

October 2015

APPIN WORKSHOP; GROWTH IN AND AROUND APPIN

Part A – Community Engagement Strategy | Wollondilly Shire

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Introduction

The community engagement initiative relating to growth in and around Appin commenced in March 2015, as a consequence of a resolution of Council. The outcomes of the community engagement exercise are detailed in this report, which is divided into the following parts:

Part A – Community Engagement Strategy; prepared by Council and sets out the “why, how and where” for the Appin workshops.

Part B – What can we learn? Prepared by Deconstructing Conflict, appointed by Council to facilitate the workshops. Part B details the discussion from the workshops and the issues raised.

Background

The Agenda for the Ordinary Meeting of the Council on 16 March 2015 included a report on the implications of the recently released *A Plan for Growing Sydney* on the Council’s draft Growth Management Strategy.

Council resolved (in part);

4. *That Council’s final determination of these planning proposals [for Appin] be deferred until completion of the studies into the Macarthur South investigation area estimated to be six months as per the advice of the Department of Planning.*
5. *That Council commence an independent mediation process that includes key community representatives and further invitations are extended to representatives from the Chamber of Commerce, Appin Scouts, Appin Historical Society, Appin Men’s Shed and Sporting Groups. The independent mediator to report on the issues raised by the community as part of the final assessment report.*

A Plan for Growing Sydney, released in December 2014, is the NSW Government’s plan for the Sydney Metropolitan Area over the next 20 years. The Plan provides key directions and actions to guide Sydney’s productivity, environmental management, and liveability – including the delivery of housing, employment, infrastructure and open space.

In particular, the Plan includes an action to investigate the suitability of the Macarthur South Investigation Area for a future Growth Centre. The Macarthur South area includes Appin.

Project Scope

The scope of the proposed event was developed in consultation with the elected Councillors. A number of community engagement options were discussed with Councillors and the most appropriate chosen to address their expectations. It was evident from these discussions that Councillors favoured the use of an independent facilitator to engage with a cross section of interest groups within the local community.

How was the facilitator appointed?

Council approached LEADR & IAMA to provide a list of suitably qualified and experienced professionals to facilitate the event. LEADR and IAMA is a not-for-profit organisation that maintains a database of mediators and related practitioners.

Three names were provided. Council then approached these professionals and sought quotes. Deconstructing Conflict was chosen as the successful candidate by the selection panel that included the General Manager and Director Planning.

Pre-workshop planning

Prior to the workshops, Council staff met with Deconstructing Conflict to plan the event. It became clear during the planning phase that the intended workshop was better described as facilitation and not mediation.

Formal mediation is very structured and requires the parties (generally two) to agree to certain rules. The outcome of mediation is a formal agreement or statement of unresolved issues.

A facilitated session is more focussed on guiding discussion by setting a structure for a group. This approach seemed more appropriate in terms of providing an opportunity for stakeholders to discuss their views on growth and to identify concerns held by the local community.

Workshop Objectives and Outcomes

As a consequence of the pre-workshop planning the following objectives and outcomes were developed:

Workshop Objectives

- To hold a workshop to enable residents and other local stakeholders to have a broader discussion about growth in and around Appin;
- To identify the concerns held by residents and other local stakeholders about growth in and around Appin;

- To further explore key identified issues in one or two focussed workshops;
- To inform Appin residents about the strategic planning process and what current processes affect Appin.
- To provide an independent report to Council on the issues raised in the workshop sessions.

Workshop Outcomes

- Council's approach to strategic planning matters which relate to growth in and around Appin will be based on a solid understanding of resident's views.
- Establish open lines of communication with Appin residents.
- Appin residents will have a greater understanding of the planning process and Council's decisions.

The Workshop

Who was invited to attend?

The initial workshop was open to anyone with an interest in Appin. This included current residents, land owners, local business operators, people who work in Appin, prospective purchasers and special interest groups.

The initial workshop event was promoted on Council's Facebook Page, the Mayors Column in the Wollondilly Advertiser and through a page established for the event on Council's website (Growth In and Around Appin – A Workshop).

In addition, emails or letters were sent to the following identified stakeholders;

- Anyone who had made a submission to a current planning proposal to rezone land in Appin (i.e. Macquariedale Road, Appin Bulli Road, and Brooks Point Road);
- Anyone who has contacted the Council recently about issues related to Appin and growth;
- Appin Historical Society;
- Appin Men's Shed
- Appin Scouts
- Appin Chamber of Commerce
- Local sporting groups;
 - Appin Sports Aeromodellers Club
 - Appin United Soccer Club
 - Appin Netball Club
 - Appin Rugby League Football Club
 - Appin Touch Association
 - Macarthur Motorcross Club
- Landowners for the Appin Bulli Road and Brooks Point Road Planning Proposals.

Subsequently the proponents (applicants) for each of the Appin planning proposals were informed of the event and advised that depending on the issues that arose from the initial workshop, Council may wish to invite them a further workshop.

Figure 1: Photo of Workshop in action - 10 June 2015



Workshop Attendance and Scheduling

It was intended to hold an initial workshop followed by a focussed workshop. As a consequence of a higher than anticipated interest from the community, a decision was made to hold two initial workshops. This allowed groups of approximately 30 attendees to each workshop.

The initial workshops were held on 10th and 17th June 2015. Everyone wishing to attend the event was offered a place at one of the two workshops.

