Stockton Community Group Inc Meeting Notes
Public Forum

Date: 18th February 2026 **Venue:** Stockton Surf Club. Pitt St, Stockton
Chair: Lindy Nisbett **Minutes**: Carolyn Bailey

1. Meeting Opened: by Lindy Nisbett at 7.35 pm with Acknowledgement of Country
Guest Speaker: Tim Crakanthorp, Newcastle State Member of Parliament
Invited Guests: Blake Cleary-Newcastle Police Crime Prevention Officer, Brock Wills-Waratah Police Command. Newcastle LGA Ward 1 Councillors: Charlotte McCabe (Acting Lord Mayor), Peter Gittens, Declan Clausen
General Attendance: Available on request
Apologies: Jo Bastian, Denise Fernandez

2. **Forum outline**: Tim Crakanthorp was sent three prepared questions prior to the forum. Councillors invited to respond to each question, followed by questions from audience.

Question 1: Stockton Beach

There is significant disappointment with the announcement that the $21m in funding for mass sand renourishment, a 2023 election promise, will not be fully allocated until 2030. What strategies will be in place to mitigate the risk of further beach erosion and damage over the next 5 years? When can we expect the promised mass sand renourishment to happen?

Response
The funding has been allocated in the State budget across the next 5 years. Tim is working with Minister for Environment (Penny Sharpe) to ensure the funding is available in a timely manner to commence the renourishment.

Progress to date: the Extended Stockton Coastal Management Plan has been endorsed through Newcastle Council (CN) and State government. Suitable sand deposits have been identified at 3 sites: the North Arm of the Hunter River, the harbour entry and off-shore. Each site presents challenges for sand extraction. The most likely site is off-shore, this requires a mining license for dredging. There is no precedent in NSW for this type of licensing. Application for a mining license has been submitted to the relevant NSW government departments with the process ongoing.

A consultancy company has been engaged to develop a procurement strategy for an appropriate dredge. This will be a complex and expensive international process that involves sourcing an appropriate dredge for the work required, that will be available at a time that coordinates with licensing and other steps in the sand renourishment process.

The Stockton Special Advisory Panel continues to meet, with local representatives Ron Boyd, Barbara Whitcher and Willow Forsyth as members.

NSW Government has matched a $280k commitment from NC to fund sand scrapping, to try to protect beach assets until mass sand renourishment is undertaken. Tim acknowledged concerns that ongoing weather events will further erode beach amenity.

Related questions and issues from the audience:
When will the Port of Newcastle (PON) resume dumping of harbour dredged sand off Stockton Beach? The dumped sand from the David Allen dredge provided a level of sand supplementation to the shoreline*.*

Tim responded, stating PON stopped dredge dumping off the beach due to licensing issues and have been slow to resolve this issue due to concerns about legal liability risk for the company. NSW gov continues to negotiate with PON to have dumping recommenced.

Frustration with the years it is taking to resolve the beach erosion expressed. What is the actual timeframe to commence effective mass sand renourishment?

Tim acknowledged community frustration with the process. Stated there had been real progress during the current term of government with application for a mining license and procurement strategy underway, but unable to given dates for when all the steps will be complete.

The speed of mass sand renourishment on the Gold Coast Qld, following the 2025 cyclone given as an example of how damaged coastline should be managed. Why can't NSW gov respond faster? Why are alternatives e.g. groynes, not being implemented to protect Stockton Beach from another erosion event whilst mass sand renourishment is finalised?

Tim explained that Qld government has licensing and dredge procurement processes in place, this allows for a rapid response to weather events. NSW does not have these underlying enablers in place yet, but is the focus of current work. A range of risk mitigation strategies have been extensively investigated over the years. The causes of the erosion at Stockton, including deepening of the harbour and extension of the breakwaters, are different to other coastal sites and as such requires solutions that address local risk. Mass sand renourishment and sand scrapping have been identified as the best solutions. Tim acknowledged that even with sand renourishment ongoing replenishment will be required due to extreme weather events. He stressed the need for solutions that can be sustained into the future.

Question 2: Stockton to Newcastle Ferry

The future of the ferry service is of deep concern for residents and commuters. The Legislative Assembly e-Petition, launched in late December, has over 2,500 signatures to date. Can you provide an update on plans to future-proof the ferry service? What is the status and timeframe for return of MV Hunter to service?

Response

Tim continues to liaise John Graham, Minister for Transport and advocate for a longer-term commitment to the replacement and electrification of the ferry service in line with plans for the Sydney Ferry. Network The Minister is aware of the petition (closing date: 12/03/2026) and will prepare a response.

A replacement ferry has been leased by NSW Gov and will remain in Newcastle until MV Hunter is returned to service. No timeframe for the repair of MV Hunter was provided as further corrosion issues have been identified since the repair process commenced.

Question 3: Homelessness and Free Campers

As anticipated, issues with the number of rough sleepers and long stay free campers has escalated on Stockton over recent months. SCG Inc acknowledges the complexity of homelessness and the need for a cross-agency strategy. Key areas of concerns are:

- *Inadequate infrastructure for sanitation and rubbish management*
- *Anti-social behaviours such as verbal abuse and physical threats*
- *Lack of enforcement of existing parking and camping restrictions*
- *Proposed parking restrictions that impact residents*

How are local and state government working together to form a comprehensive strategy to address these problems?

