



Naremburn Matters

June 2008 Vol.4, No.1

Circulation 3,000

The newsletter of the
Naremburn Progress Association (NPA)

'School' Public Meeting Draws Large Crowd

Despite the severe electrical storm on Wednesday evening 29 May, more than 150 residents attended the meeting called by WCC to discuss 'Naremburn Public School – Options for the Future'. Our Public School was closed in 1990 and the Catholic Primary School closed in 1996. Since that time, the number of children in our suburb has increased dramatically.

The meeting, chaired by WCC Mayor Pat Reilly, had a panel that included Gladys Berejiklian, Member for Willoughby, Deonne Smith, Regional Director, Northern Sydney Region, Department of Education and Training, Brother Tony Whelan, Catholic Schools Office, Broken Bay Diocese. From WCC, General Manager Nick Tobin, Community Services Director Marcia Waller, Environmental Services Director Greg Woodhams were also present. St Leonards Catholic Church provided its Parish Hall for the meeting, a much appreciated gesture given that there is no other public venue in Naremburn large enough to hold such a gathering of residents. Brief position statements from panel members were followed by a Q & A session of at least one hour, during which several residents were able to comment and ask questions.

See page 2 for the 6 resolutions from the meeting.



Photo: David Lendrum

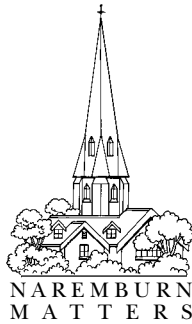
Naming the un-named lanes of Willoughby City John Allen Lane, Naremburn

WCC recently proposed that 65 un-named lanes in Willoughby City, lanes marked with a 'W' and a number, be given names. For Naremburn this involved 16 lanes; a list of proposed names selected by the Willoughby Historical Society, and Council was released. Most of the names chosen for lanes in our suburb honoured members of the NPA from its inception in 1901. Both this Progress Association and the Federation of Willoughby Progress Associations (FWPA) submitted to Council, that one of the Naremburn lanes be 'John Allen Lane' to honour the former resident of Olympia Road, who was not only active in the NPA, but was also President of the Federation (all 9 progress associations in Willoughby City) from 1995 until his death in September 2007. John made an invaluable contribution to Naremburn and the City of Willoughby. W85 will be 'John Allen Lane'.

NAREMBURN VILLAGE SHOPS

Photographic artwork by:
David Waters
7 June 2005





Naremburn Progress Association
 Founded 1901
 ABN 93 907 169 376
 PO Box 393
 St Leonards 1590

President

Kevin FitzPatrick : 9439 8119

Vice President

David Lendrum : 9439 3372

Secretary

Frances O'Brien : 9436 1536

Treasurer

Julienne Blunck : 9405 2217

Public Officer

Trisha FitzPatrick : 9439 8119

General Meetings

Naremburn Community Centre
 Central Street, Naremburn
 Commencing at 7:30 pm
 with a 15 minute Open Forum
 Thursday 12 June 2008
 No meeting in July
 Thursday 14 August 2008
 Thursday 11 September 2008

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President – out and about

This may be our winter edition of Naremburn Matters but things are hotting up in the 'burn!

- The NPA's newest Sub-Committee, Young Parents (name under construction), Karen Pearson, Belinda Lewis, Brian Norton, Chris Chaseling and me, made a valuable contribution to our highly successful public meeting on a school for Naremburn. Karen and Belinda collected signatures on a petition regarding a K-2 primary school and presented that petition to Council on 14 April.
- The Flat Rock Creek Bridge, at Naremburn's northern border on Willoughby Road is undergoing a facelift. Its degraded condition was first raised by the NPA, and our thanks to our local Member, Gladys Berejikian, for her persistent follow through with the Minister for Roads, over a period of 18 months.
- Following on from our representations to WCC, Council is enhancing the east side of Willoughby Road between Garland Road and Slade Street with the planting of 16 *Eucalypts* and 1200 *Lomandra tanika*. Thank you WCC for a cleaner, greener, gateway to Naremburn.
- The NPA supports the *Keep it Local* campaign and we did endorse the letter sent to the Premier and the Minister for Planning by the Federation of Willoughby Progress Associations, opposing the State Government's proposed pro-developer laws. See www.keepitlocal.org.au for more information.
- The NPA is engaged in the community consultation process for DAs and very specifically the DA lodged by the North Sydney Leagues Baseball Club for the installation of 25 metre high light towers to illuminate the baseball diamond in Bicentennial Reserve close to Flat Rock Drive.
- Our website is under construction and we are grateful to NPA members Nigel Smith and Rebecca Lazenby for both their professional expertise and their time freely given to help the NPA keep its community informed.
- The Willoughby Symphony Orchestra free concert in Naremburn Park on Sunday 16 March was a great success and we thank our Events Sub-Committee members for putting the proposal for this event to Council and for the time they spent working with WCC's Performing Arts.
- At this concert, the Willoughby Symphony Choir approached the NPA about staging a Christmas Carols event in Naremburn; negotiations are underway.