Attendees were not questioned as to their interest or motive in attending the event. There are a couple of exceptions, for example, where interested parties identified themselves as belonging to large development companies. In these instances the contact was asked not to attend.

At the initial workshops, two attendees were identified as possibly representing developer interest. Both gentlemen were invited to attend the first session of the workshop (presentation by the Department of Planning / Council) and not the second session relating to community engagement.

At the conclusion of the initial workshops, those community members who attended the second sessions were invited to participate in a further workshop. The focussed workshop was held on 15 July 2015.

The Workshop Format

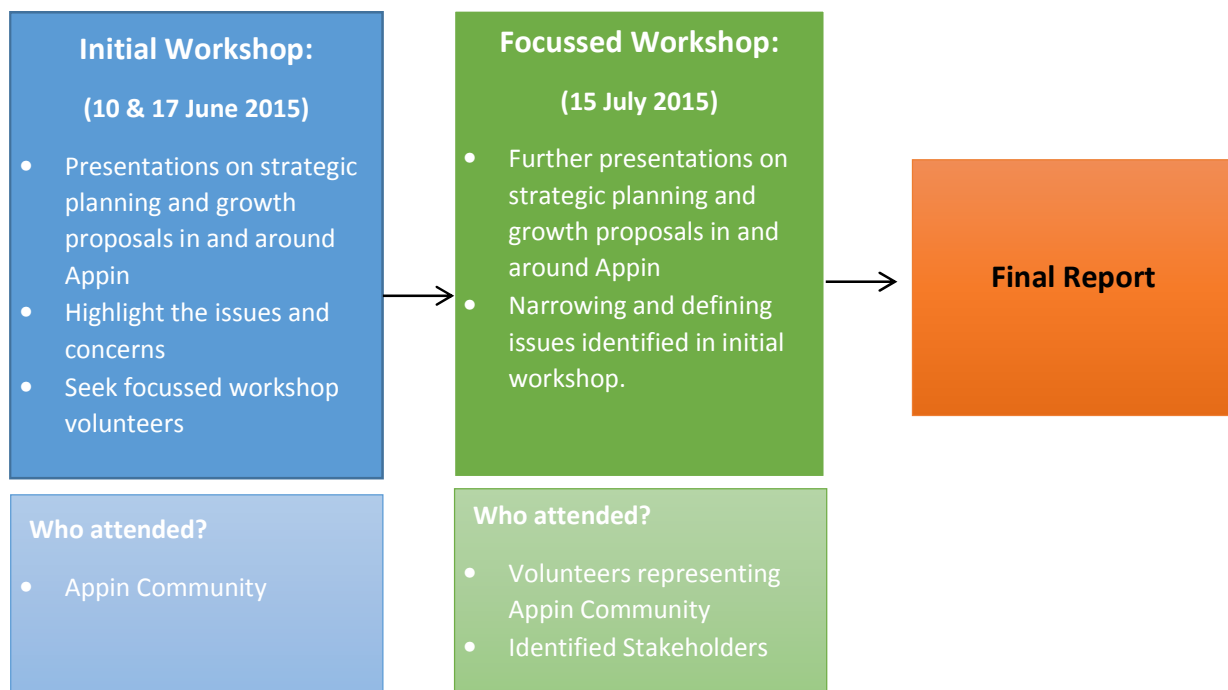
In addition to the independent facilitator, two representatives from the NSW Department of Planning and a number of Council staff attended the workshops and participated in the community engagement process.

As suggested above, the workshops were broken up into two sessions. The first being presentations regarding growth in and around Appin from:

- Brendan O'Brien
Executive Director, Infrastructure, Housing & Employment
NSW Department of Planning & Environment
- Chris Stewart
Director Planning
Wollondilly Shire Council

The second session, which the facilitator led, was predominately group work. At the conclusion of the group work, a representative from the group was asked to present their views. An opportunity to ask questions was provided during and at the conclusion of each session.

Figure 2: Workshop format



The workshop series involved an initial workshop to share and gather information. A presentation was given on the strategic planning process and information on the Planning Proposals for growth in and around Appin. The focus for the initial workshop was on smaller group discussion to identify the key issues with growth.

A focussed workshop was then held to discuss the key issues identified in the initial workshop in further detail. The focused workshop was attended by volunteers from the initial workshop and relevant invited stakeholders depending on the issues raised in the initial workshop. Figure 2 provides a summary of the workshop format.

Following the focussed workshop, at the facilitator's request, staff forwarded a survey to the group via electronic means.

How will this report be used?

The Appin Workshop has been initiated by Council in response to concerns held by the Appin Community with the numerous proposals for growth in and around Appin. It is not a statutory consultation process and is not related to any specific strategic planning process.

It is anticipated that the outcomes from the workshops contained within this report may inform Council decision making in relation to growth in and around Appin. This could include planning proposals to rezone land, any review of the Draft Wollondilly Growth Management Strategy, and Council submissions on regional strategies being prepared by the NSW Government.

Next Steps

The general feedback from the workshop participants was that a further workshop with the proponents of the major Planning Proposals surrounding Appin was not required.

The agreed approach is outlined as follows:

- Finalise this report and make it publicly available;
- Evaluate whether the workshop objectives and outcomes have been met, and
- Inform the Councillors of the Workshop outcomes through;
 - a report to Council on the Appin Workshop
 - presentation to Councillors by the facilitator