

Item 5.5 - Traffic - 24/07/20

N O R T H S Y D N E Y C O U N C I L



To the General Manager

Attach: 1 Community Engagement Strategy
- Parking Reviews (2018)

SUBJECT: (5.5) Traffic and Parking Community Engagement Procedures and Participation

AUTHOR: Report of Manager Traffic & Transport Operations, Michaela Kemp

DESCRIPTION/SUBJECT MATTER:

At the Traffic Committee meeting on 22 November 2019 there was a general discussion regarding participation rates for traffic and parking surveys, and for Council to consider alternate engagement methods to reach the target audience. Suggestions included targeting schools, childcare centres, social media and using email databases for ratepayers.

Subsequently the Traffic Committee resolved to recommend:

THAT a report be submitted to the Traffic Committee which gives the general statistics of survey results and how Council can significantly increase the response rates in surveys.

In response to the concerns raised by the Traffic Committee, Council officers undertook an analysis of past traffic and parking surveys between 2011 and 2019 and a comparison of the participation rates.

Council officers also consulted with other metropolitan Councils to compare their engagement methods and participation rates.

The findings of the review are outlined in this report.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. **THAT** the information regarding traffic and parking survey participation be received.

CONSULTATION REQUIREMENTS

Consultation has been undertaken in accordance with Council's Community Engagement Protocol

Relates to ECM No: 8052920

Standard or Guideline Used: AS1742.11; TfNSW Permit Parking Guidelines; North Sydney Council Community Engagement Protocol

Signs & Lines Priority: N/A

Precinct and Ward: All Precincts, All Wards

Impact on Bicycles: Nil

Impact on Pedestrians: Nil

Impact on Parking: This report outlines how Council engages the community regarding parking restrictions.

DETAIL

Analysis of past traffic and parking surveys

Council officers undertook an analysis of 71 traffic and parking surveys undertaken between 2011 and 2019. These surveys comprised 25 area-wide surveys (i.e. a survey of a resident parking area or area of impact) and 46 street-wide surveys (i.e. a survey of a single street for an issue affecting a single street) as summarised in Table 1, Table 2 and Figure 1.

Table 1 Annual summary of surveys and distribution

| Year | No. Surveys | Avg. response rate | No. streets surveyed | No. letters distributed |
|--------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 2011 | 15 | 15% | 166 | 20,219 |
| 2012 | 5 | 15% | 5 | 1,951 |
| 2013 | 9 | 17% | 38 | 6,403 |
| 2014 | 11 | 25% | 11 | 2,142 |
| 2015 | 9 | 26% | 12 | 1,261 |
| 2016 | 1 | 20% | 1 | 35 |
| 2017 | 7 | 22% | 12 | 1,639 |
| 2018 | 8 | 15% | 47 | 7,806 |
| 2019 | 6 | 12% | 58 | 9,113 |
| Grand Total | 71 | 19% | 350 | 50,569 |

Table 2 Summary of surveys by year and coverage

| Year | Survey Coverage | | | | Total No. Surveys | Total Avg. Response Rate |
|--------------------|-----------------|--------------------|-------------|--------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|
| | Area | | Street | | | |
| | No. Surveys | Avg. Response Rate | No. Surveys | Avg. Response Rate | | |
| 2011 | 11 | 15% | 4 | 17% | 15 | 15% |
| 2012 | | | 5 | 15% | 5 | 15% |
| 2013 | 1 | 15% | 8 | 17% | 9 | 17% |
| 2014 | | | 11 | 25% | 11 | 25% |
| 2015 | 1 | 24% | 8 | 26% | 9 | 26% |
| 2016 | | | 1 | 20% | 1 | 20% |
| 2017 | 1 | 12% | 6 | 24% | 7 | 22% |
| 2018 | 5 | 10% | 3 | 22% | 8 | 15% |
| 2019 | 6 | 12% | | | 6 | 12% |
| Grand Total | 25 | 13% | 46 | 22% | 71 | 19% |

