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The Letters Editor,
The Manly Daily,
PO Box 286,
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Dear Sir,

Councils often find themselves caught between a rock and a hard place in trying to protect the interests of its ratepayers and satisfy the needs of sections of its communities, but bureaucracies have a history of half-truths and twisted reasoning. A classic is the removal of the angel ring in the Booderee National Park on the southern headland of Jervis Bay. With an increasing number of rock fishing tragedies National Parks argued that the removal of a safety device (one that had saved 17 lives) would actually help reduce fishing-related deaths.

There seem to be winds of change in the thinking of Peninsula Councils, possibly in the guise of public liability. Warringah Council has now fenced off the stormwater pipe at Collaroy. They say it is used as a jumping platform for children, the surface is mossy and slippery, and the front block is subsiding. Though the block is to be repaired it is proposed that public access still be denied. This will have the effect of closing down one of the most popular fishing locations along the Peninsula. Yet a potentially more dangerous situation for both health and litigation exists with the Council's procedures for the dumping of sand fill along the Collaroy/Narrabeen beachfront with 2 examples of building waste being present in the sand.

Pittwater Council has now erected 'No Fishing' signs on their commercial and cargo wharves such as Careel Bay and Newport. The reason for the fishing ban has been given as the Council being pro-active in possible liability concerns, and this follows reports of kids riding their bikes off the end of jetties and wharves. There are many other locations and activities that are potentially more dangerous to the young than fishing off a jetty in which nothing is being done. As fishing is still permitted from the Council's 7 recreational wharves, one has to wonder at the difference between fishing from the commercial as to the recreational wharves.

It seems now that both Warringah and Pittwater Councils may have the same convoluted thinking. Manly Council has already fenced off Jump Rock in North Harbour. Were there to be consistency in Councils' current approach we might find rock pools filled in and the public barred from all rock platforms.

Jetties, wharves and kids go hand in hand. Whether they be used as jumping platforms or fishing possies this is where a kid will want to be. Many older residents will relate to their own childhood. For some this was the start of a passion for either fishing or other water related activities. Are we seeing the start of the 'death of fun'? Surely it is preferable to have kids enjoy themselves on structures where supervision is available. Do we want them to seek thrills at more dangerous locations such as the infamous blowhole at Warriewood or simply not enjoy outdoor activities at all? If this is indeed the start of a trend, where will children play?

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