

COMMUNITY QUESTIONS – WALKA WATER WORKS FACEBOOK LIVE Q&A

BACKGROUND

Facebook Live forums have proven a popular way for Council to engage with the community. The Live Community Q&A – Walka Water Works was held on Thursday 11 May 2023 and viewed by over 1,400 community members, many more people than would attend an in person meeting.

The Live Community Q&A ran for just over an hour and included the Mayor, General Manager, a number of officers from Council as well as a representative from Reflections Holiday Parks.

Many questions were submitted prior to this live event, via comments on Facebook posts, the Facebook event and via email including a batch of around 54 from one group ten minutes before the deadline. A number of questions were of a similar nature and were therefore provided with a collective single response.

Any additional questions that were submitted for the Q&A after the deadline or that weren't answered on the night will also be included in this document in the coming days.

QUESTION FROM A COMMUNITY MEMBER	ANSWER FROM COUNCIL (UNLESS STATED)
<p>I am very concerned about the statement "Without State government funding large parts of Walka will remain closed." Why?</p>	<p>The State Government is responsible for funding the remediation of the site. The remediation cost is significant and will need to be allocated over a number of State budget cycles. The funding for this proposal is through a separate fund – the Regional Tourism Activation Fund.</p>
<p>Are you now saying that the remediation will not go ahead unless the caravan park does too?</p>	<p>No. The complete remediation of the site will require funding separate to the funding for this proposal as explained earlier.</p>
<p>How much will the \$2 million council loan end up costing rate payers? E.g. by the end of the loan, how much will MCC have paid in total?</p>	<p>At current rates \$505,683 in interest is estimated to be paid, totaling \$2,505,683. This is based on a 10 year term (consistent with Council policy) at 4.5%.</p>
<p>How will Reflections be held accountable for maintaining the site? And what steps will be available to Maitland City Council/the community to ensure this is kept up?</p>	<p>Reflections will only manage the onsite accommodation. Council will continue to maintain the rest of the site. This will be documented in a management agreement between Council and Reflections Holiday Parks.</p>
<p>What clauses have you put in place to make sure that the caravan park can't be expanded after stage 1?</p>	<p>Council will be preparing a master plan of the site based on the studies and site assessments that need to be carried out. The scope or otherwise for expansion will be determined through that master planning process. The plan will be publicly available.</p>
<p>Please explain the 4% and what has changed from the original 10% you stated?</p>	<p>When applying for the funding, Council estimated the accommodation area at less than 10% of the site.</p> <p>Since that time, a more detailed look at the proposed accommodation area has now been undertaken and confirmed that the area in fact represents less than 4% of the</p>

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	total site not including the lake, or less than 3% including the lake.
Why can't we have the pump house restored without the Reflections caravan park?	The accommodation is there to support the use of the Pumphouse Building and the Pumphouse Lawn for weddings as well as filling a gap in the local accommodation offering.
How exactly do all these vans get there will they add even more gridlock to the ridiculous mess Maitland roads already are? And will they have to travel down the narrow roads near the back of courthouse to enter and exit the Waterworks or will they enter via Mckeachie's Run?	It is expected that vehicles can access the site from either direction however it is acknowledged that Sempill St may become the most used access to the site. Impacts will be assessed as part of a Traffic Management Study to look at impact on local roads generally.
In the areas in which Reflections Holiday Parks operate throughout NSW, do the residents of those communities have access to a range of natural areas to enjoy, or much larger sites to "share" access to with tourists? In the Maitland LGA Walka is all we've got.	<p><i>Answered by Reflections representative:</i></p> <p>In many communities we care for large, public nature reserves (similar to Walka) which are treasured by local people and are vital wildlife habitats. Our parks are only a small footprint – only 6% of the 23,000 acres of public land that we care for is holiday parks.</p> <p>It's important to us that we're a good neighbour to the local community and to the environment, and we tread lightly, respecting that we operate on public lands which are treasured by local people.</p>

QUESTION FROM A COMMUNITY MEMBER	ANSWER FROM COUNCIL (UNLESS STATED)
<p>In a recent interview with the Maitland Mercury (pub. 4th May 2023) MCC General Manger Mr David Evans stated that plans for the development of a Reflections Holiday Park at Walka Water Works were developed “through extensive engagement with the community and industry”. In support of this Mr Evans referred to the MCC’s 2020 Destination Management Plan (DMP). The DMP, a 53 page document, contains only 3 mentions of accommodation at Walka and refers only to <i>“Considering accommodation options”</i> (pg 31).</p> <p>Given the size and scope of this development, and the impact the development will have on Maitland’s most significant greenspace and wetlands, as well as the impact on surrounding residents, the roads, and floodway, as well as the growing number of people calling for the accommodation to not go ahead, does Mr Evans now consider that the residents of Maitland were not provided proper opportunity to understand the true nature of the proposal, and that the engagement process was not suitable for a project of this scale or significance?</p> <p>Further to this, does Council now concede that they did not, and do not, have community support for plans to put a Holiday Park at Walka Water Works?</p>	<p>The grant funding application was based on the concept for Walka Water Works as presented in the Destination Management Plan. The DMP was prepared in consultation with the business and wider community and the plan, together with the concepts for Walka, Maitland Gaol, Morpeth and Central Maitland, was adopted by Council.</p> <p>For any of these concepts detailed planning involving extensive community engagement is a given and is the process we are about to begin.</p>
<p>Council says that “without State Government funding, large parts of Walka will remain closed indefinitely “.</p> <p>Why? As the landowner (on our behalf) isn’t the State Government responsible for paying to get rid of asbestos on the Walka site, grant or no grant?</p>	<p>Yes, that’s correct. However, the remediation required will, of necessity, have to be funded over a number of State Government budget cycles.</p>