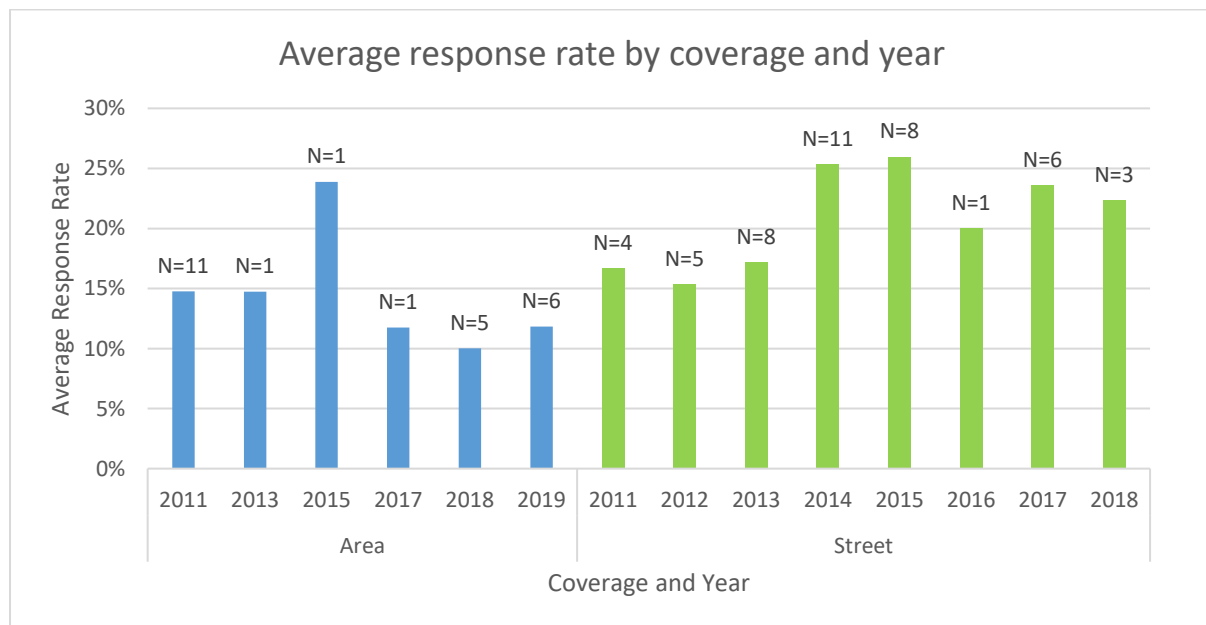


Figure 1 Average response rate by coverage and year

The survey response rate ranged between 3% (area-wide survey in 2018) and 26% (street-wide survey in 2015). The average response rate is 13% for area-wide surveys and 22% for street-wide surveys. The median response rate is 12% for area-wide surveys and 21% for street-wide surveys.

Furthermore, as shown in Table 3, response rates vary depending on the topic of the survey. For surveys concerning traffic management and traffic facilities, response rates can vary widely depending on the coverage of the survey. This is likely because a traffic management proposal (e.g. a proposal for a No Right Turn) is likely to have an impact on more people from a broader area than a proposal for a new traffic facility (e.g. a pedestrian crossing) which may affect a smaller number of people in a more localized area. Parking changes tend to have a more localized impact and generally people who utilise the parking in question are more likely to participate in the survey than those who don't utilise the parking.

Table 3 Response rate by survey topic and coverage

| Topic | Area | | Street | | Total No. Surveys | Total Avg. Response Rate |
|--------------------|-------------|--------------------|-------------|--------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|
| | No. Surveys | Avg. Response Rate | No. Surveys | Avg. Response Rate | | |
| Parking | 23 | 12% | 38 | 23% | 61 | 19% |
| Traffic | 2 | 28% | 8 | 16% | 10 | 18% |
| Grand Total | 25 | 13% | 46 | 22% | 71 | 19% |

The results generally indicate that smaller, and more specific surveys focusing on a single street attract a higher response rate than area-wide surveys.