We appreciate your support and thank those many residents who have become new members of the NPA thus far, this year. We also thank our loyal supporters, our members of long-standing who are always prepared to lend a helping hand. A good membership base gives us stronger negotiating power when addressing issues of concern to our suburb. Contact us on naremburnmatters@yahoo.com as we welcome feedback and comments.

Kevin FitzPatrick
 President NPA

ST LEONARD'S CATHOLIC CHURCH

Cnr Willoughby &
 Donnelly Rds,
 Naremburn



WORLD YOUTH DAY CROSS & ICON Friday, 11 July, 2008

St Leonard's Church will host the WYD Cross & Icon that have been travelling throughout Australia for the past year. A special TAIZE-style prayer service will be held on Friday, 11 July at 7pm, followed by hospitality.

ALL ARE WELCOME.

Parish Office: 9438 1011
www.naremburn-northbridge.com



Resolutions Passed at the Public Meeting on 28 May, at St Leonard's Catholic Church Parish Hall on 'Naremburn Primary School – Options for the Future.'

1. That having regard to the changes in demography of the Naremburn area, the Department of Education, Catholic Diocese of Broken Bay, local Member for Willoughby and Willoughby City Council commit to work together to achieve the opening of a new school within two years in Naremburn.
2. That the representatives from the Department of Education and Training and the Catholic Diocese, Broken Bay be thanked and efforts noted and appreciated for their mutual collaboration on this issue.
3. That we immediately establish a Naremburn Precinct School Working Party, such working party to be facilitated through Willoughby City Council.
4. The State Member, with our Council and community support, seeks delegations to meet with the Minister for Education and Minister for Transport to put forward the community concerns.
5. That we seek support from North Sydney Council on this issue.
6. That a further Public Meeting be reconvened in 3 months to report on progress.

Wow! What an event! The WSO in our park!

Many of you reading this will be disappointed that you did not attend the Willoughby Symphony Orchestra's free concert in Naremburn Park on Sunday, 16 March.

The NPA Events Sub-Committee's goal was to have an open air concert so that parents could enjoy a WSO concert with their children, 'just down the road' in our park. Council catered for kids with a Jumping Castle and other fun, and there was also space to play and some children did just that while waiting for the main event.

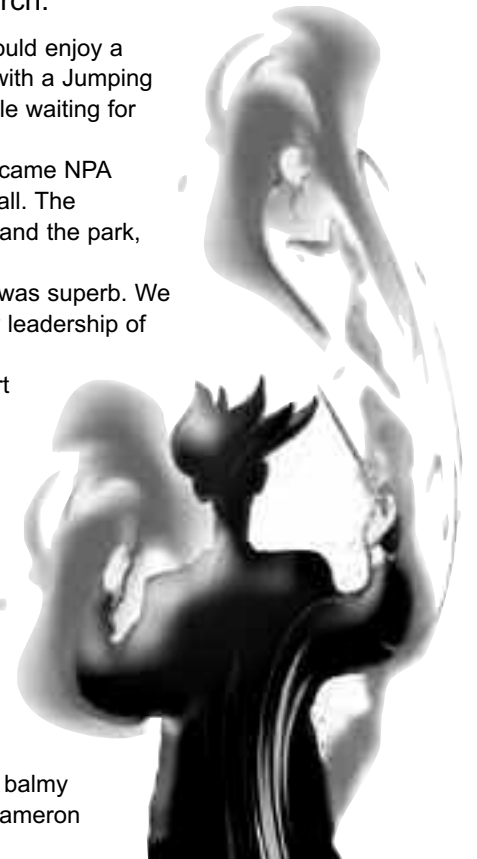
We peopled our NPA stall from 1:00 pm until 8:00 pm and welcomed the residents who became NPA members on the day. During part of the evening Mayoress Beth Reilly sat with us at the stall. The Mayor came to visit, as did Cllr Thompson. Gladys Berejiklian paid a flying visit to our stall and the park, in between two engagements.

