

Statement to Council 28th June 2016

I think that is fair to say that most people in our community support the important work of Muddy Puddles and their need for a venue for their clients to access services, and, equally, most people understand the importance of maintaining open (especially unstructured) park space for health, social cohesion, mental health and recreational activities.

In the community meeting held at the Catalina Club last Friday, 24th June 2016, which both the Mayor and Councillor Pollock attended, it was clear there are members of the community passionate about keeping Melaleuca Park, and also about providing neighbourhood parks for our future, our children and our future community.

At that meeting, one thing that really stuck in my mind was a comment (re a Narrooma park issue??), by the Mayor, to the effect of:

'When you lose a park it's gone!' You don't get it back.

So true.

Which, of course, is why we are persisting is requesting the council to:

- NOT recategorise Melaleuca Park,
- find alternative land for Muddy Puddles suitable to their needs
- Maintain and increase the number of small unstructured neighbourhood parks to comply with The urban planning policy requirement for POS (Public open spaces) (of) being available within 400m of homes... **

Council clearly has a role to facilitate and engage with the community in a transparent manner and I welcome the offer by the Mayor to hold further discussions in relation to Muddy Puddles' proposal.

However, as raised at the meeting on Friday, we must say that we would have welcomed an opportunity to engage with Council much earlier in the process, rather than at this stage of the journey. It was revealed at that meeting that Council have been working with Muddy Puddles on this process for over a year, yet **not** with members of the community who were to be affected by the decisions and the expectations raised during that time.

The meeting raised several questions, for which we request answers:

We were told Mundarra Crescent, adjacent to Batemans Bay Primary School, is 'earmarked' for a running track. This land, with an area of 5 hectares (Lot 2 DP 1044536) is currently zoned RE1 Public Recreation Community Land - category - "Required for future sports field". It has two insignificant easements over it.

The land currently considered for recategorisation to allow for the construction of Muddy Puddles on Melaleuca Reserve comprises an area of approximately 2,000 sm.

There are several questions here:

- Is a running track more important than a neighbourhood park?
- Why are the needs of the clientele for a running track considered more important than close access of parents and grandparents of small children, dog walkers, and general community, of a neighbourhood park?
- Why, in the over-five-acres of that land is there not room for the proposed amenity by Muddy Puddles?

Neighbourhood parks are especially precious... and a small, flat, treed park with a small playground structure is a special experience for children (and grandparents!) – a real treasure. Melaleuca Park has all the essential characteristics for this:

"A neighborhood park should be centrally located, if possible, within its service area and should be uninterrupted by non-residential roads or other physical barriers. The site should be generally flat and usable. It should be accessible by way of interconnecting trails, public transportation, sidewalks, or low-volume residential streets.

A neighborhood park primarily serves residents within about 1/4 mile of the park, without physical or social barriers to the boundaries.

Ease of access from the surrounding neighborhood, central location, and linkage to greenways are key concerns when selecting a new park site. The site itself should allow active and passive recreation uses. Since one of the primary reasons people go to a park is to experience a pleasant outdoor environment, the site should exhibit some innate aesthetic qualities. "Left-over" parcels of land that are undesirable for development are not generally desirable for neighborhood parks.

From: NSW Premier's Council for Active living

http://www.pcal.nsw.gov.au/planning_and_design_guidelines/open_spaces

Open Spaces

Easily accessible parks and public open spaces provide places for people to walk and cycle to, in and around. Public open space is increasingly important with the decline in private open space and the reduced capacity to pursue active leisure at home that entails. The contribution of the public domain (streets, civic spaces, commercial areas) should also be considered as part of a diverse open space network.

Parks and open spaces provide active recreation and play as well as social opportunities for children and youth. They also offer pleasant places for older adults to walk to and meet in. The value of parks and open space corridors (such as foreshores and greenways') can be enhanced by the provision of paths and trails.

As parks attract many trips, they should be located with other community facilities where possible and have clear and direct walking and cycling routes to them. This will improve their accessibility and hence their value to the community.

Design objectives

- To provide a range of public open spaces within walking distance from dwellings.
- To design open spaces which are flexible, providing the opportunity for a variety of uses and activities to occur (such as community events), and responsive, to the diversity of the surrounding community (ie catering for different ages and social groups).
- To clearly define walking and cycling routes that pass through open spaces and to incorporate these routes into the broader walking and cycling network.

Design considerations

- Provide open space within safe, comfortable walking distance from dwellings, as well as in or adjacent to key destinations, such as town centres.
- Connect public open space to the local and regional walking and cycling network with safe pedestrian crossings leading to or near park entrances. Surround open space with a high quality urban environment to encourage walking and cycling to it.
- Encourage active recreation through the provision of a range of well-designed facilities such as children's play equipment, basketball rings, cricket practice nets, netball courts and tennis courts. Design open space which is conducive to walking (ie a 'route' of adequate length), not just organised sporting activities.
- Create and maintain useable, attractive and pleasant places for people to walk, cycle, train, sit, meet and talk.
- Promote safety and amenity through good design, such as drought-resistant shade trees, natural surveillance from surrounding uses, seating, lighting, regular maintenance and clear and convenient entry points. Parks should be landscaped to create interest and maximise visibility. Where appropriate, parks should be well lit to cater to increasing demands for use outside of traditional hours.
- Cluster compatible land uses within or at the edge of parks or open space corridors, such as cafes and restaurants, child care centres and indoor leisure/sports centres. This will help reduce the land required for parking and improve accessibility.

Conclusion:

The centre for disabled children and teens planned for this site is a great idea, but let's not trade this beautiful park for it, in fact **NOT ANY PARK** for it.

If you visit the park you will see how much will be under tar or building! There are now white markers on the ground at the park that give you a rough idea of where the planned carpark and centre are to be built. They take up almost the entire open green space and even the playground structure will be pushed out of the way. A second entrance is planned on that tight corner which, you would know, is packed with parents dropping off children or picking them up morning and afternoon.

....grant a thirty year lease to Eurobodalla Education and Therapies services Limited, trading as Muddy Puddles to use Melaleuca Reserve Catalina, being part of Lot 39, DP800369 for establishment of an educational therapy centre for children with disability.'

By then the water table will have risen, the effects of sulfate soils on the area and building will be showing themselves, the costs associated by these will need to be borne by the lessee, and we will still **not get our park back** after the lease ends. It's a disgrace.

If council overrides community needs in this area, re-categorises the park and leases it to Muddy Puddles it would reinforce the community's sense that Council goes through the motions of listening to the community and does what it wants (a quote from a Councillor). To make the best of a bad situation, and if that became the case, here is an alternative proposal:

- Only lease the section between George Bass Drive and the Childcare Centre
- Create a green buffer between it and the present open green area of the park
- Take a small slice of the park on the curve and add some parallel parking to alleviate the dangers of too many cars at drop-off and pickup times
- Make the stretch a 40km zone
- Use same driveway as childcare centre.
- Continue driveway around the rear of the centre and add some more carparks there
- Place the education centre in the back corner between the childcare centre and George Bass drive
- Create temporary access from George Bass Drive during the construction phase to minimise traffic, noise and dust for the local community and the childcare centre
- Have the lease area go no further than the present play structure.
- Leave the present play structure where it is and how it is
- Add seating near the play equipment for adults
- Include relevant community representatives at all stages.

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25th May2015