Further analysis into the factors influencing the rate of response for area-wide surveys was undertaken. As shown in Figure 2 surveys focusing on only one street attract a higher response rate than surveys addressing two or more streets.

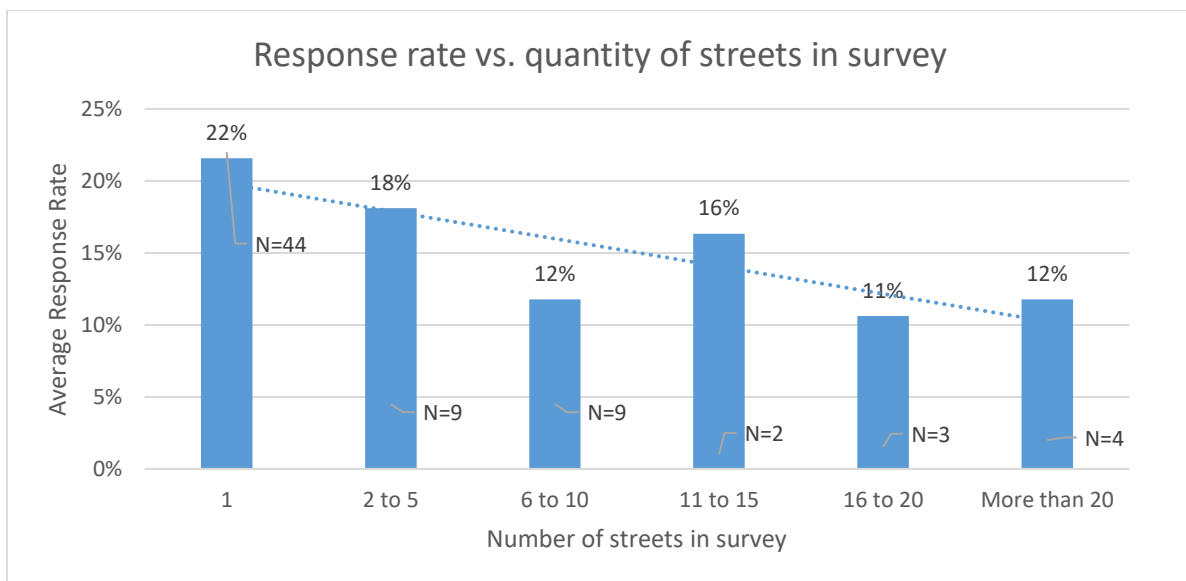


Figure 2 Response rate vs. quantity of streets in survey

However, as shown in Figure 3, for parking surveys, the response rate drops significantly from 23% to 12% when the survey comprises of more than 5 questions. Generally, area-wide surveys consist of several streets and for each street there may be multiple questions (such as preference for options for the parking time limits, hours of the day, days of the week, and metered parking).

