

Spearfishing in Little Bay Meeting

23/09/2019

Ray Outridge (Resident)
Allen Morris (Resident)
Amie Hibbard (DFO DPI)
Peter Wood (PHCA)
Susan Graham (PHCA)
Joe Ingenari (RCC)
Joshua Hay (RCC)
Chris Cleaver (DPI)
Peter Saunders (USFA)
Simon Trippe (Sans Souci Dolphins)
Trevor Walker (La Perouse Aboriginal Community)

Meeting Notes

- (CC) Welcome on behalf of DPI. Initiated introductory comments from the various representatives. Advised that all parties' comments and suggestions will be noted in order to inform options moving forward.
- (JI) Discussed the limitations on access to the area and how the complexity of land and user groups has changed over the past 5-10 years. Randwick Council accepts there are multiple user groups with a need to accommodate all with minimal problems.
- (JH) Agreed with above and reinstated above on behalf of the Council.
- (PS) Discussed historic use of spearfishing in the area. Advised that the area is unique in that it offers protection from prevailing winds and allows safe ocean access for novice spearfishers.
- (AH) Discussed compliance patrols in the area and compliance limitations due to staffing issues and the size of the area. Welcomed a targeted advisory safe spearfishing campaign.
- (TW) Claimed an anecdotal decline in fish numbers around the area. Concerned novice spearfishers are not following the rules and are "spearing anything that moves".
- (AM) Swims at the beach regularly and has seen altercations between swimmers and divers with loaded spearguns. Believes that sooner or later there could be an "incident" causing significant injury. Noted that many young children use the area for swimming and playing.
- (PS & SG) Commented that "something needs to be done.". Claimed groups of youths "run rampant" spearing in swimming areas and carry spear guns in a dangerous manner up and down the stairs along the beach. Claimed there are reports of numerous "near misses". Claims that many spearfishers using the area are under the age 14. Advocated for Little Bay to be listed as a marine reserve.
- (RO) Increasingly popular swimming and snorkelling area with every summer. Adamant that an incident will occur in the future. The swimming area is 105m long by 50m wide but on a low tide this is even less, causing more congestion and conflict between spearfishers and swimmers. Staircase to beach posed a problem as it is very narrow and gets very busy in summer, especially weekends, and claimed many close calls with gun tips. Made the point that the DPI Recreational Spearfishing Guide May 2018 (advising spearfishers stay 50m away from swimmers and to avoid crowded areas) cannot apply due to the geographical nature of Little Bay.
- (CC) Asked AH about compliance powers on age, close proximity to swimmers, uncovered spearguns and entering the water near the beach.

- (AH) Fisheries can only enforce current regulations. Opportunities for advisory information during interactions with spearfishers and other members of the public.
- (CC) Asked about alternate access via golf course track to alleviate risk of potential interactions on the narrow staircase leading to the beach.
- (JI) Explained this is likely not an option as there is an easement over the land to the golf course. Advised widening of the stairs is also not likely.
Also advised RCC was in negotiations with the golf club on a coastal walk which would likely open more access to spearfishing along that part of the coast, which is scheduled in 2020-21
- (JH) Requested information on numbers of compliance interactions.
- (RO,AM,SG) Advised interactions were “regular”.
- (AM) Claimed 90% of speargun tips are not covered.
- (PS) Asked “are you sure as a covered tip is only a small rubber tube”.
- (SG) Said they were not sure but would like to see spearfishers carry their equipment in a bag or covered up.
- (SG) Claimed she had seen a speargun being loaded in the carpark.
- (ST) Explained this would be highly unlikely. Provided info on a new style of gun called a “roller speargun” where the rubbers are loaded but the gun is essentially “inactive” due to a different loading and firing mechanism. “Roller guns” are currently the most popular type of speargun available.
- (CC) Explained that most retailers stress at the point of sale to keep gun tips covered as this prevents injury or damage to car upholstery etc and to never load the gun out of the water and never leave the water with a loaded gun.
- (RO/SG) Stated spearfishers using the area are uneducated and are not local (tourists).
- (CC) Provided options for education and advisory campaigns.
- (RO/SG/AM) Reiterated their preferred option was to restrict spearfishing as it has “no place” in Little Bay with other users such as swimmers and snorkelers. They felt an education initiative would not work with the demographic in question.
- (CC) Provided information about the success of safe spearfishing initiatives with Waverly Council at North Bondi Beach.
- (PS & ST) Reinforced the success of the initiatives previously introduced at North Bondi.
- (AH) Supported these comments and advised of a significant decline that DPI Compliance issues at this area as a result of the proactive advisory initiatives.
- (RO) Suggested the Bondi initiative was not suitable at Little Bay due to the geographical features of the area.
- (CC) Provided examples where diverse user groups share busy areas. Advised that well-planned advisory initiatives can provide positive outcomes for all user groups.
- (PS & ST) Agreed that all users can coexist and that education process would work at Little Bay.
- (RO & SG) Concerned about how and if an advisory initiative could work.
- (RO/AM/SG) Reiterated their position that spearfishing should be restricted at Little Bay.
- (CC) Reiterated DPI preference for all non-regulatory approaches to be investigated, developed and implemented. Suggested a trial of education and advisory initiatives to be reviewed after a time period e.g. six months.
- (RO) Reiterated that Little Bay is no longer suitable to spearfishing and advisory initiatives most likely will not work.
- (AH) Explained that similar scenarios occur on a regular basis throughout the Sydney region. Stated that a compliance presence teamed with other education initiatives does work and makes a difference.
- (ST & PS) Agreed the non-regulatory approach will make a difference in the Little Bay area.

- (CC) Suggested that an advisory initiative involving signage at entry points at the extremity of the swimming area was an option for consideration. Requested RO and PS/ST give their preferred imaginary lines across the bay, noting DPI would develop an advisory campaign aimed at minimising conflict between spearfishers and other user groups.
- Various entry/exit points were examined and discussed.

Potential Action Items

- Responsible spearfishing signage to be installed at top of the stairs leading down to the beach. Map (see below) with entry locations and suggested spearfishing area - **Randwick Council to erect ; DPI responsibility to design and supply.**
- Responsible spearfishing signage to be installed halfway down stairs near fish species and other signs already in place - **Randwick Council to erect ; DPI responsibility to design and supply.**
- Signage at suggested entry points - **Randwick Council to erect; DPI responsibility to design and supply.**
- Production of educational flyer detailing responsible spearfishing practices (including safe transport of spearguns) - **DPI responsibility.**
- Production of infographic video detailing responsible spearfishing - **DPI responsibility.**
- Targeted DPI Compliance to provide educational flyers and advise spearfishers of preferred entry points, safe speargun handling etc - **DPI responsibility.**
- Fishcare volunteer days to complement Compliance actions. Possible tie in with Council marine safety days - **DPI responsibility.**
- USFA to schedule weekend info sessions in lead-up to key summer period - **USFA responsibility.**
- Supply Randwick Council with educational flyer for council ranger patrols - **DPI responsibility.**
- Supply local spearfishing retail outlets with educational flyers and video - **DPI responsibility.**
- Targeted social media campaign on responsible spearfishing - **DPI responsibility, to be shared by USFA and other relevant organisations.**
- Flyer inclusion for fishing licence mail out – **DPI responsibility.**



Signage required

Imaginary line agreed by all parties present

Staircase access signage required

Signage required

Alternate access most likely to be not granted by the golf club

30 60m