

## Bondi Road: then and now



*Bondi Road looking east toward the ocean, 1910.  
Photograph: State Library of NSW*

Bondi Road is one of Waverley's earliest roads, constructed in a straight line from Old South Head Road to what was quaintly described as 'the seashore'.

As early as 1859 Council campaigned for government funding to build a road to Bondi Beach. Waverley Council Minutes, 8 November 1859. Resolved:

'That a Deputation be appointed to wait on the Minister for Public Lands to urge him to place on the Estimates for 1860 a sum of money to carry out the marking and planting of the Public Drive from the South Head Road near Bellevue to the shores of the Pacific at Bondi, and round the Bay from the Headland of Ben Buckler to the Recreation Ground or South Head of Bondi, such Road to be 100 feet wide except found the Bay where it should be 100 yards wide.'

Council got their funding and a road from Old South Head Road to the beach was built. This was initially known as Government Road, and then Waverley Street, with part of it also called New Waverley Street, until in 1884-1885 the simpler name Bondi Road was adopted. (In a confusing twist, all too common in street naming history, the former name of Warner's Avenue, North Bondi was also Bondi Road.)

The road proved to be popular and as early as June 1864 a private bus stand was set up on the northern side of Bondi Road, near Denham Street. The first Bondi-to-Sydney bus service had started taking passengers to the popular picnic grounds in the land behind the beach, now Bondi Park. The beachfront itself was still privately owned by the O'Brien family.

The bus would have had to negotiate a natural stream which ran down Bondi Road, near the corner of Flood Street, across the land now occupied by Waverley Park. Concern about protecting this important local water supply was raised at a Waverley Council meeting on 2 May 1876 and steps taken to conserve this stream.

Bondi Road originally curved around behind the beach and went all the way to Military Road, North Bondi. In 1920-1921 this part of the road which fronted Bondi Beach was renamed Campbell Parade, after Waverley Mayor John Campbell who served on Council 1908-1917.



*William Wilkinson in his well-stocked shop at 125 Bondi Road, c. 1945.*

Bondi Road still does what it has always done, links Old South Head Road to the ocean. It is one of the great thoroughfares of Sydney, taking locals, visitors and international tourists to Australia's most famous beach.

Every day buses still follow the same route down Bondi Road's steep hill to the beach, just as they have since 1864. As the road has non-stop buses and cars funnelling their passengers toward the beach it has now become notorious for its summer traffic jams. How to deal with this has been one of the most contentious issues facing Bondi Road. A 2008 RTA-proposed permanent summer clearway along Bondi Road met strong opposition from Council, residents and retailers.

The retailers along Bondi Road are known for their small individual businesses with lots of character. It is a unique shopping strip, full of colour, characters and a place which is socially diverse and rich in culture.

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