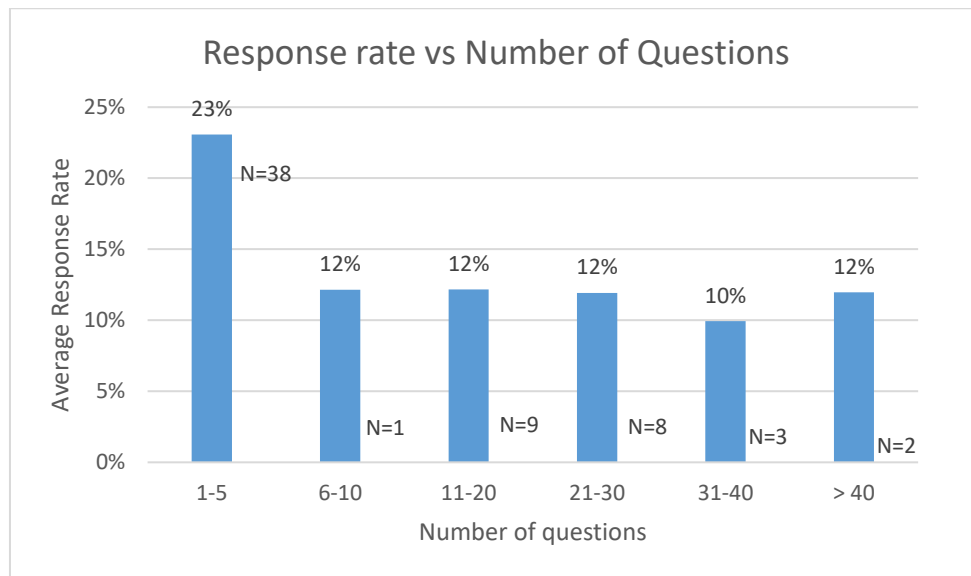


Figure 3 Response rate vs. number of questions (parking surveys)

Most of the street-based surveys were undertaken between 2013-2015. At the time many of these surveys were prompted by petitions or lobbying of a neighborhood by an individual or small group of residents, which is likely to have generated more interest and awareness within the neighborhoods than if the survey was initiated by Council. However, street-based surveys are less efficient in terms of Council’s resources than area-wide surveys due to the time involved in preparing, printing, mailing, analyzing data and reporting. After 2015, Council adopted the Local Area Traffic Management Action Plans and focused on area-wide management of traffic and parking.

The staff time to conduct surveys ranges between approximately 20 hours for a single street or approximately 60 hours for an area. Based on past surveys, this means the staff time to conduct a survey is 18 hours per street if only one street is surveyed, or 5 hours per street if an area is surveyed. In other words, a street-based survey takes 3.6 times more staff time to achieve 1.7 times the response rate than an area-based survey.

In planning community engagement, Council must take into consideration the relative costs of undertaking the engagement. If Council were to revert to surveying residents on a street-wide basis rather than area-wide, it would take three times as long for Council to undertake parking reviews throughout the LGA, and would divert resources away from its other essential activities including implementation and planning of pedestrian, cycling and traffic facilities, LATM Action Plans and capital works programs.

Engagement Methods

Council developed a formal Community Engagement Strategy for Parking Reviews in 2018 in accordance with Council’s Community Engagement Protocol. The Strategy outlines the methods to be used and timeframes for engaging the community with regard to parking restrictions.

In 2016 Council adopted Engagement HQ “Your Say” as its corporate online community engagement portal. This has enabled Council to access a broader range of online engagement and analysis tools and retain engagement information in a central location for public access.

Prior to the change-over to Engagement HQ “Your Say”, hard copy submissions (54%) were the main method of response for the community versus 46% for online submissions. Since Engagement HQ was introduced, online submissions have been the main method of response making up 81% of all submissions, versus 19% hard copy submissions.

The methods used to engage the community about parking reviews are outlined in Table 4 over page. It should be noted that prior to 2019 paper surveys were printed and enclosed with the cover letter sent to all owners and occupiers within the survey coverage area. Even with efforts made to reduce the total number of questions length of the survey, the paper survey would consist of 6 pages (3 sheets) or more plus the cover letter. This meant that for an average survey area with 1500 letters distributed, totaling 9000 sheets of paper, but with an average response rate of 12%, at least 87% or 7,920 sheets of paper is wasted.

As a result, in 2019 the survey notification procedure was refined so that only the cover letter was distributed to all owners and occupiers in the coverage area. The cover letter included details about the parking survey and directed readers to the Your Say page for further information. The letter also advised that a hard copy of the survey could be provided on request or downloaded from the Your Say page. This approach was used for 3 of the 6 parking review surveys undertaken in 2019. The average response rate was 14% when the paper copy of the survey was enclosed with the cover letter compared to 9% when the paper copy was not enclosed. This represents a 36% decrease in the number of responses when the paper copy of the survey is omitted from the mailout. As discussed previously, Council must take into consideration the relative costs of undertaking community engagement. It is possible that by including a paper copy of the survey, recipients are more aware and engaged, however for the 87% of recipients who would not otherwise respond to the survey regardless of whether they receive a paper copy, it is not considered sustainable for Council to include the paper survey.

