

Chance for improved community engagement

by Eva Wiland, Gazette editor

Improved community engagement in the planning process is likely to be among key points WCC will raise in its response to the NSW Planning Review's issues paper released for public comment in early December.

The paper is part of the NSW Government's process to develop a new legislative planning framework that will replace the Environmental Planning and Assessment (EP&A) Act.

Entitled *The way ahead for planning in NSW?* the paper outlines 238 issues raised during a wide ranging listening and scoping consultation phase across NSW (see *Gazette No 56, December 2011*), and has attracted an array of different responses and submissions from various sources.

WCC environment services director Greg Woodhams told the *Gazette* the council was in the process of preparing its response and he was unable to provide any details. But in his opinion, the

present system was too complex, had too many layers and, over the past 15 years, had been marked by a preoccupation with development applications and planning on a project-by-project basis rather than good forward planning.

The council's concern with the issues paper was it only listed points rather than providing a blueprint. Nevertheless, it was useful for identifying key themes and provided an opportunity for council to put its views across. The green paper – or draft legislation – to be submitted to government and published to councils and interested parties at the end of April – would be another chance for WCC to “sheet home” changes it wanted to see in the planning system.

Woodhams said some of the issues council might raise would be improvement of the community engagement process; a greater emphasis on strategic planning; review of the private certifier

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system to give council a stronger role on enforcement; return of development determination powers back to council “other than for, perhaps, major state infrastructure projects, rather than what has occurred with Part 3A and other processes under the current act”;

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Artarmon NYE fire destroys 3 cars, damages 4

by Eva Wiland, Gazette editor

The new year started badly for seven Artarmon car owners, who were alarmed to find their cars destroyed or badly damaged from a fire when they returned to Artarmon's Cameron Ave car park after the New Years Eve celebrations.

North Shore Local Area Command Police has started a crime investigation after being alerted to the fire on NYE. Emergency services were called to the public car park just before midnight where they discovered three unattended motor vehicles engulfed in flames. A BMW, Volvo and Pajero were completely destroyed by the fire, and four other cars sustained significant damage.

Chatswood Police leading senior constable Steve Balfour told the *Gazette* the incident was being treated as suspicious and forensic testing was continuing.

Anyone who may have seen anyone acting suspiciously around the car park on Cameron Ave just before midnight



Artarmon carpark after NYE
Photo: Brenda Downie

on NYE is asked to contact Crime Stoppers on 1800 333 000.

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new system for community infrastructure funding rather than just relying on development contributions.

In the meantime, Part 3A had been removed from the act and replaced with a new process, Woodhams said. Part 3A in another form had been introduced for any new applications that only involved state infrastructure projects. But Part 3A had been retained for projects that started before the change of government.

“[That] includes the Channel 9 Part 3A application. This means if Channel 9 wants to proceed with their proposal, then they can still use the Part 3A path,” Woodhams said.

But since late last year, council had not heard from the consultants representing Nine Entertainment Co, who were reviewing their options for the site.

Woodhams said the state government had yet to finalised their consideration of the draft Willoughby LEP. Council had sent the draft plan to the NSW Department of Planning last year.

The draft plan was currently with Parliamentary Counsel for review of the legal drafting of the text. “We hope to hear from the department in February or March,” Woodhams said.

- *To access the issues paper, go to planningreview.nsw.gov.au (or see APA Facebook page for link).* ■