

To: **Members of the Sydney Harbour HighLine Association**

26 September 2019

Dear Member

Sydney Harbour HighLine

North Sydney Council has published [The North Sydney Visitor Economy Strategy and Action Plan](#) which identifies the long-term vision and actions required to develop North Sydney's visitor economy. Council has called for feedback with submissions closing on **3 October 2019**.

In its strategy, Council has identified the Sydney Harbour HighLine (“SHHL”) as one of the four *“game-changing opportunities, to evolve the Living Heritage story for North Sydney through the adaptive reuse of heritage assets and then bringing these stories to life in a remarkable way... The Sydney Harbour High Line is **the real game-changer**; with the potential to deliver a truly immersive, must-do visitor (and local) experience.”*¹ (Refer to the page 20 in the report)

Members will recall, in March 2019 we advised SHHL members that some residents in McMahons Point had received a mailbox drop from an unidentified source that was in opposition to the SHHL. There were statements in that flyer which were incorrect or indicated the writer did not fully understand the project.

As a North Sydney Councillor, I have received a letter from three residents, strongly objecting to the SHHL being included in *The North Sydney Visitor Economy Strategy* and requesting Council to exclude it from the strategy. In addition, the writers allege there is a conflict of interest on the Council given that I am a Councillor and President of the SHHL Association.

I have written to the objectors pointing out that to keep North Sydney as a desirable place to live, we must add to our parklands and make them more accessible. In addition, I have clarified the inaccuracies in the letter and provided the facts. I have summarised my response in Appendix A attached.

I am writing to ask you to write a brief letter to Councillors and the General Manager endorsing their detailed report and fully supporting the inclusion of the Sydney Harbour HighLine in [The North Sydney Visitor Economy Strategy and Action Plan](#) . Please can you do this by **3 October 2019**

¹ North Sydney Council, [The North Sydney Visitor Economy Strategy and Action Plan](#) page 20, August 2019

The email addresses are as follows:

North Sydney Councillors

Mayor Jilly Gibson; Email: mayor@northsydney.nsw.gov.au

Councillor Zoë Baker; Email: cr.zoe.baker@northsydney.nsw.gov.au

Councillor Mary Ann Beregi; Email: cr.maryann.beregi@northsydney.nsw.gov.au

Councillor Tony Carr;

Email: cr.tony.carr@northsydney.nsw.gov.au; tonymcarr1@gmail.com

Councillor Kathy Brodie; Email: cr.kathy.brodie@northsydney.nsw.gov.au

Councillor Stephen Barbour; Email: cr.stephen.barbour@northsydney.nsw.gov.au

Councillor Jessica Keen; Email: cr.jessica.keen@northsydney.nsw.gov.au

Councillor Samuel Gunning; Email: cr.samuel.gunning@northsydney.nsw.gov.au

Councillor Alanya Drummond; Email: cr.alanya.drummond@northsydney.nsw.gov.au

General Manager, Ken Gouldthorpe; Email: ken.gouldthorp@northsydney.nsw.gov.au

The Sydney Harbour HighLine is a real game-changer which will provide a positive social, environmental and recreational benefit for locals and tourists alike.

Thank you for your ongoing support.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ian Mutton', with a horizontal line underneath.

Ian Mutton

President, Sydney Harbour HighLine Association

Sydney Harbour HighLine Assertions and Facts

- Assertion 1:** The railway corridor is currently in use. Sydney Trains have stated that it is essential for their operational requirements for the foreseeable future.
- Facts:** Sydney Trains say that its use is required for no more than the next 5 to 7 years and thereafter would be available for use by heritage trains – that probably explains why it is currently upgrading infrastructure on the track, including the replacement of track at Lavender Bay and new upright stanchions and wiring along the entire track.
- Assertion 2:** The track is used daily during the week and extensively at weekends to support track works on the Sydney train network.
- Facts:** Sydney Trains presently bring the minimum number of trains down the line each week that is needed to keep the track operational (i.e. not need recertification). Notably Sydney Trains do not bring trains down the line on weekends. The line is no longer used for the training of train guards.
- Assertion 3:** A walking track positioned alongside an operational line would not provide a world class visitor experience.
- Facts:** The rail line provides magnificent views of Berrys Bay and Lavender Bay, the bridge and the city skyline stretching from the CBD right around to Balmain. The Sydney Harbour HighLine will be a linear garden connecting various parks into a grand mosaic including Waverton Park, Sawmillers Reserve, Lavender Bay Parklands and Wendy’s Secret Garden.
- Assertion 4:** The track is owned by the NSW Government and Transport for NSW has advised that there is no funding available for this project.
- Facts:** To the extent that the Government has commented on available funds, it has spoken of the present budget period and, what’s more, it does not speak for the private sector (a key funder of the New York HighLine). The land on which the line is located is owned by Sydney Trains (RailCorp). Importantly the Government has reported that it intends to restructure Sydney Trains and that the restructure may result in the land being transferred to other Government agencies (e.g. Sydney Properties).

In 2012 the Minister for Transport reported on Sydney's rail future. The Lavender Bay Rail siding was described as:

One of 12 key bottlenecks "on the western line" where trains have to merge tracks with other lines, wait for opposing trains to cross ...

Put simply:

- Sydney Trains does not have an intention to use the line for more than 5 to 7 years; and
- The Government has indicated an intention to transfer the land to another agency (presumably as part of an asset realisation program).

Assertion 5: HighLines in Paris and New York utilised rail tracks that had been disused for a significant period – this is not the case for this corridor.

Facts: Sydney Trains have agreed that its current use of the rail corridor will not prevent construction of the walking trail providing it meets the design constraints to comply with safety issues.
Sydney Trains have agreed that while the corridor continues to be used for trains the walking pathway may be constructed and used in conjunction with Sydney Trains.

Assertion 6: The HighLine should be referred to the State Government to ensure full transparency and objective scrutiny.

Facts: The Premier established a Committee comprising representatives from Federal and State Governments, North Sydney Council and local representatives to consider the HighLine and this Committee has reported to the Premier.

Assertion 7: The council has a conflict of interest given that Councillor Ian Mutton is the President of the SHHL Association. Council is precluded from including the HighLine in its strategy.

Facts: Incorrect. Councillors who:

- advocated the preservation of St Leonards Park and oval were not conflicted and excluded from the decisions that resulted in the magnificent park and oval we have today.
- advocated the coal loader project were not conflicted and excluded from discussions when Council gave it the go ahead.
- argue to save North Sydney pool are not conflicted and excluded from Council's decision-making process when it comes to selecting the option to go forward.
- advocate the use of the railway corridor for community purposes are not conflicted from any consideration that the Council gives to the project.