The pre concert entertainment included the Willoughby City Band. The symphony concert was superb. We were treated to the brilliant playing of violinist Cameron Hill, and the enthusiastic and lively leadership of world-renowned chief conductor, Nicholas Milton. In their speeches, both the Mayor and Nicholas mentioned the Naremburn Progress Association's initiative in requesting a concert in our park.

WCC's Performing Arts Manager, Tim Long, together with his team did an excellent job in what was for them their largest outdoor event. We appreciated the cooperation and assistance of Allan Rendell and Cameron Kennedy. Allan said that over 800 people had attended the concert. It was great to see so many residents relaxing on their rugs, sipping wine and enjoying a picnic. Food stalls did reasonable trade but most of the locals brought their own tucker.

On the night several business people expressed interest in sponsoring the event. Our goal is for a concert in Naremburn Park to be an annual event. Council did foot the bill for this concert – our thanks to the Mayor and the Councillors. The value of this event is immeasurable. Practicalities are that a WSO concert ticket is \$35 for single performances, and there are subscription series of 4, 5 or 6 concerts.

As one NPA member said in his thank you email: "We have just returned from a wonderful balmy evening under the stars in Naremburn Park seeing and hearing the wonderful WSO and Cameron Hill; \$5 for a Rogan Josh and all that wonderful music – what a bargain!"



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Gladys Berejiklian MP

Member for Willoughby
Shadow Minister for Transport
Shadow Minister for Citizenship

Excerpt from her 'Private Member's Statement' delivered in Parliament, 28 February 2008, 5.50pm

Willoughby Electorate Planning

I convey the view of my electorate and raise community concerns regarding a discussion paper issued by the Minister for Planning entitled, "Improving the New South Wales Planning System".

Many local organisations and concerned residents have forwarded copies of their submissions to the Minister and the State Government about the proposals. In summary, their submissions highlight that the current proposals in the discussion paper remove and diminish communities' participation in decisions that affect them.

They are concerned that the proposals remove development decisions from our elected local government representatives and place those decisions in the hands of private certifiers paid by development proponents. Another concern is that the proposals will result in approved development in residential areas without any reference or notification to the community or adequate consultation with affected neighbours. I know many Willoughby residents feel strongly about that. We are blessed to have wonderful surroundings and many residents have worked hard during their lifetime to be able to live in the Willoughby electorate. Many are concerned about the impact of the proposals on their quality of life and on the environment.

Other concerns raised by community organisations in their submissions to the Minister include that the proposals will not provide for the proper assessment or protection of environmental features. The discussion paper does not include any relevant information about the way in which particular and special character, quality and features of local areas including conservation areas and items with significant natural and cultural heritage values will be identified and protected from degradation.

Throughout the electorate of Willoughby there are pockets of areas that are of significant cultural heritage, not just to the electorate of Willoughby but also to the State at large. Clearly, this is a major concern to many progress associations and other community groups that have contacted me about this matter. There is a concern about the overall effect of the proposed changes on the relationship between developers and developments. People feel that the current proposals will not enhance transparency but will cause there to be greater levels of dishonesty in local planning issues. Those types of issues have been raised directly with me by many organisations. Organisations have lost confidence in the process, given the short period allowed by the Minister for consultation.

I am sure many organisations across New South Wales have spent a considerable time putting together their submissions, but many believe the length of time available to them is not sufficient. Many organisations that have contacted me said that they were in favour of the direction that the Local Government and Shires Associations were going in their approach to this issue. I again place on record that the future of our local communities is important to all of us. Residents and community organisations in the Willoughby electorate certainly feel strongly about this. I urge the Minister for Planning, Frank Sartor, to take all those submissions into consideration and to ensure that the quality of life in our communities is not irrevocably destroyed.

