

1990

# WATER SAFETY DISPLAY & SEMINAR

**St. George Motor Boat Club**

2 Wellington Street, Sans Souci

Friday, November 9, 1990

9.30 am to 4.00 pm

Cost: \$25, includes morning tea and Lunch.

## PROGRAMME

9.30 am - 9.50 am	<b>Arrival and Registration</b>
9.50 am - 10.00 am	<b>Introduction and Welcome</b> - Maria Long, Regional Director South East Metropolitan Region, Department of Sport and Recreation.
10.00 am - 10.30 am	<b>Boating Safety</b> - John Green, President & John Wright, Commodore St. George Motor Boat Club
10.30 am - 10.55 am	<b>NSW Drowning Report</b> - Derrick Hand, Deputy State Coroner.
10.55 am - 11.15 am	<b>Design and Construction of Municipal Indoor Heated Pools</b> The Enmore Project - Anthony Fazio, Properties Engineer, Marrickville Municipal Council
11.15 am - 11.30 am	<b>COFFEE BREAK</b>
11.30 am - 12.00 noon	<b>Pool Fencing and Safety Issues</b> - Panel Discussion led by Kevin Pretty, City Health & Building Surveyor, Hurstville City Council.
12.00 - 12.15 pm	<b>Access to Aquatic Recreation Areas.</b> Clovelly and Gordon's Bay Projects.- Pat Walsh, City Engineer Randwick City Council.
12.15 pm - 12.30 pm	<b>The Gordon's Bay Underwater Dive Trail</b> John Rowe
12.30 pm - 1.00 pm	<b>Safer Diving - A Doctor's Viewpoint</b> - Surgeon Lt. Commander Kevin Boundy School of Underwater Medicine, H.M.A.S. Penguin
1.00 pm - 2.15 pm	<b>LUNCH</b> Address by - The Hon. R. B. Rowland Smith, M.L.C. Minister for Sport and Recreation
2.15 pm - 2.45 pm	<b>Keynote Address</b> - "Twenty Years of Water Safety" Dr. Ian Mackie, National Medical Advisor to Royal Lifesaving Society.
2.45 pm - 3.45 pm	<b>WATER SAFETY AND RESCUE DISPLAY</b> (To be held in the water outside the Motor Boat Club) Including :      Simulated boating disaster and rescue Dive rescue Abseil, rescue and resuscitation of submerged diver. Wind Surfing & Water Skiing demonstration

THE PRO-DIVE UNDERWATER TRAIL: SEMINAR PRESENTATION FOR  
NSW DEPARTMENT OF SPORT & RECREATION IN WATER SAFETY  
WEEK. ST GEORGE MOTOR BOAT CLUB, SANDS SOURCE FRIDAY  
9 NOVEMBER 1990. PRESENTED BY JOHN ROWE

(1) Good afternoon ladies and gentleman, it is a great pleasure for me to be here today at the New South Wales Department of Sport and Recreation's Water Safety display and seminar. I have been asked to talk about the Gordons Bay underwater dive trail and I must confess as a diver and a resident Clovellyite that most of us refer to the area as Thompsons Bay. The idea for the underwater trail came from Rick Poole, the founder of Pro-Dive and Dennis Hunt, who is currently the Science master at Waverley College. The underwater trail's correct name is the Pro-Dive Underwater trail.

Firstly, with those of you not familiar with the area. You will see from UBD map 72 that Gordons Bay is between Coogee beach and Clovelly beach. It is unique as far as scuba diving is concerned in that it is one of the few safe accesses to ocean water diving that can be made from the land. Since Randwick Municipal Council, with Department of Sport and Recreation funding, have placed a concrete path over the rocks into the water the area is now more attractive to scuba divers because the path to the water makes access that much easier.

Additionally, Clovelly Bay, has restrictions on scuba diving during the summer months, making Thompsons Bay one of the most popular dive sites in Sydney. It is good to see local council now making funds available for scuba divers in the area.