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Why is the caravan park attached as a condition of partial funding for what is the State's responsibility anyway?	The caravan park was part of the scope of works put forward in the grant application bearing in mind that the grant application was not an application for remediation but the Regional Tourism Activation Fund.
Council says "any profit will go back into Crown Lands". Does that mean into the Walka pot or the Crown Lands pot?	Any profit generated by Reflections Holidays Parks is reinvested into Crown Lands generally across NSW.
When will an environmental impact assessment be completed, and will it be available to the public?	An Environmental Impact Statement along with other required technical studies will be prepared and will be available to the public once a development application has been prepared and is on public exhibition.
<p>In the plans so far released, it mentions use of the water, but this often has blue green algae</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. How will you resolve the blue green algae issue without impacting water birds? b. how do you envision water usage won't impact all the water birds, it is ultimately a small body of water 	<p>Note - Answer to this question and the next three questions is the same.</p> <p>These are things that will be assessed as part of the technical studies to support the development application.</p>
How will noise and light pollution be kept to a minimum for wildlife? Particularly at night?	As above
What mitigation strategies will you be using to manage the environmental impact of the park to the surrounding area? Including the impact to flora, fauna, the increase in pollution (including light and noise pollution) and rubbish, and the erosion issues that will occur.	As above
Have you consulted with independent environmental experts and where is that report?	As above

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Did the asbestos contamination get cleared or are you sectioning off the contaminated areas?	The park has been reopened with limited access with all contaminated areas remaining closed to the public. All these areas will need to be remediated prior to restrictions being lifted.
What are the alternatives to restoring the asbestos contamination areas without the deal to provide the site to reflections?	Regardless of any other use of Walka Water Work sites including the reflections site, in order to open the site back up it needs to be remediated. This is planned to be done in stages as funding becomes available and as each area is remediated it can be opened safely.
Is there an amenities block planned?	The existing amenities block will be retained as part of this project. Future utilities are being provided to allow for the provision of a new central amenities block with the current one then being removed.
Is the section 355 Walka Water Works group still meeting and if not why not? Why start a new "liaison" group when this committee had representatives from all the major user groups?	The committee exists but has not met this term of council due to the contamination of the site. Its role was to work with council on the management of the site as we currently know it. The role of the liaison group is different – it is to work with council in addressing all aspects of the detailed planning stage of this proposal.
Will fishing be allowed?	This will only be able to be decided on the basis of water quality and other studies yet to be done.
As a resident who moved to Maitland 8 years ago and started a family here on the basis that it was a liveable and sustainable City because of Walka Water Works' existence - because there was one community nature reserve of size I and my family could enjoy - I am devastated by this plan. Can you please tell me where I can go to in the LGA to 'get away from it all' and 'swap screen time for immersive green time' (to adapt a phrase	The community nature reserve at Walka will be preserved and residents can continue to enjoy this area as they currently do. Residents can enjoy other areas in the LGA for walking in natural environments such as Brooklyn Park at East Maitland, Morpeth Common, and Rathluba Lagoon. The way you currently use Walka is the way you can continue to use Walka.

QUESTION FROM A COMMUNITY MEMBER	ANSWER FROM COUNCIL (UNLESS STATED)
<p>from Reflections' CEO) after the Walka redevelopment is completed? I personally "need" somewhere to walk and 'be' in nature for health and wellbeing, without the built environment, heavy vehicles or a for-profit business being on my visual and mental radar, and this is of huge importance to me for the liveability of a City.</p>	
<p>Will the impact on residents such as decreased land value, increase risk of crime, increase in dangerously large vehicles on Oakhampton Road, loud noise late into night from 'caravan goers' and increase in trespassing from tourists be seriously considered as an issue of development?</p>	<p>Amenity impacts on adjoining properties are considered and assessed as part of the development assessment process.</p>
<p>What impact does this have on community access to Walka? Will Park Run be allowed to continue?</p>	<p>Outside of the caravan park space (less than 4% of the site) community access to Walka will continue to be free and available.</p> <p>Park Run will continue.</p> <p>Remediation work whenever it's being undertaken will be the only temporary restriction on access to the site.</p>
<p>Why was this not put out for community consultation before a vendor was engaged?</p>	<p>Reflections Holiday Parks is a Crown Land Manager by legislation in NSW are the appropriate entity to provide and manage accommodation on Crown Land in New South Wales.</p>

