Stop Press:

WOLLONGONG HARBOUR

The Society's Council learnt with alarm that work is in progress whereby part of the stone facings of Belmore Basin has been cut away and filled with concrete blocks to support bollards. Other concrete blocks have been placed for lightposts, while timbers are being run along the top edge of the stone facings. A new pump-house is being built of suburban and quite inappropriate design, materials and positioning. The work is being carried out by a government department, and all of it is considered to be unsympathetic to a locality which the Society has always held to be the core of Illawarra's early history, and hence the most important part of our heritage.

Fortunately, the local Heritage Committee was immediately up in arms, and has been strongly supported by the Society's Council. The coverage given by news media has been good. On-site meetings have been held, and an assurance extracted from the authorities that advice will be taken to minimize the effect of these works.

It is probably true that cosmetic improvements can be made, and the Society welcomes the assurance that they will be. But the worst feature remains, that such work could be implemented, even without the knowledge of the City Council. It is particularly alarming that the work embraces some of the recommendations of a project assessment, favourable to private boat-owners, which the public roundly condemned as obnoxious when it was publicly displayed last year. The official answer to this has been that the current works were contemplated before that report was received; but this was not disclosed to the public at that time, or since. Nobody knew of it until the operations started.

However, appropriate undertakings having been given, the matter can be left at that for the present, though the Society has recorded its alarm by representations to the department concerned, and to the Heritage Council of New South Wales.

The incident proves once again that one of the costs of retaining our sadly damaged heritage is eternal vigilance. —E.B.