However, I would stress that we have received no funding from the Department of Sport & Recreation for the Pro-Dive underwater trail. But, as it is not yet complete, we are certainly available for further discussion.

The idea of the Pro-Dive underwater trail goes back as far as 1985 when it was first proposed that the trail start from Gordons Bay and travel through to Coogee beach. At that time it was necessary to get government clearance for the proposal and it took some doing as ultimately it was found that the Department of Lands was responsible for the area. Pro-Dive now have an unsigned occupancy of the area from the Department of Lands.

One idea of the underwater trail is to enable people to study marine life while they are in the water instead of looking at things when they are dry and out of the water. It is also planned to have guide cards that will explain everything on the spot.

There is indeed some fascinating underwater wildlife that awaits the diver twelve kilometres from the heart of the city. Often you see octopuses there that are so friendly that they do not want to leave you. There is also an enormous variety of fish. Black and white striped old wives and mados are very common. White eared angel fish, banded coral shrimp, nudibranch slugs range in colour from white with green markings to pale brown with orange markings. Occasionally, seahorses of all colours are seen and goat fish which change from bright red to brown when approached, are common. There is also a wide variety of plant life in the area and the kelp has spectacular hues of brown and red. Also very well known to divers are the large blue groper, which are so friendly they can be hand fed. Eels are in abundance and stingrays and Port Jackson sharks are regularly seen.

I have just returned from a visit to New York and I detected a touch of envy when I told the people that Sydney had such wildlife offerings so close to the city centre.

2

By looking at the next slide you will see how the trail was originally planned to go right to Coogee and then it was reduced further to go to the bombora at Gordons Bay but even that has changed now. As it stands at the minute, we have 200 kilogram blocks of concrete in third size 44 gallon drums with stainless steel bolts in the centre. The plan is to link these up with chain as the previous proposal of polypropylene rope proved not to be strong enough to maintain position in the very large seas which are very occasionally experienced off Gordons Bay.

I became involved in the project in February 1990, as I, like many other people, had been an enthusiastic follower of the proposal. Through my long association with Rick Poole, I just suggested one day that I would be interested in completing the task just providing he let me know what he was intending and that any major expenses would be Pro-Dives. Rick readily agreed to this and I have been assisted by volunteers both from Marist Brothers Pagewood and boys from Cranbrook School. My stepson in particular Angus Sullivan, has been extremely helpful and Peter Clark and Jan Baker, both teachers at Marist Brothers Pagewood, have both been very active helping with the construction of the underwater trail. I am also indebted to George Daniel for the slides I will be showing you this afternoon. George is a P.A.D.I. openwater instructor. When he is not diving in Thompsons Bay, he is busily working at the restaurant that his brother and he own. In fact, the best Indian restaurant in the city, Oh Calcutta. I strongly recommend to you that you dine there one evening.

There have been many difficulties in getting the trail going. If you can imagine having to move thirty 200 kilograms blocks of concrete from the shoreline into the water and over rocks and on many days through very heavy seas. Eventually we had all the drums into two dump sites and again with the assistance of Cranbrook and Marist Brothers Pagewood pupils we were able to lay the trail. But we have had so many ups and downs, like the day I lost a \$3000 underwater scooter however this turned up the following day at Coogee Beach. There is an early morning jogger currently reported trying to sell this to various divers around the city. Hopefully, the scooter will be returned. As a consequence of the difficulties in building the trail, we have now ended up with the dive trails ten commandments, which are as follows:

1. Never mix with Mrs Murphy
2. Today's dive starts the night before
3. Measure it twice - cut it once
4. Success has a thousand fathers, failure is an orphan
5. A short term gain is a long term loss
6. If it starts badly it can only get worse
7. The penalty for bigamy is two mothers-in-law
8. A short cut is the longest distance between two points
9. Slowly, slowly, catchee monkey
10. An elephant is a building designed by local council

I was also interested in the previous speaker, Pat Walsh's comments, about the problem of algae growth on the steps both in the Clovelly bay area where the most impressive track for disabled swimmers has been built right into the water and also at the bottom of the scuba divers access path into Thompsons Bay/Gordons Bay. The algae was not previously in evidence. However, during construction of this path a lot of rock was chopped away, killing many of the algae eating