QUESTION FROM A COMMUNITY MEMBER	ANSWER FROM COUNCIL (UNLESS STATED)
<p>What improvements will be made to the buildings at Walka and will they be available for community use and how do you plan to ensure that they continue to be available to the community?</p>	<p>The ground floor of the Pumphouse will include upgrades to allow it to be used as a bookable space and the Eastern Annexe (where the weddings were previously) will have minor internal upgrades to floors, lighting, and services.</p> <p>Works will include heritage upgrades to the main pumphouse building such as façade, roofing, and stonework. The ground floor will also be brought up to code to meet Building Code of Australia and Disability Discrimination Act access standards.</p> <p>Council will continue to manage the use of these buildings by the community.</p>
<p>As a resident of Oakhampton Heights why were residents never contacted about the proposal of a Caravan Park? Presently, Oakhampton Heights residents are yet to be consulted/ warned/contacted about any development? Have and/or will the residents of Oakhampton Heights be considered in this proposal?</p>	<p>Community consultation will occur as we move into the detailed planning of the proposal and through the consideration and assessment of the development applications for the proposal.</p>
<p>There is no appropriate turning circle at the end of South Willards Lane, nor is there room for one, currently we get a large number of vehicles turning around on private property. Given this, how are caravans meant to turn around without going on private property? Will this issue be addressed?</p>	<p>Council is looking to construct a new road from Oakhampton Road to link into the southeast corner of the Walka site and connect to South Willards Lane. This is being done to reduce the risk of residents in Oakhampton Heights being cut by floodwater and will basically replace Scobies Lane as the main access to this area.</p> <p>There is the other end of South Willards Lane. We are aware that caravans go down there, and we are looking at signage and other things that we can try and do to warn people not to</p>

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	<p>go down there because there is no room to get down there and turn around.</p> <p>The new road is a Council project and is independent of the Walka proposal.</p>
<p>Has Council approached the new State Government to enquire about the option to remove the caravan park from the plan given the strong community opposition? If not, why not?</p>	<p>No – the cabins and caravan sites were an element of the grant application based on the need for additional / alternative accommodation for visitors to Maitland and to support Walka's role as a wedding venue.</p>
<p>Maitland has something that no other city in Australia has. The filtration system was the first of its kind in Australia and should be celebrated and not covered up to make flat surface for a temporary stage. Has council explored making the most of this asset (similar to the Goulburn Historic Waterworks Museum) and why is it not mentioned in the history of Walka Maitland Council has recently posted on its website?</p>	<p>These matters will be addressed in a conservation management plan for the site and the heritage studies and assessments required as part of the development application process.</p>
<p>The community are not sold on the caravan park part of the Mayors 'big plans for Walka'. Could the Mayor please spend a minute to outline all of the benefits he see's in the plan to put a caravan park at Walka?</p>	<p>Maitland needs more accommodation, it will support weddings at Walka, enhance our local economy and provide jobs for our community. The majority of this funding is for the renovation and partial reopening of the Walka Pumphouse Building and the accommodation will be an enhanced activity within Walka and will be of support to the potential operators within that site (the Pumphouse) as well.</p>
<p>We are now told that the area of development in stage 1 will be less than 4% of the total land. In order to calculate this you must have an accurate plan of the site. When will this be released to the community and why hasn't this plan been released to the community yet?</p>	<p>The 4% figure is calculated based on the footprint shown in plans already published on Council's website.</p>

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	<p>Detailed planning of the accommodation will occur within that footprint and once developed will be shared with the community.</p> <p>The only plans at this stage are the concept plans and an interpretation of those plans as to where the accommodation might be suitably located on the site at Walka. It is less than 4% of the land area and that 4% is calculated and highlighted in blue on the plan that is readily available on Council's website.</p>
<p>You were specifically asked within the grant application 'which issues and concerns have stakeholders and community raised'. Important concerns were raised by the Hunter Bird Observers Club and were omitted. As detailed community consultation did not take place the community did not have the opportunity to have our concerns heard or submitted. The community has a list of over 20 serious concerns ranging from compliance, environmental impact and the overlooking of the important history of the site. Save Walka Alliance</p> <p>will be asking the new State Government to take these on board. Do you agree to halt the redevelopment until the State Government has had a chance to review your application?</p>	<p>There are a number of user groups on this site. These are all matters that will be addressed in the studies and detailed planning processes that does always include community consultation that must now be undertaken.</p> <p>We'll be progressing these studies and liaising with the community via the newly formed Community Liaison Group and there will be lots of other opportunities throughout this staged development.</p>
<p>Could Council please outline what other funding sources have been applied for previously, or could be applied for, for restoring the Heritage Pumphouse building?</p>	<p>There have been a limited number of funding programs that would allow for works to the Pumphouse Building. These are programs that operate through Crown Lands and they haven't provide access to the quantum of money needed to undertake the works required on the Pumphouse Building.</p>

