

# The Darling Point Society Incorporated

ABN 88 141 102 701

1<sup>st</sup> May 2023

Craig Swift-McNair  
General Manager  
Woollahra Municipal Council  
Records@woollahra.nsw.gov.au

Dear Sir,

On 27<sup>th</sup> March 2023 Woollahra Municipal Council passed a resolution to no longer provide notifications in the Wentworth Courier of new Development Applications, recent development decisions and any proposed plans that affect the municipality. Now Notifications are to be placed only on the Council website. Residents potentially affected by a DA still to be notified by mail.

*We feel that it is necessary to be aware of the difference between the mere perception of change and an appreciation of the reality underlying it.*

We, the undersigned, are residents of the Woollahra Municipality, many, who through our residents' associations, represent residents who *need* to be kept informed on matters that directly or indirectly affect them. **We do not believe this decision is in the best interests of the residents of Woollahra Municipality nor good governance. We believe it should be rescinded.**

This is *not* about saving \$150,000 on advertising. More prudent spending elsewhere could easily afford this.

Nor is this about stemming the flow of deemed refusals over claims of pushing out the 40 day assessment period for DAs and subsequent claimed increases to L&EC actions. Staffing levels and/or better administration could incrementally improve time frames.

**This is about the democratic process and the integrity of decision making that takes into account *informed* residents' responses to what is occurring in their community.**

There is a significant incidence with Council's distribution lists, sent to those perceived to be affected by a DA – of residents *not* being included in the mail out for a nearby DA that they would or could be affected by. How are those omitted expected to keep informed?

The only way residents can have *any* say in Council's deliberations – is if at least 10 *informed* persons exercise their right to oppose or support a DA through the LPP (Local Planning Panel), where they expect to receive a wider forum of experienced professionals to consider their POV.

[www.darlingpointsociety.com.au](http://www.darlingpointsociety.com.au)

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It is fanciful to believe in our hectic daily life, the residents of Woollahra should develop a habit of checking the Council website on the miniscule chance that they find a notice of a development that affects them. This also *ignores* a vast number of Woollahra residents who are not overly digitally adept. They are not going *to be able* to search a website - that would not win prizes for its ease of use – to “look” for a DA that could adversely impact on them and their homes. How would they know what to look for – without a DA number, an address? *This is a nonsense alternative notion.*

**What about being informed of wider local matters that could affect them, such as items being on exhibition and seeking residents’ opinions, a planning tool which open and transparent government on all levels should be seen to be seeking?**

Also, what about larger issues having huge infrastructure changes to do with major development plans, *sometimes State initiated*, potentially impacting their local, and further afield, area.

*Or significant new restricting impacts on Crown Lands that are their local areas for leisure and exercise?*

As it is, residents already have to be alert to matters affecting them next to, but just outside, their municipal boundaries.

Issues of this kind used to be reported in the news section of the Wentworth Courier – but this reportage in our *local* magazine has become very thin and essentially replaced with life-style focused articles. The considered, important letters to the editor radically curtailed and then removed! There used to be prompt significant responses, even specialist articles, from highly relevant and influential figures broadening on *local* issues or relieving or assuaging concerns. *Courier reporters have ceased coverage of Woollahra Council meetings.*

**All gone! Local public interest journalism has all but disappeared.**

**What remains is the Mayor’s Column, which serves to inform the community, *only in part*, what is going on.**

**Shutting down this Notifications avenue for residents to be informed severely reduces open and transparent government at all levels.**

The Woollahra Municipal Council Community Engagement Policy adopted in July 2021 commits Council to the best practice guidelines of IAP2 (International Association for Public Participation Spectrum) two of whose six-point approach include ensuring the people in the community “*are well informed about issues, strategies, or plans that may affect them directly or indirectly*”. And “*are offered genuine opportunities to participate in Council’s decision-making process.*”

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We trust that a rescission motion will be forthcoming and this resolution withdrawn.

Yours sincerely,

Robert Pompei, President - The Darling Point Society

Charlotte Feldman, Vice President – The Darling Point Society

Barbara Rooke, Founder – The Darling Point Society

Will Mrongovius, President - The Paddington Society

Esther Hayter - Vice President - The Paddington Society

Robyn Attuell - Executive Committee Member - The Paddington Society

Geoff Rundle – Former Woollahra Mayor and Councillor & Founder Residents First Woollahra