

Milson Precinct Meeting - MINUTES

Thursday 5th June 2025 @ 7.30pm – 9.30 pm

The Church by the Bridge, Kirribilli

1. Chair Welcome

- a. Acknowledgement of Country -
- b. Introductions - 18 Present – JC MB GS A&ER TK HH IH VB T&EW SG JS JT ES SF JN PM
Chair noted members from other Precincts may be in attendance
- c. Apologies – 3 - CL T&PD

2. Confirmation of Minutes – Meeting of 3rd April 2025

Moved by JN

Seconded by MB

3. Matters Arising

a) Therese Cole, CEO NSC was invited to attend as per motion – however a diary clash precluded attendance. Chair advised an invitation will be issued for the August Precinct meeting

b) A matter for record correction was outlined by MB, who spoke to the Local Government Act which details Councils have the option of either re-adopting a current Community Strategic Plan or adopt a modified or new Community Strategic Plan, the legislative requirement is for Councils to have an adopted Community Strategic Plan by 30th June following election.

4. Guest Speaker: Cr. Godfrey Santer, Deputy Mayor (DM)

Key points made by DM:

- IPART refused NSC SRV of 87%, sighting that NSC had sufficient liquidity to pay – but included “restricted funds” which are not available for NSC to use. Only 4% rate peg for 2025-26.
- No appeal process, so another SRV process for end of this year. NSC Executive will engage with IPART as part of this process. DM advised current financial rate Structural deficiencies were due to rate freeze under Ted Mack and the rate pegging system.
- DM said there are problems with IPART’s submission system, including its emphasis on consideration of percentages rather than dollar amounts for rates. This affects its consideration of the merits of submissions by councils, in North Sydney’s case leading it to ignore NSC’s low rates compared with other councils.
- DM advised NSC were considering ‘Financial Repair’ initiatives which will include staff numbers, services like graffiti removal, verge mowing, decrease hours, pay for NYE event, increase in non-rate income – e.g. compliance and charges.
- Community Consultation is currently being undertaken – closes 24th June.
- NSOP pool construction cost blowout was discussed, with DM advising current legal actions restricted some sharing of information. NSOP Operating Plans were discussed. DM observed NSOP should be treated as a tourist attraction – as an event space for NS - as 4 Iconic places for Sydney – Opera House, Harbour Bridge,

Luna Park and NSOP. Two are within NS – we should be maximising this. Include Wendy Whitely's Garden, Balls Head in connected walks, to make NS a tourist destination

Questions/Comments from the Floor:

1. Community were disappointed that so many speakers and community present at the council meeting, to address the SRV issue, but the council ignored these concerns raised by community members, and the report was submitted to IPART before midnight that night, without any changes. Was not due for submission till following Friday, so time available for review and changes.
2. Schools paying their way – 10% of NSC LGA land is owned and operated by schools, which are exempt from rates, although they keep buying up more properties to expand, and new schools starting up.
3. NSOP operations – plan for loss over first 3 years. – Why? Should use the 1500 sqm gym space for events, conferences, weddings with an arrangement with Luna Park for the use of the Car Park. Locals should have reduced aqua entry \$fee.
4. Was Audit and Risk Committee used for development of the NSOP? DM advised Yes but more 'tick the box' application.
5. Is Council working together well? Is Staff moral OK – turnover rates? Are there opportunities for Apprentices and trainees within council operations? DM advised Yes there is cooperation between councillors, moral has increased since new CEO arrived, limited opportunities for apprentices, especially with limited funds, and not replacing staff that have left, due to lack of SRV.
6. Major risk to NSC is the IT project, as NSC has 4 non-integrated and redundant IT systems. This causes duplication, additional time for dealing with DA's etc. and was underfunded. This needs to be a 'whole of Council' matter to be upgraded – but not on delivery program. DM agreed and acknowledged this would need to be addressed by NSC.
7. Community journey of next SRV, to understand the rate increase, to be able to provide the services that are needed and expected, to address the failing assets, to bring them up to satisfactory standards or better, and finish the pool. Rebuild trust and confidence of community.

MOTION: Milson Precinct thanks Cr Santer for his time to come to our meeting tonight, answering the questions of the community. Moved: JC SF

5. Revised Delivery Program 2026-2029 and Draft 2025-26 Operational Plan – Submissions close 24 June

- * NSC Draft 2025-26 Operating Plan shows \$10m in grants, \$3.2m Surplus, \$31m Depreciation, = circa \$35mm cash operating surplus and +\$29mm Cash/Cash Equivalents at end 2026 FY. NSC Staff numbers of 409 Full-time equivalent employees at a cost of \$57m = \$142K per employee. Was \$48m in 2024-25 – so increase of \$9m in a year! By comparison, Shoalhaven Council = +\$100k per Fte
- Recommendation NSC undertake a cost/Fte benchmark against other LGA's. Suggest ask these questions of NSC CEO at next meeting.

MOTION: Milson Precinct to make a formal submission on behalf of the Milson Precinct Community the Draft 2025-2029 Delivery Program and Draft 2025-26 Operating Plan consistent with the views outlined by the meeting attendees.

MOTION: Milson Precinct request North Sydney Council (through the NSC CEO) consider reviewing the current Operational Plan for NSOP given the forecast losses over 10 years and NSC undertake proactive communication to community about the NSOP within the council newsletter.

Moved: TW & EW

6. Draft Community Engagement Strategy 2025-2026 – Submissions close 11.6.25

- Community concern about the format of the “Have your Say” surveys – you can’t see what the next questions are, without completing the first and each page before pushing ‘NEXT’. This does not allow you to know what pages some of these questions refer to – so you can’t focus your attention on the relevant pages of very long documents. It then becomes just a “tick the box” type of consultation. This needs to be addressed for all surveys.
- Concern about whether the proposed new STAR committees going to replace the Precinct system.
- Concern that the new proposed STAR Committees will be ineffective given NSC has no funding to undertake new ‘Informing Strategy’ initiatives. NSC risks again disappointing Community?
- DM advised the STAR committees were not intended to undermine the precincts – just subject orientated / topic focused.
- Concern expressed about the lack of transparent charters, governance structures, reporting structures and election/participant selection profiles.
- Concern expressed about how the STAR Committees will collaborate with Precincts. Will STAR Committees effectively be viewed by Council as the ‘voice’ of community at the expense of direct community engagement processes? DM advised STAR Committee role will be to be inform, advise, then consult for community approval.
- Comment from Community - Often little consultation at this level with the community, vs just being ‘published’ to the community.

MOTION: Milson Precinct to make a formal submission based on the discussions expressed at the meeting. Moved TK PM

7. Other Business

DA – Pattons Slipway – NSC has requested more information, that was not received by April. The new Board of Directors are intending to push forward with this DA. Milson Precinct will continue to monitor this DA progress and report to Community proactively with any developments.

Environmental – Chair detailed an email from a community member, Mossy, concerning alternative waste and energy solutions locally – like Sweden. Suggest that he be included in the ‘Environmental STAR’ as committee member.

MOTION: Milson Precinct requests more information on Miller Place Closure – including progress of this proposal. Milson Precinct seeks more info re Miller Place from NSC - including how it will work for buses and traffic through the CBD? **Moved VB JC**

CPC meeting: is next week 17.6.25

NEXT MEETING: 14 August 2025 – AGM, with guest speakers NSC CEO Therese Cole, NSC Planner to discuss TOD and impact within Kirribilli and NS LGA