QUESTION FROM A COMMUNITY MEMBER	ANSWER FROM COUNCIL (UNLESS STATED)
<p>The purpose of the grant is to generate high-impact tourism. Can you explain how the caravan park aspect of the plan meets the criteria of the grant?</p>	<p>It's the combined offering of the funding application that enabled it to meet the criteria for the funding program – the mix of accommodation, restored pumphouse building with opportunities for function and hospitality and the general services and infrastructure upgrades to improve the overall amenity and useability of Walka.</p>
<p>Maitland undoubtedly needs a good caravan park. Which other sites were considered before opting for Walka? With all of the issues with the site (environmental impacts, flood zone, narrow roads, not within walking distance to town) why was Walka chosen as the best option for Maitland?</p>	<p>This is a partnership with the State through Crown Lands. Other privately owned locations were not considered.</p> <p>Walka was chosen so the accommodation can support the reactivation and future use of the restored Pumphouse.</p>
<p>Save Walka believes that MCC was handed a directive from the State Government to take the caravan park as a way for the State Government to commercially benefit from the site. Is this accurate? If not please explain why a Reflections Caravan Park is tied to this funding?</p>	<p>This is not correct.</p> <p>Reflections are a partner in the proposal as a Crown Lands Manager. The suggestion that the State Government seek to commercially benefit is questionable. Reflections exists and have dozens of sites on NSW Crown Lands that they provide similar accommodation for. Any benefit that they derive goes back into the benefit to those Crown Lands.</p>
<p>30 weeks ago you made the following statement on the MCC Facebook site. "if we are successful in securing the funding, a comprehensive communication and engagement plan will be developed that will include consultation with all identified stakeholders" All identified stakeholders are the Maitland community who use the site. Please explain how you plan to engage with ALL members of our community including those who do not have social media or use the internet.</p>	<p>Broad community engagement will begin with the first step being the formation of the Community Liaison Group that will be meeting within the next month.</p> <p>There will be lots of opportunities for the broader community both online and offline to have input into what this project looks like over the next 12 – 18 months.</p>

QUESTION FROM A COMMUNITY MEMBER	ANSWER FROM COUNCIL (UNLESS STATED)
<p>What do you say to the community members who say that 'Maitland needs a caravan park. But not at the expense of Maitland's only natural space for residents to use for recreation. Why is the council putting cash flow ahead of the health of the residents and the environment'.</p>	<p>There is no cash flow benefit to Council and certainly not in terms of the accommodation offering that's proposed for the site.</p> <p>The availability of other natural spaces has been responded to in a response to an earlier question with at least three other locations in Maitland that are natural areas under Council management available for community use.</p>
<p>What recreation activities are earmarked for Reflections to offer its customers staying at Walka? Many of its Holiday Parks offer water recreation or nature-based activities.</p>	<p>The recreation activities will be the same as those available to the broader community.</p> <p>Access to Walka and visitors to Maitland will be improved over time through a system of shared pathways linking Rutherford to Walka and Walka to Morpeth and that's something we've been working on for some time.</p>
<p>What is the customer profile for visitors to the caravan/holiday park?</p>	<p><i>Answered by Reflections representative:</i> Our largest customer group is Regional Tourers – people over 50 who own a caravan, and who have the funds, flexibility and time to travel year-round. They are active, and love getting out in nature. They also love the finer things in life, so they're great supporters of local restaurants, cafés and shops.</p> <p>We welcome families with older children who love nature and being active. We're also seeing more people who enjoy cabins and glamping – they want to be closer to nature.</p>

QUESTION FROM A COMMUNITY MEMBER	ANSWER FROM COUNCIL (UNLESS STATED)
<p>A caravan park in itself is not a tourist attraction', why are we spending millions of dollars of the grant towards items that are not tourist attractions?</p>	<p>Visitors need somewhere to stay and this is a market we don't currently accommodate.</p>
<p>Walka used to be a reasonable rate to hire for weddings. Will there be a price increase after the renovations?</p>	<p>This is yet to be determined.</p> <p>Council reviews its fees and charges every year for its services where they are paid services and Walka and weddings will be no different to that.</p>
<p>A caravan park cannot occur without impacting the current amenity and use of the site, how do council plan to balance community use with tourist use of the site. For example will the community have access to all BBQ's on site and will tourists have use of community BBQ's? At times Walka can become very busy, how will council ensure that the community will not lose out to tourist use of the site?</p>	<p>I'm sure that at some point in time we have all visited areas outside of Maitland and used the natural attractions and facilities that sit within those communities.</p> <p>We've gone to a beach we've shared it with the residents that live nearby that beach, we've gone to parks in other Local Government Areas and we've shared those facilities with the residents. We don't see Walka in any different context. It is a busy site because it is such a popular site.</p> <p>Council's management of the overall site will be such that we ensure that there are adequate facilities for our community and for those who might choose to stay in the accommodation onsite or those who decide to make a day trip from areas outside of Maitland.</p>
<p>When a council seeks partnerships is there usually a tender process? If so, why was this not conducted in this case?</p>	<p>Reflections Holiday Parks are a Crown Land manager under state legislation and are well and truly able to have a presence and maintain and offer accommodation on Crown Land.</p>

QUESTION FROM A COMMUNITY MEMBER	ANSWER FROM COUNCIL (UNLESS STATED)
<p>Given that Council would have a conflict of interest in the preparation and determination of any development application, who has been engaged to develop plans, supporting documentation and studies and the planning report (whether it be an REF/ SEE/ EIS)?</p>	<p>Any conflict of interest is yet to be determined. The reason that is yet to be determined is that we're identifying the planning pathway and whatever planning pathway specialist consultants will be retained to prepare all reports.</p>
<p>My concern is that the redevelopment proposal is more aligned with a mandate from Crown Lands <i>to activate Crown Land to contribute to the economy</i> (Crown Land 2031) than a desire to improve the liveability of our city for the long-term benefit of the Maitland community. How do you respond to my concerns?</p>	<p>This is simply not the case. This is about the reopening and activation of Walka for the benefit of the entire community.</p>
<p>In this week's council meeting it was mentioned that the majority of funding will be spent on the building. What is the actual funding split between Reflections and MCC?</p>	<p>Approximately \$9 million dollars is the funding available to Council with \$6.1 million to the provision of the accommodation offering.</p>
<p>In relation to either the entire Walka Water Works Site and it's encompassing lands or the portion(s) to be occupied in the Stage 1 works and any subsequent stages, what advice has been given by Council's planners (or their consultants) regarding the permissibility of the land use activities and works?</p>	<p>The appropriate planning and approvals pathways are now being developed. Part of this is looking at land use permissibility for the proposed works as part of the Development Application.</p>
<p>Is the following statement made by a resident on the MCC Facebook page accurate? 'I think that placing leaflets using the terms forcibly acquiring parcels of land in some elderly residents' letterbox might be considered stressful and</p>	<p>This is a matter not related to the Walka project.</p>