Examples of past consultation materials since 2016 can be viewed on Council’s Your Say page at https://yoursay.northsydney.nsw.gov.au/traffic-surveys?tool=survey_tool#tool_tab

Table 4 Community Engagement Methods (from current Community Engagement Strategy – Parking Restriction Reviews (2018))

| Method | Phase 1 - Community Survey | Phase 2 - Recommendations and Reporting | Phase 3 - Implementation | Target Stakeholders | Engagement Level |
|---------------------------|--|---|---|---|-------------------------|
| Webpage | Provide information about the project and direct people to how they can have a say i.e. survey and Traffic Committee | To provide information and updates about the proposal including key dates and links to reports. | To inform the affected community about the outcomes of the review and the changes to be implemented with approximate timeframes | All | Inform/Consult |
| Memo | Provide information about the project and direct people to how they can have a say i.e. survey and Traffic Committee | | To inform the affected community about the outcomes of the review and the changes to be implemented with approximate timeframes | Precincts All Councillors | Inform/Consult |
| Direct Letter | Provide information about the project and direct people to how they can have a say i.e. survey and Traffic Committee | | To inform the affected community about the outcomes of the review and the changes to be implemented with approximate timeframes | All | Inform/Consult |
| Survey (online and paper) | Conducted via online Your Say portal and paper surveys through post. Purpose is to obtain views about parking restrictions in the area. | | | All | Consult |
| Precinct Committees | Provide information about the project and direct people to how they can have a say i.e. survey and Traffic Committee | | | Precincts and their members/ visitors | Inform |
| Internal Consultation | Identify the parking pressures for the area and whether parking meters should be proposed or are affected. Formulate survey questions and arrange publication on website. Organise printing and distribution of letters. | To consult with the traffic team on proposed recommendations arising from the survey results. | Organise updates to webpage, advertising and distribution of notifications. Organise implementation of signage and parking meters as required. | Traffic Team Integrated Planning and Special Projects team Communications Team Works Section | Consult/Involve |

| <i>Method</i> | <i>Phase 1 - Community Survey</i> | <i>Phase 2 - Recommendations and Reporting</i> | <i>Phase 3 - Implementation</i> | <i>Target Stakeholders</i> | <i>Engagement Level</i> |
|-------------------|-----------------------------------|--|---|--|-------------------------|
| Traffic Committee | | To consult with the Traffic Committee on proposed recommendations arising from the survey results, and to resolve on recommendation to Council | | Traffic Committee Members of Public | Inform/ Consult |
| Council Meeting | | To advise of the Traffic Committee recommendations and adopt formal Council resolution with regard to changes to parking restrictions. | | Councillors Members of public | Consult/ Involve |
| E-newsletter | | | To inform the affected community about the outcomes of the review and the changes to be implemented with approximate timeframes | Survey respondents | Inform |
| Letter box drop | | | To inform the affected community about the outcomes of the review and the changes to be implemented with approximate timeframes | Local residents and businesses | Inform |
| Signage | | | Permanent parking signage to inform of parking regulations | All | Inform |

Alternate methods

Historically local newspaper advertisements were used to promote Council’s community engagement notices, however printing of the local newspapers ceased in 2020 and is now 100% online content which is currently not as widely circulated. Use of local digital newspapers will be decided on a case-by-case basis and in consultation with Council’s Communications team.

Council may be able to use social media geo-targeting to promote current surveys only to social media users who have visited a defined area to more directly reach people who are in the area of interest to inform them about the survey.

Property owners and occupiers

Most households in the North Sydney LGA are occupied by renters (47.4%). 43% of households are owner-occupied and 1.6% are social housing. Mailouts for surveys are generated from Council’s property database. Letters are generated for all property owners at their registered address and, if the property is not owner-occupied, a letter is generated for the occupier. Non-resident owners make up approximately 4% of survey respondents.