Response

Tim acknowledged the issues and complexities of homelessness being experienced on Stockton and across Newcastle.
Overnight timed parking restrictions has been proposed through the CN Local Transport Forum as a strategy to reduce rough sleeping and free camping at the west precinct of King and Clyde Streets. Community consultation was undertaken by NC in January.
Tim asked that residents experiencing issues related to people experiencing homelessness contact the following:
Police (emergency): 000, **Police Assistance Line (no-urgent): 131444**, **Tim Crakanthorp's office: 49261126** or the **Newcastle Assertive Outreach Service: 1300305667**.
Tim also advised that Paul Scully, Minister for Planning & Public Spaces, has initiated a 6-month due diligence process by Department Community & Justice and Landcom to explore options for social housing development on the former Stockton Centre site. Development could be similar to that being undertaken at the Broadmeadow Railway Heritage site.
Tim also invited NC Councillors to respond:

Charlotte McCabe: explained the responsibilities of NC, State and Maritime authorities for road and parkland management.
The proposal for timed parking restrictions around the Ballast has been generally supported, with the process currently being finalised. The next phase will be community consultation on managing Crown Land/parklands.
Charlotte acknowledged the challenges of providing empathy and support for people experiencing homelessness and the changes needed.
SCG Inc submitted a letter to Ward 1 Councillors in January sharing concerns from local residents about rough sleepers, free campers and the proposed parking changes. The response from Ryan Tranter, NC Executive Manager Transport & Regulation is attached.

Related questions and issues from the audience:
Hayden Constable, Stockton Scouts, spoke of the impact of anti-social behaviour and the proximity of campers to the Scout Hall on the local unit. The situation significantly challenges the ability of Scout leaders to meet legislated child protection responsibilities to keep the children safe, and impacts the ability to hire out the hall as a revenue stream. He has emailed Councillors with these concerns and asked what solutions can be put in place to ensure the future of this local organisation?
Peter Gittens validated Hayden's concerns and spoke of the need for enforcement of existing restrictions.
Access to the Scout Hall from Fullerton St is not a recognised road, so will not come under the proposed timed parking restrictions. However, it would be covered under future proposals for Crown Land/parklands.
Brock Wills (Waratah Police) explained Legislation Section 197 and 198 that give police "move on" powers for offensive or intimidating behaviour. However, a "move on order" is not permanent. For police to initiate court action/orders a statement from the complainant is needed, with the possible need to attend court.
Brock stressed that police respond to calls made to 000 and the Police Assistance Line Ph: 131444) on an urgency/priority basis.

A person identifying as homeless shared their experience of attending the Homes NSW office, describing it as unsafe and confronting with rude and aggressive behaviours from both customers and staff. The lack of adequate staffing appears to be contributing to extended wait times, escalating behaviours and disengagement of people in need.
Tim responded, saying he is investigating rumours of staff cuts in this area of high need and will meet with Rose Jackson, Minister for Homelessness, to discuss these concerns.

A number of audience members raised concerns with the increasing number of people rough sleeping due to homelessness and free campers, noting these are distinct groups. *Issues included*:

- No camping signage already in place is being ignored and not being enforced by council rangers or police.
- Examples of local residents being fined for parking infringements, while restrictions for campers (including issues with noise) is not enforced.
- Lack of sanitation facilities, including caravan toilet dump facilities.
- Safety fears due to aggressive and antisocial behaviour.
- Impact of parking changes at Horseshoe Beach contributing to increase in both free campers and rough sleepers on Stockton.
- What alternatives are/were offered for homeless people moved from Horseshoe Beach?
- Lack of proactive support for local residents and community even though these problems could be foreseen.
- Perceptions of people experiencing homelessness declining offers of accommodation and support.
- Lack of visibility and action by Council Rangers.
- Social media being used to promote Stockton as a free camping destination e.g. Wikicamps

Response

Charlotte provided examples of supports, alternatives and follow up provided for homeless people at Horseshoe Beach through the Assertive Outreach service and the challenges of gaining the trust of vulnerable people which can take months or years.

Declan explained the two sets of legislation governing Council's role for enforcement of road and Crown Land restrictions.

Options such as bollards to restrict access to parkland will be considered in the next phase of community consultation.

Current priority is to address the camping/parking issues impacting the area around the Marine Rescue base.

Councillors don't have data on Council Ranger activity, including the issuing of infringements. They have undertaken to follow up this data and share with the community when available.

Brock Wills explained the role police has in enforcing street parking restrictions. Although authorised to monitor and issue infringements it would not be a priority for the allocation of resources.

3. Meeting close: Lindy Nisbett closed the meeting at 8.45pm, thanking Tim Crakanthorp, invited guests and the community for their attendance.

4. Next Meeting: Wednesday 15th April 2025, Stockton Surf Life Saving Club at 7:30 pm