

9 May 2019

The Hon Adam Marshall MP
Minister for Agriculture and Western New South Wales

Dear Minister,

Subject: Public Water Safety Issue – Little Bay

Question: What do the three bays shown below have in common?



Clovelly Bay



Gordons Bay



Little Bay

Answer 1 All are located in the Randwick City Council area.

Answer 2 All are very narrow confined bodies of water.

Answer 3 All are very popular locations for swimmers and snorkellers.

What, if any, are the differences between these three bays ?

Whilst the three bays are similar in topography in terms of narrow confined waters, swimmers and snorkellers at Clovelly and Gordons Bay can go about their activities in a safe water environment. **The reason for this is that spearfishing is banned at these two locations.**

In stark contrast, Little Bay swimmers and snorkellers have to share the limited water space in the bay with spearfishers who, for the most part, are not following safe spearfishing practices and are putting the safety of the general public at risk.

What safe spearfishing practices are being ignored at Little Bay? The Department of Primary Industry (DPI) safety guidelines for spearfishing stipulate that, as it is a particularly dangerous form of recreational fishing, that spearfishers should avoid carrying spearguns through crowded areas, never load or unload a speargun out of the water and **should avoid spearfishing in popular swimming locations.**

At Little Bay, all of these DPI safety guidelines are breached on a regular basis. Spearfishers openly carry their spearguns and uncovered spearheads up and down the steep narrow and, at times, crowded timber stairs that lead to the beach. Once on the beach, the spearfishers often have to walk around beach goers including children playing on the beach to get to the rocks or in some cases, they just put all of their equipment, including spears and guns, down on the sand near beachgoers. Spearguns, at times, are also loaded, contrary to DPI safety guidelines, whilst on the beach or rocks or carried loaded up or down the stairs.

With regard to the DPI safety guideline that spearfishers should avoid spearfishing in popular swimming locations, the situation in the water at Little Bay is such that there are times when there can be up to six spearfishers, carrying loaded spearguns, swimming in very close proximity to swimmers and snorkellers. This is a very dangerous situation that will end in tragedy for someone.

It was for this reason that I wrote to the Mayor of Randwick, Kathy Neilson on 7 February 2019 expressing my concerns about public safety at Little Bay. Randwick City Council subsequently forwarded my letter on to the Department of Primary Industry who sent me a reply about this issue on 5 April 2019.

The DPI Group Director, Aboriginal and Recreational Fisheries in that letter stated that “the issue of spearfishing along some Eastern suburbs beaches, including Little Bay and Malabar Bay, was raised at a recent Recreational Fishing NSW Advisory Council meeting. The [Advisory] Council noted concerns regarding spearfishing at these locations and recommended that the Department continues to implement a non-regulatory, education approach to address the issues”.

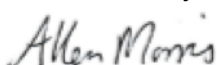
As Little Bay is such a popular swimming and snorkelling location, and one which is becoming more crowded with each passing year, the public safety issue at Little Bay is not so much about educating spearfishers about their safety responsibilities but more about the fact, that **Little Bay is**, by the very nature of its topography, **totally unsuited to safe spearfishing** due to the narrow and confined swimming area, as are Clovelly Bay and Gordons Bay where spearfishing has already been banned.

To quote your former parliamentary colleague, the Hon. Troy Grant, “ The NSW Government is committed to improving water safety and reducing the number of preventable deaths and serious injuries in the water. We want everyone to enjoy our beautiful beaches, rivers and pools and be water safe, not sorry.”

Given your government’s commitment to improving water safety, I ask you, as the Minister for Agriculture and Western New South Wales, to make the waters of Little Bay safe for swimmers and snorkellers **by adding Little Bay to the Schedule 6 list of the Fisheries Management (General) Regulations Act 2010 so that it becomes a designated location where spearfishing is banned.**

Please feel free to contact me on 0477037701 if you wish to discuss any aspect of this matter.

Yours Sincerely



Allen Morris