The Traffic Committee has previously suggested using the email database for owners who have nominated to receive their rates notices by email. Letters still need to be generated for all other recipients. Additional administrative time would be required to avoid duplicating the survey being sent by both mail and email to those recipients. This is unlikely to increase participation in the survey given the low response rate by non-resident owners.

Letters are also addressed to schools that are located within the survey area, and their P&C committee if known. Letters are not addressed directly to childcare centres, however childcare centres located in the survey area would receive a letter at the property addressed to “The Occupier”. The online survey is publicly accessible so schools, childcare centres and other businesses can advise teachers, parents and customers of the survey through their own communication channels.

Comparison with other Councils

As part of this review, Council contacted traffic departments from other metropolitan Councils to compare their approach and response rates to traffic and parking surveys. The information supplied by the Councils are summarised in Table 5, which indicates there is a large variation in response rates depending on the Council area, methods used and the subject of the survey.

Table 5 Comparison of approaches by other Councils

| Council | Method | Survey Engine | No. Surveys per year | Average Response Rate | Proportion of surveys that result in changes |
|-------------------------|---|------------------------------------|---|--|---|
| Fairfield Council | Paper | Social Point | 50 | 5% | 70% |
| Cumberland City Council | Paper only | N/A | 5 | 20-30% | 50% |
| Inner West Council | Online | Survey Monkey; Your Say Inner West | 50+ | Unknown | Unknown |
| Camden Council | Paper | Email for auto-responses | 50-60 | Up to 10 submissions per survey | Most are implemented |
| Randwick City Council | Online + paper copy provided on request | Your Say Randwick | Each parking area is surveyed every 4 years | Varies but higher since Your Say online engagement | Varies |



Parking Restriction Reviews

Prepared May 2018

Councils are required under the *Local Government Act 1993* to inform the community of particular issues that potentially affect their way of life. North Sydney Council is committed both in principle and in practice, to engaging on matters affecting the North Sydney community.

The purpose of this project-specific Community Engagement Strategy is to outline the ways stakeholders can be involved in the decision-making process. Community engagement opportunities will be provided across a range of ‘engagement’ levels.

1. Introduction

This Community Engagement Strategy outlines the steps Council will take to engage the community in the review of parking restrictions. Council is committed to engaging the community to ensure that parking restrictions are balanced in accordance with parking demands and Council’s parking hierarchy as outlined in the *North Sydney Integrated Parking Strategy (2015)*.

1.1 Council’s Community Engagement Protocol

This strategy has been prepared in accordance with Council’s *Community Engagement Protocol*. The Protocol is used to determine the level of ‘level(s) of impact’ applicable to this project/decision (proposal). This proposal has been determined as:

| LEVEL OF IMPACT | LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT |
|-----------------|--------------------------|
| High. Local | Inform, Consult, Involve |

The North Sydney Traffic Committee must be consulted prior to implementing changes to parking restrictions in accordance with the RMS Delegation to Councils pursuant to the Transport Administration Act, 1988.

Council used the framework shown below in Table 1.1 to select the most appropriate ‘level(s) of engagement’ for this proposal to ensure an appropriate range of engagement ‘levels’ and methods were offered:

| LEVEL | DESCRIPTION |
|-------------|---|
| Inform | Providing balanced and objective information to help the community understand problems, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions |
| Consult | Obtain public feedback on alternatives and/or decisions |
| Involve | Work directly with the community throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered |
| Collaborate | Partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and identification of the preferred solution |

Table 1.1 Derived from the IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum

2. Background

The ongoing review of parking restrictions aligns with Outcome 2.4 of the Community Strategic Plan to improve traffic and parking management, and Strategy 2.4.3 - *Provide integrated and efficient on-street and off-street parking options in residential and commercial areas.*

In the North Sydney area, there are 22,000 on-street parking spaces. Competing for these parking spaces are some of the 62,000 residents and 51,000 people who work in the area, as well as other visitors to the area. In many areas of North Sydney, demand for on-street parking far exceeds the supply of on-street parking. There is generally strong competition for these parking spaces, amongst the various interest groups. The demand for various types of parking must be balanced to meet the needs of various user groups.

