

Camden Residents' Action Group

Incorporated

Camden – Still a Country Town

Website: <http://www.crag.org.au/>

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The General Manager

Camden Council

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Attention: Bradley Colling

12 June 2020

Dear Sir,

Re: Camden Council
Community Participation Plan (CPP) (draft)

As noted in the introduction (para. 1.2) this Plan aims to identify how and when Council will inform, engage, and consult and also to make engaging with the local planning system easier for the community.

How the principles of the EP&A Act (2.23 (2)) are to be operationalised is not explained in the draft CPP. How the current process of community engagement will change to be more accessible, open and transparent is not clear.

We are a long-standing community group who has consistently made submissions on planning strategies, proposals and development applications for more than 45 years. As a legislated CPP Principle includes that planning authorities should actively seek views that are representative of the community it does seem ironic that we only found out about the exhibition of the draft CPP by accident.

In our case, we were aware that the CPP was meant to be adopted by the end of 2019, and were on the lookout for it. From the community's perspective the exhibition timing is random and unexpected. We believe that very few submissions will be received because the community is largely unaware of the exhibition.

We therefore submit that the exhibition period should be extended and that the community be informed of it according to the legislated CPP principles.

But as already noted above “how” the community is to be informed and encouraged to participate is unclear. We raise the following points:

- A perusal of Council’s Facebook page shows no indication that it is being used to notify planning information.
- A perusal of Council’s website shows no facility for interested people to sign up for alerts when a matter is placed on exhibition.
- Notification before the pandemic was through a newspaper that required subscription access, so by definition it was not open and transparent.
- As a community group we are never confident that we will be informed of planning matters and development applications of interest to our membership and friends, and often find out indirectly through community members who happen to be notified.
- Our community group has in the past been invited to present our opinion and sought out for planning workshops. We believe that this approach should be re-instated for community groups with a charter that is relevant to the planning matter.

Unfortunately, we do not see these issues necessarily addressed in the draft CPP, and it looks to us that nothing much will change.

We note the approach of Wollondilly Council, which holds regular community forums where questions and any matter of concern can be raised in a more informal manner. We believe this is in the true spirit of community participation and we recommend its Guidelines¹, which references a number of various ways of communicating with the community, as an approach to be adopted by Camden Council and considered in formulation of the CPP.

We are also of the strong view, that to improve community participation, faith in the planning system, decrease anxiety and streamline the process that proponents of

- potential DAs should be required to consult with neighbours beforehand;
- potential contentious DAs and proposals should be required to consult with the community beforehand.

We trust that the draft CPP document will be re-exhibited and that the community will be made aware of the opportunity to participate in its development.

Yours sincerely,



Glenda Davis
President

¹ Wollondilly Shire Council <https://www.wollondilly.nsw.gov.au/assets/Documents/Council/Meetings-and-Forums/Community-Forums/Community-Forum-Guidelines.pdf>