Council Elections

Election Day for WCC is Saturday, 13 September. Our March issue featured all three Naremburn Ward Councillors. This issue has articles by the Member for North Sydney and by the Member for Willoughby. In our September issue we will allocate space for each of the candidates for election for Naremburn Ward, as well as candidates for Willoughby Mayor.



Thai Takeaway Food

294 Willoughby Road Naremburn

Monday to Saturday

Lunch 11:30 – 2:30

Dinner 4:30 – 9:45

Sunday

Dinner 4:30 – 9:45

Phone your order – Ready in 20 minutes

9906 1088

Penny Wade

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www.spfoodworkshop.com.au

Baseball Lights: Bicentennial Reserve

The North Sydney Leagues Baseball Club (NSLBC) DA was discussed at an on site Ward Council (Sailors Bay and Naremburn Wards) meeting, 9 April 2008, then at Council's meeting of 14 April, and again at a full Council on site meeting, 19 April. Garland Road residents and others have complained about the effect of the 25 metre high light towers and the lack of community consultation by NSLBC since October 2005. As a result of the 19 April meeting at the Baseball Diamond, WCC arranged a viewing of night training at North Shore baseball diamonds for Council officers, Councillors, the NPA and a Garland Road representative, on Wednesday, 4 June.

A Public Meeting will be held on Wednesday, 18 June at 7:30 pm at the Community Centre. We look forward to a win-win resolution of this issue.

Missy's Place

Apologies to Michelle Saper for the errors in the March issue of NM. Missy's Place is located at 570 Willoughby Road, Willoughby, where you can 'nurture your spirit, treat your body, laugh and enjoy'.

www.missysplace.com.au – 9967 5417

Organic Fruit & Vegetable Buying Group

Naremburn resident, Katie McKinnon has set up a group that uses its buying power to provide mixed boxes of the freshest organic fruit and vegies at conventional supermarket prices with delivery each Thursday direct to your door.

Contact Katie on 0403 757 644

Naremburn Branch Library

For the July School Holidays

For kids aged 6 years and under there will be a story time about indigenous culture to coincide with NAIDOC Week (6-13 July). Session will start at 10.30 am and finish at about 11.15am, on Friday 11 July.

On Monday, 14 July, from 3.00 pm to 4.00 pm King Arthur will be the theme of a great craft activity for children aged 5 to 12. Book your kids into these enjoyable sessions at Naremburn Library – phone 9439 5584, from Monday 23 June or 9777 7900 (Chatswood Library),

Gripe of the 21st century

The car park at the Naremburn Village Shops is almost sacred ground, a battlefield which valiant NPA members and long-standing shop-keepers fought to keep. Several times over a period of 30 years, the shops were under threat. The shops were saved. Road-builders intent on providing a highway to the Hills District after the demise of the extension of the Warringah Freeway, gave into to pressure from the Naremburn community to retain parking bays for the shops - well for the patrons of the shops! Sad to say, some shop-keepers and their employees are choosing to park their vehicles in this area for most of the day. Let's keep this car park for customers so that all the shop-keepers benefit. Fair go!

Naremburn Survey

HomeTraders Real Estate recently commenced a survey of Naremburn residents to see what the people in the community valued or had concerns about. Below are the findings so far.

■ Factors leading people to the area. Most agreed that key factors are:

1. Proximity to the city and the station.
2. Diverse and quaint housing.
3. An interesting population mix.
4. A sense of community.

■ When asked about some genuine concerns, responses included:

1. The lack of a local primary school was a real concern among young families.
2. Parking and traffic issues: Traffic flow, particularly on Waters Road and Dalleys Road, mainly a problem at peak times. Those living close to St Leonards were fed up with trying to park. Despite much of the area having residents' parking, this is still not adequate.
3. Those living close to St Leonards Station found security a concern, both personal safety and belongings.
4. Street lighting, particularly on Francis Street and the path to St Leonards.

Liz Price and Matt Johnson will continue to knock on doors to gain some insight into the community so please support them. We look forward to the final results.

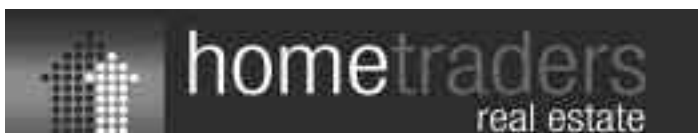
Liz Price has lots to offer as a Naremburn Agent



“My biggest Real Estate mistake is not having bought in Naremburn when I had the chance 20 years ago!”