QUESTION FROM A COMMUNITY MEMBER	ANSWER FROM COUNCIL (UNLESS STATED)
somewhat lacking in the “extensive consultation process “that the council is espousing’.	
How does the council plan to remediate the water?	This is yet to be determined but it doesn't form part of this funding. This is environmental protection work.
I live at Oakhampton Heights and some of my neighbours are under the impression that a new ‘Scobies Lane’ will not proceed unless the caravan park goes ahead. Please confirm that the new road will go ahead regardless and is not tied to grant funding.	In late 2022 Council resolved to undertake this new road as an alternative to Scobies Lane as a standalone project. It is not tied to any works under the Walka Water Works project.
What process has or will Council go through to select the consultants? (Selective tender/ open tender/ other?)	This will be done in accordance with council's Purchasing and Procurement Policy that is accessible on Council's website.
Please confirm whether the land is classified as Community or Operational Land under the Local Government Act. If the land is classified as Community Land, at what point will Council be seeking to change it to Operational Land?	The land is not classified in any sense under the Local Government Act. The site is identified as Crown Land and Council manages the land under the Crown Land Management Act. It is a requirement that Council manages Crown Land as if it were community land but it isn't by legislation classified under the Local Government Act. A Plan of Management will be developed to outline how the site will be managed.

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<p>The Reflections Site will be looking to erect fences to delineate the holiday park area and segregate it from the public area (for safety purposes at the very least), so how can Council rationalise the effective privatisation of public land that is to be enjoyed freely by all members of the community? This is not like Maitland Pool for example where entry is controlled, but still available to the public- this is privatisation of public land.</p>	<p>The site is not being privatised. The State Government own the land. Reflections are an operator on Crown Land and don't exist for profit.</p>
<p>Who had the ultimate decision as to whether this proposal goes ahead? Council or state government, after all studies etc have been completed?</p>	<p>The Planning pathway for the overall future development of the Walka Water Works site is likely to involve development applications that could be considered by either the Council, the JRPP or via State significant development. The planning pathways will be determined as part of the development of a concept masterplan for the future development of the site.</p>
<p>It is interesting that this process has had to happen to address community's concerns, if it is such a widely supported and popular proposal. Where is the data for this statement? Thanks for the Q and A and there are still so many questions to yet to be answered. Hopefully, this will be happening at all stages</p>	<p>Council will continue to share information with the community throughout the project through the Community Liaison Group and other opportunities.</p>
<p>There are so many technical studies that need to be done! This is a change of use of a critical green space asset for our City and huge intensification of use of the site. With so many community objections to this already, why not pause this plan and engage with the new State Ministers on how to better use these funds, prioritising community benefit, environment and heritage?</p>	<p>The question about technical studies has been responded to earlier.</p> <p>Council is prepared to brief relevant state ministers on the proposal.</p>

QUESTION FROM A COMMUNITY MEMBER	ANSWER FROM COUNCIL (UNLESS STATED)
Of the 3 parties involved, who suggested a caravan first?	The need for accommodation was identified in the Destination Management Plan that was adopted by Council in 2020.
WE WANT A MUSEUM INCLUDED!	The Destination Management Plan includes a museum experience and interpretation as part of the works at Walka.
The meeting was a great opportunity to learn more about the proposed changes. Very informative. I missed some of it so didn't hear it all. Is there proposed upgrades to general bathroom facilities not connected to the caravan park?	New centralised amenities are identified in the overall concept for Walka. They are not part of Stage 1 of the reopening however Council will continue to source grant funding opportunities.
How can the Mayor suggest that more weddings would be held at Walka if there was accommodation available?	The accommodation will help to make Walka a more attractive location for weddings by offering onsite accommodation. Many other wedding venues include onsite accommodation to increase their appeal.
What will happen if the ecological and other supporting studies indicate the area proposed is unsuitable for the proposed use?	Should this be the case we will reassess the situation at the time.
What other areas have been considered for a tourist park? For example the area in Bolwarra, would be would be an excellent choice, not flood prone, has good road access, short distance to Lorn shops, great views of Bolwarra lagoon and the river, with possible water activities, adjacent to a nature reserve, it's dog friendly too, you would have to resume a few housing	The area referred to is private land, not appropriately zoned, and is largely flood affected in a major flood.