The hierarchy (Fig. 1) and parking principles (Fig. 2) for management of on-street parking is outlined in the *North Sydney Integrated Traffic & Parking Strategy*, and the Local Area Traffic Management Action Plans include actions to review parking restrictions on an area-wide basis to address the specific community needs.



Figure 1 Parking Allocation Hierarchy (*North Sydney Integrated Traffic & Parking Strategy*)

| Parking Occupancy | Existing Unrestricted or Restricted parking areas | Existing Meter Parking Areas |
|---------------------|---|--|
| >90% Occupancy | Reduce the parking time limits* (e.g. – 2P to 1P) or introduce parking meters | Utilise parking rates for high demand areas as per Council's Fees and Charges |
| >85% Occupancy | Reduce the parking time limits* or introduce permit parking schemes | Utilise parking rates for high demand areas as per Council's Fees and Charges |
| 45% - 85% Occupancy | Regular Monitoring | Utilise parking rates for medium demand areas as per Council's Fees and Charges |
| 20% - 44% Occupancy | Increase the parking time limits (i.e. –2P to 4P). | Utilise lowest parking rates as per Council's Fees and Charges or consider removing parking meters |
| <20% Occupancy | Remove parking restrictions | Consider removing parking meters |

* Permit Parking Scheme controls less than 1 hour are not permitted given their adverse impact on resident amenity. The parking controls must be able to accommodate for resident visitors and residents who are not eligible for a Resident Parking Permit.

Figure 2 Parking Principles Plan (Warrants) (*North Sydney Integrated Traffic & Parking Strategy*)

3. Community Engagement Strategy

3.1 Who are our community stakeholders?

The Community Engagement Strategy identifies the following groups to engage with in the local community. Depending on the area, different community stakeholders may be involved however typically the stakeholders will comprise:

- Local residents and their visitors/ guests
- Local businesses, including their customers
- Property owners
- Local schools – staff, students, P&C, parents and guardians
- Precinct Committees
- Local Chamber of Commerce
- Educational institutions – staff and students
- Traffic Committee
- Internal – Works Department

3.2 Key Communication Messages

- to manage the finite parking resource in accordance with the parking management hierarchy, and LATM Action Plans to meet the needs of the community.
- Community input can be sought through surveys
- Results of surveys are reported to the next available Traffic Committee meeting and the recommendations of the Traffic Committee are reported to the next available Council meeting for adoption.
- Surveys are available via Council's 'Your Say' webpage and updates will be provided through the decision-making process. Where changes to parking restrictions are adopted, residents and businesses of the affected streets will be notified by letterbox drop.

3.3 Timetable

Community and stakeholder engagement will occur at various times during each parking area review. Each area review is expected to take up to 4-5 months. The key project development phases are outlined in the following table:

| <i>Phase</i> | <i>Timing</i> |
|---|---------------|
| 1. Community Survey | 2 months |
| 2. Formulate Recommendations, Report to Traffic Committee and Council | 2 months |
| 3. Notification and Implementation | 1 month |

Note: In accordance with Council’s Community Engagement Framework described on page 1, the ‘level of engagement’ per engagement method is indicated.