Liz Price comments as she discusses her love for the Naremburn area. Her appreciation of the history and the character of the suburb is infectious. Having lived on the Lower North Shore most of her life, Liz has genuine community interest and knowledge. Combine all this with her past career as a solicitor, for many years in the field of commercial law and more recently as a lawyer at the Land Titles Office, Liz Price is an agent with a lot to offer those contemplating the sale of their home.

For all property advice, talk to Liz Price!



110 Hampden Road, Artarmon
0418 117 542 mob **9411 7299** office
www.hometraders.com.au



Henry's Birthday Bush Poetry Reading

Sunday 15 June

2:00 pm – 4:00 pm,

The Henry Lawson Cave, along
the Bicentennial pathway between
Gaza Road and Flat Rock Drive.

Featuring Don Swonnell and Peter Carmody with Dave Seeney on guitar, spend your Sunday afternoon enjoying some raucous and inspirational poetry and test your skills in the bird call competition with local twitcher, Timmy Thurston.

Please come with a cushion or camp chair to sit on, and mug for tea and damper. If you have a special poem to read or have read, please bring it along. In case of wet weather a cancellation message will be recorded on 9777 7755 by 12 noon.

Alternative date – Sunday 22 June.

HARBOUR REGENERATION

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Native Planting
Ideas and Advice
Maintenance and Creation
from
Balcony to Bushland

Simon Gregory
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Nareburn's Bushy Bits

In this issue, we travel along Bicentennial pathway, beside what one-time resident Henry Lawson described as “the scrub ridged western side” of Flat Rock Gully. Before we do, did you know that the area between the ends of Market Street and Garland Road was a proposed site for Burley Griffin's Incinerator, with entry from Brook Street? One wonders what the future of the gully might have been.

Let's begin under Flat Rock Drive; a tunnel to connect Bicentennial with the new Flat Rock Gully Reserve was installed. Inside, a beautiful mural depicting local flora and fauna was painted, in 1998, by Aboriginal artist, Carl Simpson, ably assisted with hand stencils by children from the Trumper Pavilion Vacation Centre in Chatswood.

As we continue on with the ridge top on our left, all to our right is buried rubbish and fill once known as the 'Nareburn Tip'. The gully beneath us sloped down 30 metres to Flat Rock Creek that now runs in a box culvert about a metre beneath the pathway.

All along this ridge, market garden rock terracing is still very much in evidence. Eventually covered in huge weeds, privets and other exotic garden escapes, in 1996-97, the Flat Rock Gully Bush Regeneration Team began extensive regeneration, re-vegetation, and careful habitat restoration assisted by corporate and community planting teams. The Bicentennial Bushcare Team and contractors now maintain it.

A little further along an original bush remnant was discovered revealing changes in vegetation, particularly trees, including *Eucalyptus haemastoma* (Scribbly Gum), *Elaeocarpus reticulatus* (Blueberry Ash) and *Allocasuarina littoralis* (Black Sheoak), all valuable information for re-vegetation.

Moving on we come to an old concrete 'drop pit', transformed by Aboriginal artist and sculptor, Shane Haurama in 2007, to depict the past, present and future of the indigenous people and the gully landscape.

Now the rocky ridge becomes more evident; we come to what is now known as Henry Lawson's Cave, a place where the great man 'rested', between bouts of spirited behaviour at local pubs, as well as being a nice place to contemplate the gully, the roar of the nearby waterfall, and the creek running below.

Earlier I mentioned habitat restoration, because, in sections along this ridge, a critter was discovered, thus far unique only to Nareburn within Willoughby City – Burton's Legless Lizard, last seen, perhaps appropriately, at Henry's Cave. Other local residents include a pair of white-faced Herons and a Pacific Baza, with the pathway corridor being used as a nesting and hunting area by Butcher Birds and Tawny Frogmouths.