QUESTION FROM A COMMUNITY MEMBER	ANSWER FROM COUNCIL (UNLESS STATED)
<p>blocks, that shouldn't be a problem, Councils grand ideas always have priority over ratepayers.</p>	
<p>Wow more people have signed the “no caravan park at Walka site” than we’re involved in the face-to-face pop ups that you have based your “extensive community engagement” on, but it’s apparently not enough to say that the community don’t support the plan!!!</p>	<p>Engagement with the community is ongoing with the first Community Liaison Group meeting now held. Engagement will continue throughout the life of the project.</p>
<p>I hope the management from council improves dramatically. They’ve been very unwilling to maintain the site till now!</p>	<p>Prior to the closure of the site there was a regular maintenance regime at Walka. This was impacted by the discovery of the contamination, which means that there are now some constraints and conditions on how Council can maintain Walka. You can find out more by reading the Fact Sheet, which can be found here</p>
<p>Your community deserves better than this. David Evans and Mayor Penfold, the community are asking to discuss this face to face. Will you attend a public meeting, if not why not?</p>	<p>Representatives of the Save Walka Alliance had been offered opportunities to meet with Council and had refused. They have now agreed to meet this week.</p> <p>The Live Q & A provides the opportunity to reach a much greater audience than could attend a public meeting.</p>
<p>It appears that the one of the main public issues is the need for a caravan park, with its related transport access issues. Can the park be considered for cabin only accommodation? This addresses the need for “accommodation” without some of the concerns.</p>	<p>The mix of accommodation will allow people on all budgets to use the space rather than for only those who can afford to stay in cabins. It also allows for those who are touring the country the opportunity to spend time at Walka.</p>

QUESTION FROM A COMMUNITY MEMBER	ANSWER FROM COUNCIL (UNLESS STATED)
<p>Cabins still require all of the infrastructure to go in - for electricity, sewerage etc etc which, in my view, is too high impact for this site.</p>	
<p>If council needs more accomodation options then our LEP need addressing to allow farm stay options which it currently doesn't. This would easy the demand</p>	<p>The current Maitland Local Environmental Plan 2011 (MLEP 2011) does not provide for Farm Stay accommodation within the LGA. The provision of farm stay accommodation is being considered as part of the Local Housing Strategy and future review of the MLEP 2011.</p>
<p>With regards to the revenue that Reflections will gain from Walka - will that be put back into the Walka site specifically, or will it be dispersed amongst other sites managed by Reflections?</p>	<p>As above</p>
<p>Why has Walka reserve been neglected for the last 10years , even with a resident caretaker, and all the resources council has available.?????</p> <p>There is only about 30Ha of ground to look after, by comparison The Willard family have been in the area for 160 years, and John maintains the 66Ha farm at the other end of Willards lane to Walka reserve.</p> <p>John is 84yr old, and maintains his 66Ha by himself with a 50year old tractor, typically runs 50head of cattle, grows and harvests cereal and hay for the cattle, and does all this with approx \$50,000 yearly from cattle sales. His farm is in a better state of repair than Walka.</p>	<p>Pre-contamination Council maintained the site to a standard appropriate for uses of the site as we know it. The caretaker is not responsible for the maintenance of the site.</p> <p>In recent times maintenance has been limited due to the part closure of the site because of contamination. Further information is available here</p>

QUESTION FROM A COMMUNITY MEMBER	ANSWER FROM COUNCIL (UNLESS STATED)
<p>Maitland City Council - the title owner of the Walka site is the Walka Water Works Trust. I presume that this Trust arrangement appoints Maitland City Council as the Trustee, who would have responsibility for management of the site as public reserve owned by Crown Lands. Why have we heard nothing about the activity of the Trust and how it is acquitting its responsibilities for management of the site to date, or at least since the 1990s? Council seems to behave as if no one is responsible for the site, and that it is useless and derelict. If that is so, it would seem to be because of dereliction of duty by Council as custodian of the site. I ask that Council please own up to its responsibilities to the public for preservation of this beautiful site, before proceeding with plans to abandon it. Please publish a copy of the Trust Deed on the Council website and also any financial statements prepared for the trust (which should show how any grant money provided for Walka was managed by the Walka Trust, and demonstrably spent on Walka).</p> <p>Also, these financial statements, if properly maintained, should show how \$300,000 of developer's contributions earmarked for the Walka site under the 2013 s.94 Development Contribution Plan was actually spent on the site, and how Council has provided for Walka's preservation from developer's contributions in any later plan. Or not. If not, why not?</p>	<p>The role of the Walka Water Works Trust in this statement is misunderstood. The site is owned by the NSW State Government as Crown Land and is managed by Council as the appointed Crown Land manager. This relationship is embodied in a Memorandum of Understanding (2007) signed by Crown Lands and Maitland City Council.</p>

QUESTION FROM A COMMUNITY MEMBER	ANSWER FROM COUNCIL (UNLESS STATED)
<p>For the public record, can Council please confirm the figure of 'less than 4%', and the map, refers only to Stage 1 of development.</p>	<p>That's correct. When applying for funding for the Stage 1, Council estimated the accommodation area as 'less than 10%' of the site'. Since that time, a more detailed look at the proposed accommodation area has been undertaken and it has been confirmed that the accommodation area in Stage 1 in fact represents less than 4% of the total site not including the lake, or less than 3% including the lake. A map depicting the proposed accommodation area as part of Stage 1 has also been shared on Council's website</p>
<p>Could Council also confirm for the public record, that it has, in its own resources, plans for future expansion of the Holiday Park, making both the percentage and the map false and misleading.</p>	<p>No. Future stages of the reopening of Walka Water Works are not yet funded, either through Council's operational budget or grants. Concept plans can be seen in Council's Destination Management Plan that was adopted in 2020 or in the Walka Water Works Redevelopment document on the Staged Reopening of Walka Water Works page on Council's website however any future stages can only progress if and when funding is secured.</p>