3

limpets in the area, known as celana. By controlling algae with chlorine, generally the chlorine kills off everything in the area and the algae is the first plant to recolonise. If you look at areas in Clovelly that are not treated by chlorine you will see that there is no excessive algae growth there because the balance seems to have been reached with the limpets. In fact, the only algae growing in these areas is that on top of the limpets shells because they are unable to lift their bodies outside of their shell to clean the algae off and they are too busy anyway eating away at the algae underneath the water.

I have a wide range of slides to show you the beauty of the area underwater and, again, I stress this is only twelve kilometres from the city centre. We are extremely fortunate to have this wonderful area available for Sydneysiders to enjoy.

So the Pro-Dive underwater trail is nearly complete again. All the drums are in position and now we finally have 24 drums underwater. A diver completes a circuit of the Pro-Dive underwater trail by swimming from 1 through to 24 and then picking up at 3 which returns the diver safely to the end of the trail and back to the scuba divers access path.

A few facts and figures for you. The dive trail is approximately 608 metres long. The average distance between each drum is 24.3 metres and it takes approximately 35 to 40 minutes to swim the trail with scuba gear of course! Air consumption is approximately 100 kilograms per square metre. The deepest point is ~~8.2~~ metres and the shallowest point is 1 metre. The drums are connected by 6 mm galvanised chain and each drum weighs 200 kilograms approximately. We believe there are several safety features to the Pro-Dive underwater trail and some of these I can summarise as follows.

- a. It is a known area
- b. The access is very easy
- c. By providing connecting chain diver orientation is easily improved
- d. There is increased confidence for novice divers as it gives them point of orientation.
- e. There is reduced possibility of diver separation and, as a consequence, a reduction of diver anxiety from knowing where divers are at any given time.
- f. Divers are able to find their way back to the shore by following the chain.
- g. Given difficult conditions divers can hand over hand over the chain and also reduce fatigue by hauling on the chain.

My stepson, Angus Sullivan, has also been very actively involved in the Gordons Bay area so much so that he completed a 28 page senior geography project on the area entitled - Should Gordons Bay be Declared an Aquatic Reserve? Part of that project questioned several users of the area and 74% of those interviewed said they would be like the area declared an aquatic reserve and of these people only 18% said that they were members of an environmentally conscious organisation. So one might say it wasn't really a "greenie response". There is also a fishing club at the back of Gordons Bay. It is not proposed or suggested that commercial fishing be banned in the area. As there are several aquatic statuses allowed from a reserve where it is not permissible to remove a

④ single marine organism, up to just banning of spear fishing. Each aquatic reserve has separate categories and is the subject of a Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries AgFact called Aquatic Reserves.

With all of this in mind, Angus and I both wrote separately to the Minister about the area being declared an aquatic reserve based on the following reasons:

1. The area has a high usage of training novice divers
2. The area is unique in that it is one of the few in the Sydney region that is accessible by scuba divers to the ocean directly from the shore. In order to reach other attractive diving sites, ocean fees have to be paid to professional boat operators.
3. The area has been recognised as a high usage area for scuba divers consequently Randwick Council has completed the building of a footpath with assistance from the Department of Sport and Recreation.
4. The underwater trail will make the area much more attractive to novice underwater divers
5. It has already been suggested under the management guidelines for the eastern beaches that Gordons Bay should be designated a marine park.

As I am fast running out of time, I should conclude on that point and thank you very much for your attention and for the opportunity to talk about the Pro-Dive underwater trail. It is an area I see as being as close to my backyard as my own backyard and I very much enjoy working there on a straight voluntary basis in order to have this area complete.

Postscript: We intended laying the chain to complete the underwater trail on November 10th. Regretfully, the whole six buckets of chain, approximately 74 metres a piece were used and we still have four drums to connect up. Hopefully, this will be completed the week beginning November 12th.