the Bondi coastal walk accessible,” said Ms Spigelman. “We support the plans that disability advocates Justin Reid and Adam Long prepared with Waverley Council in 2013, which provide much better access to a far larger part of the actual coastal walk.”

Sculpture by the Sea, Bondi brings demonstrable and significant cultural, artistic, tourism and economic benefits to the local community. A recent economic study by BIS Oxford Economics estimated visitors to the event contributed more than \$11 million in direct spending to local Waverley food and beverage businesses, while interstate and international visitors travelling to Sydney specifically to visit the exhibition contribute \$38.9M to the NSW economy.

More widely, from school groups to seniors, people have quite literally voted with their feet for 22 years, while the exhibition provides countless opportunities for emerging and recognised Australia artists to exhibit their work alongside some of the world’s great sculptors.

“In the face of little to no visible resident, public or disability sector support for the positioning of this path in Marks Park, we are at a loss as to why there is such determination to run a visual scar through one of the great sculpture sites in the world and one of Sydney’s most loved open green space coastal headlands,” Ms Spigelman concluded.

MEDIA CALL

DATE: Thursday 11 July 2019

TIME: 11:00am

WHERE: Marks Park, Tamarama (cnr Fletcher Street, Kenneth Street and Marks Lane, Tamarama)

WHAT: Interviews and overlay opportunity with Sculpture by the Sea founding director, David Handley, artists, residents, local businesses and disability advocates at the work site where construction machinery is at work digging up the ridge

Please see Statements from the Community Below

To download supporting visual documents, click [here](#)

For further information on Sculpture by the Sea or interviews, please contact:



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Statements from the Community

"In 2009, we presented a plan to Council for Justin's idea of a step free coastal path from Bondi to Marks Park (and eventually, all the way to Bronte). The path concept was endorsed unanimously by Council, with many members speaking very supportively and comprehensively in favour of it. We were told, at that time, that an access path around Marks Park had been approved and would be built at some time in the future. That time is now, but we are disappointed that none of our suggestions from 10 years ago have been taken into account, or that the opportunity to consult us was not taken. The proposed path achieves almost none of our aims (though it would be easy to so), while having obvious shortcomings for wheelchairs and other park users. We understand that many locals are disappointed with the planned path due to the loss of green space, and that Sculpture by the Sea have not been consulted and feel their event will be badly compromised, if not ruined.

"The current plan to run a path along the top of the ridgeline is counter to our concept for a number of reasons. The earth berm along the east and south sides of the park is a windbreak, and a wheelchair user like Justin is particularly vulnerable to cold and strong winds (as are the elderly and babies in prams, who would be other users of the path). **We see the ridgeline as a dangerous site for an access path, both for wheelchair users and for prams**—which anyone who has used either knows can roll away on a slight slope, and quickly lead to a fall, with potentially devastating consequences. We would very much like to be involved in a discussion about a better route through the park, together with local residents and Sculpture by the Sea."

- *Justin Reid & Adam Long the original advocates for an accessible Bondi coastal path*

"The Access program provided by Sculpture by the Sea enables a large number of our students to enjoy and participate with the arts. It is **a highlight in our school calendar and provides opportunities that otherwise would not be available to our students**. We don't access Mark's Park at any other time of the year apart from the Sculpture by the Sea tour as the adjacent roads are too narrow and there is only one parking space reserved for disabled parking. I understand that the proposed access path would greatly compromise, if not ruin, Sculpture by the Sea which would be a great shame to us and many others. I understand that there may be alternative path option, which would enable an access path to be built and not compromise the art exhibits."

- *Jane Cosgrave, President Friends of Wairoa School, for students with intellectual and multiple disabilities at North Bondi*

"Without doubt, the proposed access path just announced would signal an abrupt end of participation in Sculpture by the Sea by major artists. In turn, the loss of their crucial involvement would trigger the immediate, unthinkable and tragic demise of Sculpture by the Sea as a major event on the national arts calendar. Of course, access to the site by visitors with disability must be a factor in Council's management of the park. However, I understand that a previously identified alternative path would achieve the desired access without resort to **the ham-fisted, horrendously intrusive layout just announced.**"

- *Geoffrey Edwards, Curator, Pt Leo Estate Sculpture Park, former Director, Geelong Gallery and former Senior Curator of Sculpture, National Gallery of Victoria. Member of the National Trust of Australia Public Art Committee.*

"We wish to express our utmost condemnation of the totally inadequate and grossly misleading consultation process undertaken by Waverley Council with local residents for the proposed access path that will noticeably reduce Marks Park's open green space. We request Council immediately undertakes to cease work on the concrete path so that an open and full consultation can be held with the community."

- *Lauren Williams, Justin Reid, Alicia Parker and Alan Lewis - Save Marks Park Committee*

"A terrible, impossible, unworkable idea. Do not let this happen!"

- *Eileen Slarke, artist, former Sculpture by the Sea exhibitor, now in a wheelchair*

"Given the highly seasonal nature of tourism in Bondi, we really depend on Sculpture by the Sea for the **huge boost to trading that it brings**. We'd hate to see the exhibition compromised, it's the busiest time of the year for us."

- *Alasdair France of the Bondi Trattoria*