

City of Marion approves bridges for walkway gullies

The City of Marion has given the go-ahead to build suspension bridges across two gullies at Hallett Cove to finish improvements to the Coastal Walkway.

The cable bridges have been the subject of intense scrutiny in recent months with Council engaging consultants to evaluate the merits of installing the bridges against rebuilding the existing stairs at Grey Road Gully and Kurnabinna Gully.

“This has been a difficult and exacting project but, in the end, Council has resolved to proceed with the suspension bridges,” Mayor of Marion Kris Hanna said.

“The total cost will be about \$8 million to install the bridges. However, Council determined that for environmental reasons as well as financial reasons the bridges were the best option.”

The Coastal Walkway is located in the Marion Coast Park which extends 7.2 km from Marino in the north, to the Hallett Headland Reserve at Hallett Cove in the south.

A structural audit was conducted by engineers in 2019 leading to some sections of the boardwalk being closed for safety reasons until they could be rebuilt.

Grey Road Gully and Kurnabinna Gully are the last sections to be rebuilt with the \$1.126 million Field River section extension officially opened in April. The State Government provided \$2.44 million towards the overall upgrade.

For environmental, accessibility and financial reasons Council last year resolved to proceed with suspension bridge designs rather than rebuilding the stairs. After community feedback, that decision was reviewed by various consultants including a Prudential Report prepared in accordance with Section 48 of the *Local Government Act 1999*.

Global material shortages, increased labour costs and recent CPI increases have significantly increased the cost of installing the bridges from initial quotes a year ago.

However, Council has been advised that the suspension bridges would be several hundred thousand dollars more cost-effective, considering 'whole of life' costs and the fact that the cost of materials and labour for reinstating the stairs would also have escalated in the past year.

Council was also advised that the bridges would have significantly less impact on the environment with only eight footings instead of several hundred and would have less impact on the surrounding flora and fauna.

The bridges would also make sections of the walkway more accessible for people of different abilities and fitness.

Council has also taken on feedback from the community about the scale of the bridges with contractors revisiting the designs to reduce the length of both structures from 50 metres to around 40 metres.

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