

**UPDATED - REPORT ON NOTICE OF MOTION - IMPROVING THE SAFETY AND AMENITY OF AWABA PARK (HAMILTON STATION PARK) HAMILTON**

**REPORT BY: CREATIVE & COMMUNITY SERVICES**

**CONTACT: ACTING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CREATIVE & COMMUNITY SERVICES**

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**DIRECTOR COMMENT**

City of Newcastle (CN) has played a collaborative role in hosting multiple cross agency meetings regarding anti-social matters including illegal drug dealing in and around Awaba Park and Hamilton Station with NSW Police, Depart of Transport, NSW Health and other social service providers. The most recent meeting on 30 November included the Hamilton Business Improvement Association, Ward Two Councillors, and a representative of the State Member for Newcastle. Unfortunately, self-described “volunteer-run autonomous grass roots anarchist collective” Food Not Bombs, who set up a community food pantry within the Park in 2019, was unable to attend due to a miscommunication with CN staff.

Feedback at the 30 November meeting as well as from local businesses is that the number of people suffering from mental health issues and drug use has grown significantly in recent months. Police are receiving regular reports of people resorting to violence, and sometimes refusing assistance from volunteer groups and organisations that specialise in assisting people sleeping rough in the community.

Supporting those living rough has at times proved challenging with the NSW Department of Communities and Justice Assertive Outreach Team having to withdraw their staff from Awaba Park on multiple occasions due to concerns for their safety.

Newcastle Police have responded to the most recent meeting by ensuring that the area is on the daily taskings for its crews, both from a high visibility approach and utilising its plain-clothes proactive police.

Graffiti is an issue in and around Awaba Park. In November CN submitted an application under the NSW Department of Communities and Justice Graffiti Management Grant funding program for \$95,000 to support improved lighting, murals and graffiti management. CN is currently awaiting confirmation of its success.

CN officers clean the streets and gutters surrounding Awaba Park daily, with a full mowing service conducted every two to three weeks depending on growth. Litter collection within the Park has recently been increased to weekly in response to representations from Ward Two Councillors. Staff are observing the volume and type of litter to determine if this frequency requires further lifting.

The Local Centres Program is a CN funded priority program to deliver urban renewal and relies on community engagement through several stages of the project’s development. CN's resource allocated to this Program has a high workload and is currently working through the Local Centres Program on a priority basis prescribed by the Council as well

as expediting Georgetown, Waratah and Mayfield Local Centres. In addition, the Darby Street – Streets as Shared Spaces trial is being delivered under this Program.

Awaba Park (Hamilton Station Park) sits outside of the Hamilton Local Centres B2 (Commercial) zone. An upgrade of Awaba Park and associated street infrastructure requires community consultation and detailed design, utilising the Local Centres planning methodology and the same resourcing as the other Program priorities.

Due to existing prioritised projects across the Local Centres Program and no evidence that a public domain project would deter drug dealing or support those suffering from mental health issues, CN is of the view that the projects underway at Orchardtown Road New Lambton, Georgetown, Waratah and Mayfield should continue to be prioritised ahead of Hamilton Station.

**ALTERNATE DIRECTOR'S RESOLUTION:**

That City of Newcastle:

1. Notes that local businesses and residents using the Hamilton Railway Station and the adjacent Awaba Park and surrounds have contacted the State Member for Newcastle and Ward 2 Councillors concerned about a recent escalation of alleged anti-social and criminal behaviour in the area.
2. Notes that CN is committed to improving outcomes for the community and has sought grant funding from the NSW Government for lighting, installation of murals and graffiti management to improve the amenity and safety in the park.
3. Notes that CN undertakes regular cleaning of the adjacent streets and gutters and maintenance of Awaba Park and surrounds and that CN recently increased litter collection to a weekly run and has not seen an identified need to further increase this schedule based on observations of volume or litter type.
4. Notes that the Local Centres Program delivers public domain plans (PDPs) and upgrades across the Newcastle local government area, and that renewal works are delivered on a prioritised basis with Orchardtown Road currently under construction and have expediated planning for Mayfield, Georgetown and Waratah.
5. Notes that a future PDP for Awaba Park will utilise Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles to improve the amenity and safety for residents, visitors, railway passengers, NSW Police, Transport for NSW staff and businesses and their staff and volunteers in the Hamilton Railway Station and Awaba Park area.
6. Requests the Newcastle LAC re-establish the 'Business Beat' program in which local NSW Police engage on a regular basis with Hamilton businesses.
7. Writes to the Minister for Transport, the Hon. David Elliott MP, State Member for Newcastle, Tim Crakanthorp MP, and the Newcastle Local Area Command of the NSW Police, calling for:

CITY OF NEWCASTLE

NOM Report to Ordinary Council Meeting 13/12/22

- a. A further increase in active Police patrols of Hamilton Railway Station, Awaba Park and the surrounding area; and
  - b. Investigation of the feasibility of provision of, additional CCTV cameras and resources by the NSW Government, through Transport for NSW, to monitor the alleged and perceived increase in criminal behaviour at Hamilton Train Station, the adjacent Awaba Park, and surrounds.
- 8 Writes to the Minister for Mental Health, Regional Health and Woman, Hon. Bronnie Taylor, MLC, calling for:
  - a. Resources for expanded Mental Health / Alcohol Other Drugs (AOD) outreach services within the city or a dedicated funded program facilitated by the local health district or NGO Alcohol Other Drugs Sector which works specifically to support frequent and transient visitors to Hamilton Station Park and surrounds who experience the impact of complex mental health and AOD.