

ACCESS TO NEW NORTHERN BEACHES HOSPITAL "CLOSED"

Posted 23 March 2021

TWO YEARS LATER - NOTHING HAS CHANGED



From: basmark@optusnet.com.au

To: 'ElectorateOffice Pittwater'

Sent: Monday, March 22, 2021 5:18 PM

Subject: Fix the Wakehurst Parkway, please

Dear Rob

I was planning to call your office this morning to suggest that you stay at home today and keep your feet dry. Then I thought, why don't you take the government helicopter to work and pick up Brad and Gladys along the way. You could all drop into the local public hospital, the Royal North Shore at St Leonards, pick up a takeaway coffee and maybe visit some of your constituents who are staying there because the Northern Beaches Hospital does not accommodate their medical needs such as providing heart surgery or stents.

I guess that you have heard by now that the Wakehurst Parkway is again closed because of flooding. This means that the shortest most direct route from most Pittwater electorate suburbs to the Northern Beaches Hospital is not available. I recall that this does not worry you or Brad and that you were reported as playing down the need to upgrade or improve the Wakehurst Parkway access to the new Northern Beaches Hospital.

You proudly announced in a 2020 article in Pittwater Life that a range of measures to improve access along the Wakehurst Parkway were imminent. Apparently, this comes from a consultant's report completed in July 2019. Why did it take so long to release the details of that report?

It is March 2021, and the Wakehurst Parkway continues to flood and nothing, apart from the opening of the ocean entry on a couple of occasions, has really been done to solve the problem. There seems to be there is no serious recognition by Council or the NSW Government or our local State Members of Parliament to the fact that the Wakehurst Parkway is a major alternative road artery to Pittwater Road and that it is also the direct route from Narrabeen to the new Northern Beaches Hospital.

How long can this political game of ignorance continue? We need a widened, upgraded and open Wakehurst Parkway. The solution is obvious and that is the construction of a raised bridge over the flood prone section. The engineering technology exists in the magnificent Sea Cliff Bridge at Coalcliff and more recently sections of pre-built concrete spans have been used to raise the Pacific Motorway above the flood plain north of Grafton.

The Wakehurst Parkway was built without foresight when the original path of Deep Creek was interrupted by road fill diverting the Creek's path to Narrabeen Lagoon and the ocean. Floods are now more likely because of the amount of construction and hard surface including the upgraded Warringah Road and the Northern Beaches Hospital site. Significantly more development is planned for Frenchs Forest which is now devoid of trees. The runoff is significant, and it is directed towards Deep Creek. The greater the development the more will be the runoff. If progress is inevitable then so too is the flooding.

In a letter to you in late 2017 about the Wakehurst Parkway, I put the following question.

Q4. Are there any plans in place in the foreseeable future to upgrade the Wakehurst Parkway between North Narrabeen and Frenchs Forest apart from some flood proofing arrangements? (I am not referring to pie in the sky long-term promises).

In a letter dated 2 February 2018, you (Rob Stokes) wrote that the "most frequent causes of flooding is the overflow of Middle Creek". He went on to explain that the "NSW Government provided \$5 million to Northern Beaches Council to assist with measures to alter Middle Creek and better enable water to disperse during rain events". You also emphasised that "Council is responsible for managing the surrounding Middle Creek and Narrabeen Lagoon". It seems that the blame game, passing the buck and fobbing off are the order of the day.

As to the road itself, you (Rob Stokes) agreed that "further measures are required to be reviews separately by Roads and Maritime Services to improve the functionality of the corridor". I love that word "functionality" but what does it mean? In this context, it means the way in which the Wakehurst Parkway road corridor is able to function. A grand word but there was certainly no promise from you to pursue a road upgrade. Basically, it seems that you hope that a review by the RMS, whenever that happens, will lead to the Wakehurst Parkway being made to function better.

In Peninsula Living, June 2017, you (Rob Stokes) were reported as saying that emergency services are permitted to travel on the Parkway during flooding "provided it is safe to do so".

It was also reported that you (Rob Stokes) reject the idea that the need to fix the road is urgent arguing that the majority of Northern Beaches patients in ambulances go directly to Royal North Shore Hospital in St Leonards, travelling the same route (Wakehurst Parkway).



In the same edition of Peninsula Living, Brad Hazzard, Minister for Health and Member for Wakehurst, emphasised the amount of money being spent Northern Beaches Hospital related road projects at Frenchs Forest and on upgrades to Mona Vale Road designed to improve traffic flow during a flood emergency. It is not clear what flood proofing he was talking about because neither of the projects mentioned address flooding in the Wakehurst Parkway. Mr Hazzard said that “at some point in the not too distant future, I’d like to see more money spent on [Wakehurst Parkway] but let’s get the first done first”.

Mr Hazzard was also quoted as saying that “the vehicles can pass along Pittwater Road and up Warringah Road to the hospital. It might be a slightly longer passage, but for an ambulance using lights and sirens, it should not be”. Furthermore, he said that was sceptical about claims that Pittwater could be cut of in an extreme weather event. There have been a number of such events over the years so why such a casual response?

It is time to fix the Wakehurst Parkway and to also reinstate Mona Vale Hospital to at least Level 3 status to ensure that Pittwater and coastal suburbs have ready access to an emergency department.

I look forward to your response.

Mark Horton

Mona Vale NSW 2103

Email: basmark@optusnet.com.au

Mobile: 0409 611 371



Source	PITTWATER ALLIANCE
Website	https://pittwateralliance.weebly.com/
Email	pittwateralliance@gmail.com