

Robyn Attuell's address: WMC Meeting 19.01.09

What I have to say, not only reflects my view as President of the Paddington Society, but the sentiment expressed in hundreds of emails and contacts from Paddington residents.

Paddington is the largest, intact, Victorian precinct in the world, and Council has invested a considerable number of resources in ensuring that this status is maintained. It is an historic, walking suburb with an intricate network of pedestrian passageways. They are a unique, historic feature of Paddington.

The pedestrian right-of-way in question, used continuously for over 125 years, with little impact on the surrounding residents, and maintained by Council, is an essential pedestrian link to shops, restaurants and public transport. It contributes to the viability of local businesses, reduces car use and parking problems.

In the interest of Paddington's fabric and the public interest, this walkway **MUST** remain open.

We understand the walkway is on private title - but it has always provided public access.

It is Council's responsibility, to take the initiative and find a solution to ensure that it remains open. - If public liability is a problem, then Council must take responsibility for that. - If anti-social behaviour is a problem, Council can take responsibility and improve the lighting. - If noise is a problem, then sound-proof the 1990s addition above the walkway.

If it means acquiring the land, then Council must compulsorily acquire it and do all of the above.

This is a vital precedent that needs to be set in favour of the community and the precinct of Paddington.

Bill Morrison's address: WMC Meeting 19.01.09

I am Vice President of The Paddington Society and a resident of Paddington for 35 years.

I support the previous speaker.

The Paddington we enjoy today, whether resident, visitor, tourist or the like, is the result of the quiriness of the development of the place over 180 or more years - from the original land grants, the gentry villas, to the subdivisions of the late 19th century - a process of which more by accident than by intent - has resulted in a complex environment which can never be reproduced today - no matter how hard we might try - no matter how skillfully we might plan.

For this, and other reasons, it is our view that the current owners of Paddington are merely custodians of this wonderful heritage - and that it is our responsibility, each and every one of us, to protect this precious commodity and ensure that it is passed on to future generations in the best possible and the most intact state we can.

One of the historic quirks, is that this passageway between Cooper St and Glenmore Road was established to give access to Fiveways for a number of the downhill properties at the time of sub-division of the Glenmore Road frontage of what was possibly the Deepdene Estate and the Glen Ayr Estate.

Its existence since 1884 has meant that it has become an intrinsic part of the Paddington footway system - and that many residents, children, the elderly have benefitted over the years.

It has become part of the urban fabric - it ensures people in this time of environmental destabilisation walk and not drive.

To many who live in Paddington, to own this property (194 Glenmore Road) would be to inherit the privilege to host this pedestrian movement, for the benefit of the whole, and to take on board the responsibility that it remain for future generations.

For, if it is lost now, it will be lost forever.

In my view, in the view of The Paddington Society, Council must assume its responsibility as the governing authority, to ensure that this quirky little passageway, which means so much to so many, remain available for full public use in perpetuity.

John Mant's address: WMC Meeting 19.01.09

I want to propose how council might deal with this issue that has engendered such community reaction.

Firstly we need to recognise that this is an example of the inability of local government generally, and this Council in particular, to properly manage their responsibilities.

Most Councils in NSW, including this Council, are organised essentially as they were in 1880. We changed the Act in 1993 to allow councils to modernise the way they operated. Only a very few have. Most have retained their Silo/guild divisions each consisting of particular professionals, each responsible for a particular function, but nobody except, theoretically, the General Manager, being responsible for an outcome.

In the case of Paddington the outcome is Paddington as a place. The laneway at 194 Glenmore Road is clearly an important component of Paddington as a place.

For years the Society has been asking Council to appoint a Place Manager for Paddington. For years the powerful heads of the silo divisions have resisted that request and the Councillors have been too disinterested or lacking in management skills to overrule them.

So here we are tonight with a recommendation to consent to an owner who wants stop all, except the couple of owners with legal rights, from using a critical pathway. Apart from the many access implications, a few months ago Council's engineering silo finally completed an expensive up-grade to Five Ways. Council's Planning silo now is proposing the closure of a key access point for a number of the centre's customers. All there is is a vague promise that someone, sometime, will bring a report to council about what might be done to overcome the effects of such a consent. What a way

to run a Council!

Had there been a Place Manager then it would not have got to this point. As soon as the owner got in touch with council complaining about the problems with the walkway, the Place Manager would have called to discuss the issues. Given a Place Manager is to do whatever it takes to solve a problem and the file is not to leave the desk until a solution has been found, the full gamut of alternatives would have been canvassed. Not being responsible for the development assessment function, unlike the Planners, a PM is free to explore solutions without a conflict of roles.

And, of course, there are solutions, provided good will is engendered. Council could resume the walkway or acquire an easement in gross. Given that there are benefiting owners and the walkway has to stay open for them, and owning the freehold is more of a cost than a benefit, the compensation to the owner should be nominal.

We are here tonight because, despite its many dedicated officers, the organisation structure is archaic. Nobody is empowered find and settle the solution to a complex problem. Things are broken up into bits, or just fall through the cracks. Committees and reports to council abound. Action is merely about responding – to DAs, to Councillor memos, to ratepayer complaints. Something is achieved when the file disappears from the desk. Nobody is charged with solving issues before they become problems.

Try this little test. When the letter came in about the problems with the walkway to who could the GM send it with instructions to fix the problems? The Strategic Planner to do a study or a DCP? The Engineer who is not interested in adding to his responsibilities? The chief accountant? Or, as we have now, the Development Assessment Branch, with instructions

to deal with an application? Which certainly does not solve the problem.

One reason given for not appointing a PM was the cost. I would argue that making someone responsible for Paddington would save money by reducing the amount of churn.

Productivity would go up. And there would be a better Paddington.

Look at us tonight. A long complex Assessment report, two lawyers' opinions, all of us here to object, staff and council time spent in apparently listening to us, possible legal challenges, a further report to council by some unnamed part of council, more meetings....

My suggestion therefore is that in the absence of a Place Manager, the only officer responsible for achieving complex outcomes, namely the General Manager, should appoint someone, not the head of a silo, invest them with his powers and, reporting direct to the GM, require that person to negotiate a solution with all those involved. Not to do a study, or bring another report with options, but propose a real solution that has been agreed subject to Council approval. This present application should be deferred for two weeks to enable this to be achieved.