3.3.1 Phase 1 – Community Survey

This phase will involve bringing awareness and inviting the affected stakeholders to participate in the survey and provide feedback on parking in their area. Approximately 2 weeks of preparation time is required ahead of the survey period. The minimum time for survey responses is 28 days.

| <i>Method</i> | <i>Target Stakeholders</i> | <i>Engagement Level</i> | <i>Purpose</i> |
|---------------------------|---|-------------------------|--|
| Webpage | All | Inform/Consult | Provide information about the project and direct people to how they can have a say i.e. survey and Traffic Committee |
| Memo | Precincts All Councillors | Inform/Consult | |
| Direct Letter | All | Inform/Consult | |
| Survey (online and paper) | All | Consult | Conducted via online Your Say portal and paper surveys through post. Purpose is to obtain views about parking restrictions in the area. |
| Precinct Committees | Precincts and their members/ visitors | Inform | Provide information about the project and direct people to how they can have a say i.e. survey and Traffic Committee |
| Internal Consultation | Traffic Team Integrated Planning and Special Projects team | Consult/Involve | Identify the parking pressures for the area and whether parking meters should be proposed or are affected. Formulate survey questions and arrange publication on website. Organise printing and distribution of letters. |

3.3.2 Phase 2 - Formulate Recommendations, Report to Traffic Committee and Council.

At the end of Phase 1 a summary of consultations outcomes (raw data) will be produced and included in a report to the Traffic Committee. Based on the community responses and occupancy data, the report will include recommendations for parking restrictions within the surveyed area.

The Traffic Committee report will be published on Council’s website one week ahead of the meeting. Members of the public may attend the Traffic Committee meeting. The recommendations of the Traffic Committee are reported to the next available Council meeting.

Not listed in priority order:

| <i>Method</i> | <i>Target Stakeholders</i> | <i>Engagement Level</i> | <i>Purpose</i> |
|-----------------------|---|-------------------------|--|
| Webpage | All | Inform | To provide information and updates about the proposal including key dates and links to reports. |
| Traffic Committee | Traffic Committee Members of public | Inform/ Consult | To consult with the Traffic Committee on proposed recommendations arising from the survey results, and to resolve on recommendation to Council |
| Internal Consultation | Traffic Team Integrated Planning and Special Projects team Works Department | Inform/ Involve | To consult with the traffic team on proposed recommendations arising from the survey results. |
| Council Meeting | Councillors Members of public | Consult/ Involve | To advise of the Traffic Committee recommendations and adopt formal Council resolution with regard to changes to parking restrictions. |

3.3.3 Phase 3 - Implementation

This Phase involves implementation of the adopted resolutions including prior notification to the affected stakeholders.

To do this we will undertake the following activities following resolution by Council. This process typically takes up to 1 month.

| <i>Method</i> | <i>Target Stakeholders</i> | <i>Engagement Level</i> | <i>Purpose</i> |
|-----------------|--|-------------------------|---|
| Webpage | All | Inform | To inform the affected community about the outcomes of the review and the changes to be implemented with approximate timeframes |
| Advertisement | All | | |
| e-newsletter | Survey respondents | | |
| Memos | Precincts Mayor & Ward Councillors | | |
| Direct Letter | Chamber of Commerce Local Schools Educational Institutions | | |
| Letter-box Drop | Local residents and businesses | | |
| Signage | All | Inform | Permanent parking signage to |

| <i>Method</i> | <i>Target Stakeholders</i> | <i>Engagement Level</i> | <i>Purpose</i> |
|----------------------|---|-------------------------|---|
| | | | inform of parking regulations |
| Internal involvement | Traffic team Integrated Planning & Special Projects team Communications team Works section | Involve | Organise updates to webpage, advertising and distribution of notifications. Organise implementation of signage and parking meters as required. |

4. Opportunity Cost/Rationale

Engaging the community in this proposal may entail financial costs to Council to achieve a high-quality engagement process. If the process is robust community, ownership of the decisions made will ensure efficient outcomes. Insufficient or poor-quality engagement can result in poor long-term decisions requiring further resources to rectify. The aim of a high-quality community engagement process is to make sustainable decisions. The engagement process will help Council staff and/or Councillors to understand the related recommendations rationale.

5. Further Information

For further information, please contact Council’s Manager Traffic & Transport Operations, Michaela Kemp, Engineering & Property Services Division:

Phone: 9936 8100
 Email: council@northsydney.nsw.gov.au
 Website: www.northsydney.nsw.gov.au