

Local Democracy Groups review - June 2020

As chair of the Housing and Affordability Advisory Committee (HAAC) I am writing on behalf of the committee's members. Members are concerned by the proposal to amalgamate HAAC with other groups including the Planning & Heritage and the Transport Advisory Committees.

There are several reasons why we believe it is not appropriate for HAAC to be amalgamated with these other Local Democracy Groups.

Since its first meeting in November 2018, HAAC has developed a cohesive working relationship and a deeper understanding of the issues around housing and its importance to the social fabric of the Inner West LGA. The group was drawn together because of their passion and commitment to providing ideas around mechanisms which contribute to housing solutions which are affordable, suited to purpose, well designed and planned. HAAC does not have the same level of interest in other areas.

Housing and its affordability is an important issue now and into the future, especially as Australia focuses on building economic recovery after the Covid-19 pandemic. HAAC does not believe there is time to deal with other issues such as transport, even though we understand the linkages between housing and other infrastructure areas such as transport.

HAAC has had 10 meetings since November 2018 including the most recent meeting on April 6, 2020 with all meetings having achieved a quorum except one. The committee has followed the IWC approved Terms of Reference for the committee as well as the guidelines for running meetings.

The committee has made submissions on a number of Council policies and submissions such as:

- Draft Local Housing Strategy;
- Draft Local Strategic Planning Statement;
- Council's submission to the State Government's review of the Boarding Houses Act 2012.

While also making a contribution to the establishment of the Affordable Housing Fund, the committee was planning to discuss priorities for the use of Affordable Housing funds at the next meeting.

We note that the draft proposal includes the following:

- (a) Quarterly meetings with Community Chair and staff facilitation at Manager-level;
- (b) Two appointed Councillor representatives and CEO attendance;
- (c) Report recommendations to Council meetings;
- (d) Tie committee term to Integrated Planning and Reporting cycle so committees' work aligns with and inputs into Council's Delivery Program.

In relation to the above, HAAC currently meets more regularly than quarterly (a) and has regularly had its minutes and recommendations circulated to the CEO and councillors (c). In discussions with the CEO, Michael Deegan, last year we discussed his attendance at meetings

and more recently I invited Clr John Stamolis to attend our now cancelled June 1 meeting following inquiries by him on the committee's work. I think councillors and/or the CEO attending meetings would be a positive way to build transparent communication and understanding. Our committee would welcome such a development. As to (d), HAAC has completed submissions which align with Council's strategic policy development such as the Local Housing Strategy thus integrating its work with Council's Planning and Reporting cycle.

In summary, while some amalgamations of Local Democracy Groups may make sense, such important issues as housing and its affordability require focus and time which would not be possible if amalgamated with other Advisory Committees.

Regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Collins-White', written in a cursive style.

David Collins-White
Chair of HAAC
On behalf of all members of HAAC