



NSW Dept Planning & Environment

### **Draft Community Participation Plan**

The Mosman Parks & Bushland Association, was established in 1964, with the principle objective of preserving and protecting bushland, parks and open space in the Municipality of Mosman for present and future generations.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on your draft Community Participation Plan.

Our response is short as this is difficult time to provide feedback and the workshops were also limited and difficult to make- the Parramatta workshop fell on the day of the Sydney deluge making it difficult if not impossible to attend.

We believe that stating that you will undertake community participation and providing time frames for various plans and projects to be available for community participation is merely the start. The process must facilitate and be seen to facilitate robust community engagement.

The plan needs to set out how it will ensure that communities have every reasonable opportunity to participate in plan making and respond to proposals by clearly establishing the following:

#### **Adequate and clear notice about community participation opportunities.**

The process needs to widely and effectively communicate to the public or affected public what is happening and what the engagement opportunities are. A variety of "notification" methods must be applied in all cases. This could include the net, local and metropolitan papers and other modes that relevant local authorities might suggest. None of these alone is adequate.

Communication is complicated and if the message is not out the engagement will not happen. The plan needs to address this as an essential task for a valid community engagement process. The communication must be customized according to the subject and the community/communities targeted.

#### **Timing of engagement**

The timing of engagement has a big impact on the ability of any community group or individual to respond to an opportunity to participate in a planning process. Times to avoid include all school holidays and the December January period. The current request for feedback is flawed by a response time of December 19. There must be a strong message in your plan about time periods when engagement is most effective and when it is problematic. If engagement is to occur across the 'no go' times, the time frame must be increased. This should also be a direction in your plan.

While one of your objectives is to make engagement easy, poor timing does not allow this. The current process cannot be seen to support this objective.

### **Levels of engagement**

Your plan refers to inform, consult and engage. These are all part of the spectrum of engagement, but they do not cover all possibilities, nor do they convey the promises that you make to the community when you undertake these levels of engagement. We would commend the IAP 2 Spectrum for community engagement. If the collaborate and empower levels of engagement are not to be included, the Association is of the strong view that the promises associated with inform, consult and engage in your hierarchy of participation needs to be included and can be taken from the IAP2 spectrum. These promises are essential if you wish the community to have any faith in a community participation process.

### **Conclusion**

We accept that robust communication and participation is not about giving people everything they want, but we expect that the community should be heard, and that the following points should be followed to ensure sincere and legitimate engagement.

Robust participation involves the following:

- It is clear as it sets out what is negotiable and non-negotiable. This is the absolute basis for honest and authentic engagement;
- It is true to its promises to the community – these need to be spelt out in the plan in relation to each level of engagement.
- ensures that whatever level of engagement is undertaken, advice is timely effective and appropriate;
- opportunities to participate are real and 'no go' times are avoided.



Kate Eccles

President

19<sup>th</sup> December, 2018