Now, up to Gaza Road we find a huge block of sandstone, very hard, called ironstone, carved by Ishi Buki sculptors, depicting patterns from the Incinerator. Behind this, buried under the Leisure Centre's car park, lies the huge flat rock ledge, thought to be the inspiration of the Gully's name. Behind that, up on Small Street is Burley Griffin's Incinerator, the source of all the problems. Not able to cope with early to mid twentieth century rubbish, it was decided to tip and fire up the rubbish into the Gully, with a box culvert going straight under Flat Rock Creek Bridge, causing the destruction and burial of the beautiful Nareburn waterfall. Its position is shown by a photo plate on a pole alongside the pathway above; a series of photo plates on poles along the pathway from the bridge and Henry's Cave, give an interesting picture of what was.

And so we come to Flat Rock Creek Bridge at Willoughby Road. Erected in 1886, opened by Mayor H Fleming, twice strengthened for increased traffic, after years of neglect and inappropriate repairs, it is, as I write, receiving a much-needed face-lift. Stonemasons are re-pointing, and doing minor repairs to the sandstone as well as cleaning it, revealing the vibrant colours of the sandstone and the unique structure of this wonderful old bridge. I can't wait to see the outcome.

This Bicentennial shared pathway is very popular, particularly on weekends, for walking or cycling. There's always something interesting to see.

Next issue, we continue exploring Nareburn's parks and bushy bits.

Until then, keep planting our special native flora.

Don Swonnell
Walter Street



Naremburn Neighbourhood Watch

June 2008

Break and Enter

In the last newsletter we identified break and enter as a big issue in our area. It would seem that there was a sudden surge in this offence and then it stopped. It seems to have been quite quiet recently. The most popular item for theft these days seems to be GPS navigational equipment from cars, so please be careful with these if you don't want to lose them. We are still having items stolen from garages and undercover parking areas, the most popular items are golf clubs and pushbikes, so make sure yours are engraved with identification or the serial numbers are recorded to help police get them back to you.

Police successes

Police arrested a 50-year-old man in Chatswood for bag theft. Following an ATM photo of a man using a stolen credit card police arrested a chap who was charged with four break-and-enters in the area.

Winter wisdom

This time of year is one where people spend more time at home in front of the heater. Many fires in winter are caused by heating equipment. Here are our top tips on fire safety:

- Don't leave heaters on when you are out if you can avoid it.

- Be careful of items left on top of electric oil filled heaters as they can easily catch alight.
- Take care with children in pyjamas as many are quite flammable and only need to brush against a hot element or ember to catch fire – flannelette may be cotton, but it is often highly flammable.
- Leave keys in doors with deadlocks or unlock the deadlocks when you are inside – the last time you want to lock yourself in is when there is a fire.
- Have an evacuation plan – it sounds very corporate, I know, but what would happen if there was a fire? Would your family know to keep down low and which door/window to use to get out in a hurry?
- If you have a wood burning fire have the chimney cleaned every now and then – chimney fires are bad news.

Next Meeting

Our next meeting is:

Date: Wednesday 25 June, 2008

Time: 8:00pm

Where: St Cuthbert's Church Hall, Merrenburn Avenue

If you would like to join our email report service please email us at naremhwh@tpg.com.au.



GRADY'S GARDENS

- Landscaping
- Mowing
- Maintenance
- Waste Removal

0406 947 409

Heritage Award

The Willoughby City Heritage Awards recognise and promote environmentally sensitive design solutions that ensure the heritage character of the Willoughby LGA is maintained and enhanced.

Robin Phelan was the winner of the 2008 Restoration Heritage Award for her Burley Griffin house at 14 The Parapet, Castlecrag. She was ably assisted by local Architect, Scott Robertson of Station Street, Naremburn.

Robin has also produced every Naremburn Matters issue since our first effort in April 2005; we enjoy the benefits of her wisdom and creativity.

Congratulations to both Robin and Scott!



JOIN THE NAREMBURN PROGRESS ASSOCIATION!

\$10.00 per person per annum paid annually (\$1.00 Concession)

LAST NAME: FIRST NAME: TITLE:

ADDRESS: PHONE NO:

E-MAIL: MOBILE:

Cash:

Bring completed form to the next meeting – held on second Thursday of the month, with the exception of January and July.

