

Community Engagement Summary

The PP request is at the Pre-Gateway stage and public exhibition is not legally required during this preliminary assessment phase. However, Shoalhaven Council's Planning Proposal Guidelines recommend targeted early community notification. A limited notification process was carried out in accordance with these guidelines between June - August 2021, discussed further below.

As a result of the preliminary notification, 88 submissions were received:

- **37 support** Willinga Park (and, by inference, support the PP request);
- **49 objections** to the PP request; and
- **Two (2) neutral** (requests to monitor water quality and provide traffic calming measures independent of the PP).

The majority of submissions (n: 67 / 76%) received came from landowners and residents in Bawley Point, revealing that the local community is divided on the PP request. This indicates Willinga Park benefits the local community, but also has impacts which concern some residents.

Early feedback received from the preliminary notification period is summarised below. Copies of all submissions can be provided to Councillors on request. Fifteen (15) late submissions were received, of these 14 are objections and one (1) is in support. These are not included in the submissions summary.

Community Feedback - Summary of Main Themes

The main themes relayed in the preliminary feedback on the proposal related to:

- **Traffic impacts and concerns** – Over half the submissions were seriously concerned that the proposal would create and exacerbate traffic problems in, and through, Bawley Point. (56% of submissions).
- **Noise** – the second-most common issue raised related to event noise (music, patrons, amplified noise) and traffic noise (45% of submissions).
- **Character impacts** – 36% of submissions stated allowing further expansion of Willinga Park operations will negatively impact on the small rural and tranquil coastal village character of Bawley Point.
- **Amenity/lifestyle impacts** – related to the above point, 31% of people felt that the proposal would impact adversely on the lifestyle they enjoy in Bawley Point, that is they moved to the area for its slower pace, village character, quiet/safer roads, connected community, lack of larger-scale development and relative isolation, which many feel may be affected by continued growth at Willinga Park.
- **Events without consent** - Almost a quarter (24%) of the submissions expressed concerns about any future 'without consent' / 'exempt development' event provisions. Most objections did not want Willinga Park to be able to operate events in the absence of any planning framework or without conditions of consent that allow for management of impacts.

Other common themes included:

- degraded road condition and increased need for maintenance due to excess traffic
- heavy vehicle noise, congestion, damage to roads and safety implications

- community and social impacts, as some people with objections argued that the benefits of Willinga Park did not flow on to the community (beyond those who work at the facility) and that negative impacts outweigh positive.
- wildlife impacts (e.g. increased roadkill and light pollution)
- method of expansion – many people noted that Willinga Park has developed in a piecemeal manner, with many modifications to development approvals, prolonging impacts of construction and no overarching plan to guide or limit growth. This track record of incremental growth was viewed by many as ‘death by a thousand cuts’ and finding planning loopholes to expand operations. The cumulative impacts resulting from the PP request (additional growth in functions and events) were of particular concern.

Less common themes included:

- traffic and pedestrian safety
- inappropriate scale of development
- inconsistency with planning controls and non-rural nature of the proposed uses
- water quality concerns and environmental impacts
- precedent
- construction impacts
- transparency of planning processes adversely affected by ‘without consent’ / ‘exempt development’ provisions
- light pollution associated with operations

Many of these submissions worried that any additional capacity for events at Willinga Park would exacerbate existing issues.

Submissions in Support

A considerable number of submissions expressed support for Willinga Park. The main themes of these submissions included:

- **Entertainment** – 28% of submissions stated they appreciate the entertainment options that Willinga Park provides and supported the expansion of these opportunities.
- **High quality architecture** – 23% of submissions recognise that Willinga Park is very well-appointed with facilities and the quality of construction is high and should be better utilised.
- **Community benefits** – Over a fifth of the submissions (22%) stated that Willinga Park has provided a raft of community benefits, and is available for community-based events and open days. The philanthropic work of the landowner in the local community was also noted – contributions to the Gantry rebuilding and the local Mens Shed in particular.
- **Jobs** – 22% of submissions highlighted the jobs created at Willinga Park, both ongoing and as a result of construction. The facility also supports local businesses and creates job opportunities elsewhere in the local area and region through a multiplier effect.
- **Equestrian facilities** – the international-standard of the equestrian facilities on the site was also mentioned in 15% of submissions). Some submissions supported diversification of the site to support the equestrian goals over the long term.

Traffic impacts are an area of common ground emerging from the submissions. Some of the submissions of support recognised that Willinga Park has traffic impacts that need to be investigated further and managed, and some objections recognised Willinga Park's economic and entertainment contributions (and did not object to Willinga Park in general) but objected to the PP request due to compounding traffic impacts. 18% of submissions called for alternate road access to be provided to Willinga Park to reduce traffic congestion and safety and amenity impacts on locals.

Preliminary notification methods

Written notification was sent to landowners (n: 87 representing directly adjoining neighbours and all properties with access from Forster Drive); the Bawley Point and Kioloa Community Association (CCB); Murramarang Mens Shed and Batemans Bay Aboriginal Land Council on 25 June 2021. This letter outlined the PP request and requested any comments by 6 August 2021. A copy of the proponent's Planning Proposal request was provided on Council's [Pre-Gateway exhibition webpage](#) and a public notice published on Council's website.

Significant community interest emerged, with Council staff presenting information on the PP request and PP process at the BPKCA special meeting on Sunday 1 August from 3.30pm (staff presented and answered questions via audio-visual link due to Covid-19 restrictions). Approximately 40 community members attended the information session. At this session, it was agreed to extend the period for submissions for an additional two weeks.

Council staff have been available to answer phone and email enquiries on the PP request, with notable interest from community members. Conservatively, it is estimated that more than 20 phone calls have been answered regarding the PP request.

The preliminary public notification of the PP request was limited in scope, consistent with the *Shoalhaven Planning Proposal Guidelines*. The Pre-Gateway phase of a PP is preliminary in nature and public notification is also preliminary and targeted, usually to direct neighbours and the local Community Consultative Boards (CCBs). Timeframes to report PP requests to Council for a resolution (target is to report within 90 days of receipt of a request) also affect the ability of Council to undertake comprehensive community engagement activities at this early stage.

Next steps – Community Engagement/Public Exhibition

It is important to note, that if the PP is supported, public exhibition of the PP is required and community engagement would involve wider distribution of information. All persons who made a submission during this preliminary phase (including late submissions) will be updated at key milestones and information will be uploaded to a project specific webpage, on Council's 'Get Involved' web-based engagement platform, should Council resolve to proceed with a PP.