LIVE CHAT COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS ADDRESSED DURING THE LIVE Q&A

QUESTION FROM A COMMUNITY MEMBER	ANSWER FROM COUNCIL (UNLESS STATED)
<p>Didn't the Council say Reflections would only be managing the accommodation but the reflections spokesperson has hinted that they would be managing the rest of Walka by outlining their experience in managing lands other than caravan parks.</p>	<p>It certainly is the case that there will be two Crown Land managers involved with this site. Reflections managing the accommodation offering on the site but it is Maitland City Council that will be the Crown Land manager for the rest of the site. Management by Council will provide the same access and opportunities for community members and the visitors to the site as has always been the case.</p>
<p>Timeline around remediation – interpreted as timeline</p>	<p>At the moment we're working through the process of how long. It will be contingent on when funding becomes available. It is anticipated it would take 12-18 months on site if all funding was available.</p>
<p>Matt keeps deflecting to technical studies, when will these happen and what's the timeframe?</p>	<p>There is quite a complicated planning pathway for this development and Council are working through that planning pathway and as part of that we'll start to identify the technical studies which are a required for consideration under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act.</p> <p>These studies would include, but are not limited to, environmental assessments, ecology assessments, traffic assessments, flood assessments.</p> <p>It's important to understand we have applied for and in part successfully received funding for a concept, not a finalised development plan. It's virtually impossible for Council's to carry out all of the extensive assessments, studies and reports that are needed in terms of getting to a point of being able to</p>

QUESTION FROM A COMMUNITY MEMBER	ANSWER FROM COUNCIL (UNLESS STATED)
	<p>consider a development approval or otherwise for a project like this.</p> <p>It is the opportunity provided by the grant funding to get on and now do this detailed investigation and planning work and as we've stated that's where community engagement around all of this properly occurs.</p>
How will development affect the flood mitigation system.	<p>Walka Water Works has existed hand in hand with the Hunter Valley flood mitigation systems as it flows through the river, the spillways and the Oakhampton floodway system. Essentially, since the time of the 1955 flood in Maitland. That mitigation system was constructed after the 1955 flood so in short it's highly unlikely that any work proposed for this site under this proposal will have any impact on the flood mitigation system that's been in operation since its construction post 1955 flood.</p> <p>Nonetheless, flood assessments and flood studies as matters previously referred to are part of our considerations in the detailed planning of the proposal.</p>
Has the Council considered to ensure that a specific percentage of the work is completed by local Maitland based businesses, being suppliers, contractors or consultants?	<p>All of the work on this site is likely to be engaged under Council's procurement policy and there is an item in that policy that deals with preference to local suppliers. So wherever it is possible, Council will look to source suppliers, materials, trades, contractors for the work at Walka through local suppliers as it does with all of its procurement decisions.</p>

QUESTION FROM A COMMUNITY MEMBER	ANSWER FROM COUNCIL (UNLESS STATED)
You mean Walka's proposed role as a wedding venue, surely?	<p>Weddings have been conducted at the Walka Water Works site for many, many years and at the time we discovered the asbestos contamination issue and had to close the site the forward bookings for weddings at Walka ran well over a year or so. It is, and always has been, a very popular wedding site.</p> <p>It's important to note that those weddings operate at Walka under a current development approval.</p>
With the proposed upgrades and development of the pump house will the hire fees associated with using it for weddings or functions be Increased to a point where it is no longer a budget viable option for local people?	This is a popular venue for weddings and we want to make sure it's a price point that's reasonable and competitive but not out of reach.
Is this caravan park for both tourists and residents?	No. It is for accommodation for visitors to Maitland and the Walka Water Works and not for long term residents.

QUESTIONS REPEATING THOSE PREVIOUSLY ANSWERED

QUESTION FROM A COMMUNITY MEMBER
You have made it clear that stage 2 of the plan would have additional holiday park accommodation including cabins on the opposite (Western) part of the reserve. This would increase the size of the Reflections accommodation area significantly. Would Reflections or Council be responsible for this part of the reserve?

QUESTION FROM A COMMUNITY MEMBER

Maitland City Council recently posted on social media the “proposed accommodation area... would in fact represent less than 4% of the total site”. It has also provided a map of the project site, showing the development area shaded in blue (see, <https://www.maitland.nsw.gov.au/projects/staged-reopening-walka-water-works>). For the public record, can Council please confirm the figure of 'less than 4%'.

The map and percentage refers to Stage 1 of development, does Council have plans for future expansion of the Holiday Park? Is there a Stage 2 and what's involved with it?

The responsibility for asbestos remediation of the site lies with the State Government. So why is it now tied to a tourist generating grant?

We all know that MCC live meetings and live Q&A's have a historically low community engagement rate. This 'live Q&A' isn't the two-way conversation you need to be having with the community. Are you Mayor Penfold and General Manager David Evans prepared to meet with the public and have a live Q&A face to face?

