



September 2024

Shoal Bay access

TRRA agrees that this is an urgent issue, but considers that it is premature to pursue a new road for alternative road access to Shoal Bay and Fingal Bay, in the absence of:

- The results of the consultation undertaken by TfNSW in 2020-21
- Independent expert advice on the options for permanently securing Shoal Bay Road at the vulnerable 'pinch point'

This is a classic 'wicked problem' with no easy or cheap solutions, but clearly urgent attention is required beyond waiting for the adoption and implementation of the Coastal Management Plan (CMP) at the current and planned timescale. Proposed CMP actions for Shoal Bay CH017 and CH073 are directly relevant but their proposed long term timing – years into the future – is not acceptable, given the increased urgency following the August storm event. The Emergency Action identified for Shoal Bay in section 6.5 of the CMP has already been partly activated in response to the major erosion in August, with sand movements that can only be a temporary fix, but now needs to be followed through to a more permanent solution as soon as possible.

Recent calls by several parties for a hard sea wall at the 'pinch point' opposite Shoal Bay Avenue, AND for expedited planning for an alternate road are easy to make, but beg several key questions, including:

Sea wall to support and protect Shoal Bay Road

- How practical from an engineering perspective is a sea wall at that location?
- Could it be built without an alternative route during construction (i.e. traffic management implications)?
- Would a sea wall have unintended consequences for other parts of Shoal Bay Beach and beyond? To be effective, a seawall may need to extend to a significant stretch of the Shoal Bay foreshore? Would the complete loss of any beach in front of a seawall be an acceptable outcome?
- What are the implications for the marine environment (inc. Marine Park constraints)?

Austral Street extension to provide alternative access

- Engineering considerations.
- Environmental considerations, including effect on Shoal Bay wetlands, native vegetation and fauna and flora habitat, and on the water catchment.



- Legal obstacles/delays including de-gazettal from the National Park, necessary Aboriginal Heritage consultations, Hunter Water etc.
- Do Fingal Bay and Shoal Bay communities really understand the long term implications of alternative access in increasing pressure for major development? The State Government will expect a major return in new housing from any investment in the road – this would require other costly new infrastructure and have major implications for the character of the area.

Other alternatives - questions

- Could a proper 'fix' of Shoal Bay Road with a hard sea wall guarantee sufficient access in the longer term such that an alternate route could be avoided?
- Does the community want to re-visit the other route options, which have apparently been rejected (none of us have seen the report promised in 2021 after the last round of consultation by TfNSW, if it even exists)
- Is continued sand nourishment a long term option or just a constant waste of significant amounts of money that just puts off the inevitable need for a sea wall, and potentially causes major issues for the foreshore morphology?

An overriding question is 'How realistic is it to expect major State (or Federal) funding for BOTH a sea wall fix (\$?? millions) AND an alternative road (last estimate \$170m)?'

The way forward

While there are no easy answers, we agree that discussions, and expert advice, need to be given a very high priority, and some preliminary decisions made *before the end of this calendar year*.

TRRA calls for the following immediate action, to be initiated by Council:

- Professional modelling of the coastal morphodynamics of the Shoal Bay foreshore, and expert recommendations and costings for long-term protection of Shoal Bay Road. The recent erosion should make a strong case for State and/or Federal funding for this urgent work, but Council will need to take the lead in pressing for this.
- Council should seek the results of the TfNSW 2020-21 consultation on alternative/supplementary routes to Fingal Bay/Shoal Bay, as an essential foundation for any further consideration of route options.