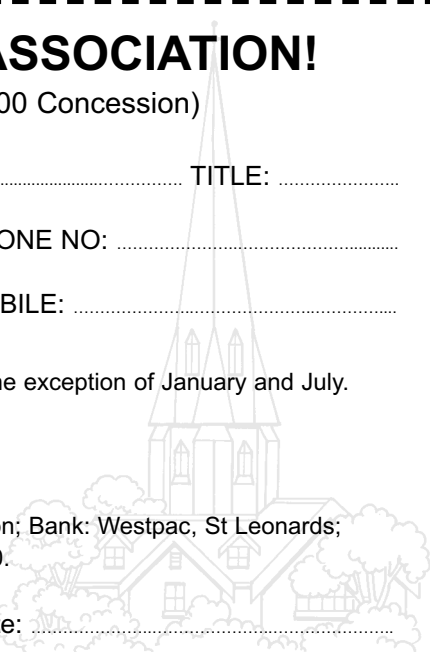
Cheques:

To Naremburn Progress Association and send to PO Box 393 St Leonards NSW 1590.

Electronic Funds Transfer:

BSB: 032 297; Account Number: 20 1474; Account Name: Naremburn Progress Association; Bank: Westpac, St Leonards; Description: Your last name. Please post this form to PO Box 393 St Leonards NSW 1590.

Signature: Date:



Noticeboard

We welcome contributions to the community noticeboard. It provides free advertising for not-for-profit community and charity organisations in Nareburn. Please phone Trisha on 9439 8119

The following are held at the Nareburn Community Centre 7 Central Street, Nareburn

Nareburn Progress Association

2nd Thursday (except Jan & July)
7:30 pm to 10:00 pm
9439 8119 (Kevin or Trisha)

Playgroup

Wednesday and Thursday
10:00 am to 12 noon
(School Term only)
9439 8814

Nareburn Over Fifties

Most Mondays
10:30 am to 2:00 pm
9436 3304 (Lorna)
9436 2607 (Margaret)

Northern Suburbs Philatelic Society

3rd Thursday, 7:45 pm
Visitors always welcome
9419 7354 (Paul Storm)

Breast Feeding Association

1st Tuesday
10:00 am to 12 noon
9966 1591

After School Care

Monday to Friday
3:00 pm to 6:00 pm
(School Term only)
9439 8814

Willoughby Pre School

Monday to Friday
9:00 am to 3:00 pm
(School Term only)
9437 4260

Nareburn Library

Mondays - 2:30 pm to 5:00 pm
Thursdays - 2:30 pm to 5:00 pm
Saturdays - 9:30 am to 12 noon
9439 5584



Federal Budget will result in more pressure on Royal North Shore Hospital

In May the new federal government brought down its first Budget. As the Shadow Minister for Health and as the Member for North Sydney, one of my primary interests was to see what the government would do to fix the problems that have been exposed at our own major public hospital – Royal North Shore.

The Prime Minister promised that the ‘buck would stop with him’ when it came to public hospitals so expectations have been running high.

We have all been horrified at some of the stories that have emerged from Royal North Shore. As the parent of young children I perhaps am more acutely aware than ever before about how important it is that we have access to the highest quality public health care. I know that the doctors and nurses at RNSH are some of the best in the world but they have been let down, like many patients, by the system and by a lack of funding from the State government.

At first blush, the federal budget seems to provide some additional money for public hospitals but the devil is always in the detail.

What the government also announced were changes to the Medicare surcharge that will, according to the government’s own figures, drive up to half a million Australians away from private health insurance. It’s a grossly irresponsible policy that shows a lack of understanding about the inter-relationship between the public and private health-care systems.

With so many dropping out of private health insurance, particularly among younger age groups, the inevitable consequence will be higher premiums.

Changing the Medicare surcharge, which has helped encourage so many to insure against ill health, will mean that those 400,000 people will now largely rely on the public system? It will be a catastrophe for public hospitals across Australia as they deal with this exodus from private care and the government has introduced this with no compensation for our hospital system. We have seen estimates that it will cost public hospitals up to \$1.76 billion dollars because of the extra patients they will now have to treat.

At Royal North Shore that will mean longer waiting lists for elective surgery and more pressure on the many out-patient services provided by the hospital. With the hospital already under so much strain it is hard to see how it will cope without additional resources. I will fight against the government’s changes and, if they succeed, I will certainly be putting the case for the additional funding that Royal North Shore and other public hospitals will need to compensate for this very short-sighted policy decision.

Joe Hockey MP

Member for North Sydney
Shadow Minister for Health & Ageing

