

# REPORT FROM NORTH EPPING COMMUNITY FORUM - 30<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2017

Prepared by:



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## NORTH EPPING COMMUNITY FORUM

**Location:** North Epping Bowling and Community Centre

**Date:** 30<sup>th</sup> November 2017

### FORUM SUMMARY

North Epping residents were advised of the Forum date and venue approximately two weeks prior by letterbox drop to every home. Meeting notices were also posted in several prominent locations in North Epping. Anecdotally, it appeared that the letterbox notifications had prompted many to attend.

The Forum commenced at 6:45PM. Eight Councillors (including the Mayor) representing different Wards attended and approximately 130 community members also attended

There was an even split of males and females. The majority of attendees appeared to be aged 50 years and over. Most had lived in North Epping for many years.

### Meeting format

The meeting was moderated by Libby Darlison of The Miller Group. For the sake of efficiency audience questions were collated into groups of four or five, and were then individually addressed by the Mayor and Councillors.

The Mayor opened the meeting by welcoming attendees. He explained that he felt that the evening presented an opportunity for community members to present their issues directly to Councillors rather than via council staff. It was a chance to understand the issues of concern to North Epping residents.

The Mayor emphasised that this was the first of several planned community consultations in different Wards across the Hornsby local government area. It provided the Councillors an opportunity to hear firsthand the issues of importance and would assist them to govern effectively for everyone in the Shire.

Mayor Ruddock outlined the priorities for this term of office including shire wide issues such as:

- The pressures on Council to accommodate more people in Hornsby,
- Poor quality development, which very often lacks appropriate infrastructure
- The need for Councils to possess stronger controls over planning.

He also noted the priorities specifically relevant to North Epping, including:

- The lack of access into and out of North Epping,
- The challenges this presents in terms of traffic congestion
- The dangers it presents in the event of a bushfire - especially given that North Epping is a bushfire prone area.

### **The issues raised by community members**

The major issues supported by those attending the Forum included:

- Population pressures and over-development with lack of infrastructure
- Vegetation and tree canopy loss – particularly as climate change brings temperature rise
- Traffic, parking and access in and out of the area
- Council amalgamations – especially the potentially financially negative impact of the outcome of the loss of Epping to Parramatta Council
- The 295 bus and related (public) transport issues including the closure of the Epping to Chatswood rail line
- Shade structures in parks
- Increasing rents at community preschools
- The need for footpaths, particularly along Boundary Road
- The Epping Bowling site
- The gap in Section 94 contributions

The Mayor and Councillors responded to each of the issues raised. The responses are in Appendix A at the end of this document.

The Mayor thanked all who attended. In closing the meeting he reiterated the priority he and his fellow Councillors are giving to community consultation and spoke briefly about the development of an expanded community consultation plan, incorporating webcasting as well as holding Council meetings in different locations across the local government area.

The meeting closed at 8.40pm

## **Appendix A**

*A summary of the responses for each of the issues identified above*

### **1. Population pressures and over development**

*Summary of responses from Mayor and Councillors*

- Hornsby Shire Council has met its State Government targets and any future growth will only be around transport nodes.
- Much of the focus will be on Hornsby CBD, this takes the development pressure off other areas.
- Council will look to influence the planning of developments.
- It's difficult to plan when a site e.g. North Epping shops, has multiple owners
- The State Government has a big targets, Council can't guarantee there won't be high rise in North Epping because a developer could go straight to the State Government for approval
- The quality of the development is of paramount importance, however the reality is that increasingly local government has had more and more planning powers removed.
- By March 2018 it will be Independent Hearing and Assessment Panels (IHAPS) – mandatory for all councils - that will have responsibility for process of assessment and determination of development applications (DAs) of high value, corruption risk, sensitivity or strategic importance.
- Council realises that, in general, developers usually want the largest/highest possible urban footprint and do not provide sufficient amenities
- Nothing has been lodged for the North Epping shops site and we can't go to the community with any plans until they are lodged with Council

### **2. Loss of tree canopy**

*Summary of responses from Mayor and Councillors*

- Council is looking at the protection of all trees, not just native species
- Council wants to improve the Tree Preservation Order
- Some of the loss of trees is due to the 10/50 legislation
- Council will have a plan for plantings in public places and more street trees

### **3. Traffic, parking and access in and out of the area**

*Summary of responses from Mayor and Councillors*

- Issue of access to Sutherland Road, which was cut off, was discussed
- Call for a partial solution to end the bottle necks, perhaps using technology
- Discussion regarding electronic tolls on some local roads
- For building workers we could look at having a park station a distance away and put on a shuttle bus
- Council could force more parking into each development, though this will increase the price of each unit in the development

### **4. Council amalgamations**

*Summary of responses from Mayor and Councillors*

- Issues should be dealt with sensibly
- We expect not to be worse off – this is what the state government has said very clearly
- Mayor Ruddock mentioned City of Parramatta Council taking Hornsby Shire Council to court

*Mr Damien Tudehope MP (Local member) - response*

- He wants Epping CBD under one local government area

- He does not support the return of Epping to Hornsby Shire Council
- Parramatta is conducting the Epping Planning Review.
- Parramatta will deliver retail and commercial space in Epping.
- Blames the M2 traffic troubles on the M2 delivery by the Labor Government.
- Suggestion of widening of the bridge and the introduction of distance-based tolling.

*Mayor and Councillors' response to Mr Tudehope*

- Hornsby Shire Council will pay the rates due and provide the database
- Council is keen for a sensible resolution
- We do not want the Council to be left worse off
- We supported amalgamation and are now left weaker
- All our submissions protested the loss of south of the M2
- We agree Epping CBD would be best under one council
- Look at all the infrastructure and facilities HSC has provided over the past 100 years
- We agree with much in the Epping Review Plan
- Epping is a Urban Activation Precinct and therefore you get State Government control and increased development

**5. Buses, particularly the 295 bus**

Summary of responses from Mayor and Councillors

- We are looking to have the government expand the services

Summary of response from Mr Tudehope

- NSW Government has provided 1,000 new buses
- Smaller buses running more often may provide a better solution

*Other issues*

**Shade structures in parks** – Mayor stated he was keen to see more. Shade in parks is at the top of the list of affordable projects that can be carried out

**Increasing rents at community preschools** – not answered

**The need for footpaths, particularly along Boundary Road** – not answered

**Why didn't Council buy the Epping Bowling site** – Councillor Hutchence replied that Council tried to buy the site as a Voluntary Planning Agreement (VPA). Then the amalgamation prospect was raised and the purchase did not proceed. It was a lost opportunity.

**Section 94 gap** – We have a section 94 gap because \$20K does not adequately cover the cost of providing drains, parks and other community facilities