

City of Parramatta – Council meeting, 11 March

Public Forum

Janet McGarry on behalf of Epping Civic Trust

I would like to speak to item #11.1 – Pedestrian accessways in Epping

The Epping Civic Trust is the peak community body for the Epping area – an area that has undergone rapid change and unprecedented growth. I am here again to speak to you about this paper, which was deferred two weeks ago.

To recap, these laneways are part of a complex challenge facing council to ensure that proper pedestrian access is provided for a vital route between Epping Station and Rawson Street, the area bounded by Beecroft Road and Rawson Street. This is in an area undergoing much higher densification than was envisaged in the 2011 DCP, which anticipated three accessways in this precinct. The role of the council owned laneways, covered in this paper, is absolutely vital to achieving this access.

The fact that this topic has had to be deferred a number of times should be warning that there are serious issues with this paper and the approach council staff have taken to the topic.

I know our councillors tonight are likely to move a lot of amendments to this paper. I believe they are trying to fix a lot of the issues in it and get a better outcome for the community and long term future of Epping. It is that important an issue.

Unfortunately the community does not know what amendments are likely to be proposed tonight. As such we have had no opportunity to review them, and therefore comment on them. That is wrong.

Our councillors are genuinely trying to do the best thing for Epping, I have no doubt. But the process is flawed whereby the staff can table a paper and yet so many changes are needed to it. This paper is wrong. It should not be coming to you in this form because it fails on two major counts:

a) It is rushed and does not put these critical accessways and laneways into a proper master plan for this precinct that is about to be developed

b) It puts the developers first – in fact it clearly states in point 6 that you, our representatives, must pass these changes because otherwise the developers will go to the Land and Environment Court.

This paper, if you pass it, will start a ball rolling that will not be able to be fixed or turned back. Instead of planned, well thought through and implemented pedestrian thoroughfares that link the two sides of Epping into one harmonious whole, we will likely get a mish-matched mess – designed to suit developers maximising their sites.

Why is the RMS not involved here – these accessways have to link properly to the railway station. But there is no mention of that in this paper.

Where are discussions and plans with the state government and their policy to widen the bridge, which requires another lane on Beecroft road which these lanes link to?

This paper has no context because it is being driven from the wrong starting point.

The Epping Ward councillors are trying their best. But this paper should never have been tabled because it does nothing to set a proper long term future for the Epping Town Centre. So, again, the Epping Civic Trust asks that you reject it and send it back to staff with a resolution that instructs them that detailed work on the laneways can only occur after Epping Town Centre has a proper master plan.