Will the Environmental Impact Statement include the expected impacts to the reserve from additional accommodation on the opposite side of the reserve in stage 2?

What other areas have been considered for a tourist park?

What supporting documents and plans will be required to be submitted with any application under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979? Will a Social Impact Assessment be prepared up-front to lead the design of the proposal or as an afterthought as they often are, noting that Council does not have an SIA policy?

What advice has been provided in terms of an approvals pathway? Please confirm the approvals pathway to be undertaken.

When we have interstate or overseas visitors one of the activities for a quiet day is a picnic at Walka. Are you concerned that a planned caravan park will put locals and tourists off visiting what will become known as Walka Caravan Park? This is a comment on the MCC facebook site I imagine my family would likely no longer visit in the future if it turned into a commercial area that lacked heart and soul. Does this concern you?

QUESTION FROM A COMMUNITY MEMBER
The stage2 proposal to put cabins on the western part of the site goes against the idea of preserving the nature of the area. How would you also balance this with community access as this would affect all user groups including Park Runners who run past this area?
You have outlined plans for more accommodation in stage 2 including cabins on the western side of the reserve - if this goes ahead how will tourists reach these cabins.
Has Council's WWW 355 committee ever met? If not, why not? If so, where are the minutes?
It has been mentioned that 'To date Crown Lands have been open and forthcoming in providing assistance, advice and identifying project funding opportunities. Based on Crown Lands involvement it is evident that both Council and Crown Lands are aligned on the outcome of the project and the importance of reopening the park to the community as soon as possible.' Why haven't Crown Lands provided the required funding to remediate the site already?
Is this project going to be restricted to only 2 stages or 2 plus in future
Can Council confirm the new access road will go ahead regardless of the Reflections proposal outcome?
Matt is not actually answering any questions, simply referring to technical studies, but has not indicated what type of technical studies nor any time frames for these. What are the time frames for when these studies will be performed, and by whom
Your community deserves better than this. David Evans and Mayor Penfold, the community are asking to discuss this face to face. will you attend a public meeting, if not why not?

QUESTION FROM A COMMUNITY MEMBER

Has consideration been given on the traffic impacts of Oakhampton Road when Reflections is operating? Oakhampton Road and Sempill Streets on a daily basis can barely handle a standard vehicle let alone constant caravan/camper trailer traffic coming and going.

In regards to the proposed new access road, the approach to it will be via Oakhampton Rd and Sempill St - both these streets are very narrow with two sharp bends (often accidents) - they will not cope with heavy traffic particularly caravans - how does MCC plan to address this issue?

How can you say that community consultation is a 'given' when this plan is basically fait accompli? The 'consultation' is occurring after major decisions have been made.

The following question was not asked in full. You were specifically asked within the grant application 'which issues and concerns have stakeholders and community raised'. Important concerns were raised by the Hunter Bird Observers Club and were omitted. As detailed community consultation did not take place the community did not have the opportunity to have our concerns heard or submitted. The community has a list of over 20 serious concerns ranging from compliance, environmental impact and the overlooking of the important history of the site.....'Save Walka Alliance will be asking the new State Government to take these on board. Do you agree to halt the redevelopment until the State Government has had a chance to review your application?'

There seems to be a great deal of community opposition to this nature reserve being impacted upon by the building of a tourist accommodation in Walka Water Works Nature Reserve. Why then is this project being supported so vigorously by councillors, the mayor and the General Manager? Why has the remediation and reopening of the site been conflated with this tourist funding? And has council applied to fund the asbestos removal with any other government body?

How can you guarantee the ongoing operations of the nature reserve will not be impacted, when you will no longer be managing the site? Surely, you cannot promise what will happen with any certainty in regards to how the site will be managed, any future expansion of accommodation and where residents can have access, when you have no say in that?

QUESTION FROM A COMMUNITY MEMBER

This is a residential area, so how can you support commercial premises such as the ones proposed within the scope of your reopening, including what looks like a licenced premises? Where is the consultation with neighbouring properties? The community group where people live on Oakhampton Road near Aberglasslyn are a part of the consultation process, rather than the many residents who border the reserve? What restrictions and noise abatement provisions have you considered?

Without the Environmental Impact Statement being completed, how is it that these plans are a certain in regards to the building of 40 caravan ensuite sites, and 12 EcoCabins? There is no sewage provisions at this site? How is the water run-off and sewage going to be managed?

As this project seems to be a “fait du compli” how can you guarantee that this project will not spoil or impact on the enjoyment of this special place? Have you seen any plans? Eco cabins – what makes them “eco- friendly” or is economical rubbish?

Council has stated that if the proposed plans for the development of Walka funded by the grant do not go ahead then parts of the Walka Water Works will remain closed. Please explain.

I am concerned that under the redevelopment plan, no government - either State or local - will retain any responsibility for the care and preservation of the Walka natural environment and heritage, in an accountable way. It seems that will be left to Reflections Inc, who do not specify how much of their profits go back to the sites they displace. I'd like Council to make the terms of the Regional Tourism Activation Fund grant publicly accessible on the Council website Walka page, so we can see how much is going towards its existing responsibilities to preserve the site and how much is going towards profit making ventures. I'd also like Council to state who will be responsible for the caretaking and management of the site if this plan goes ahead, and under what regulatory framework.

Is there any further information in the way of a timeline for these changes?

