Marrickville Council Infrastructure Jury Report

"How good is good enough" in respect to public infrastructure?

November 2014

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We, the Marrickville Council Infrastructure Jury (MIJ) acknowledge the traditional land of the Cadigal people of the Eora nation. We acknowledge the terrible wrongs committed against the Aboriginal peoples of the country and their care of the land over many generations. We celebrate their ongoing survival and achievements in today's society.

We, the MIJ acknowledge the determination and steadfast efforts and dedication of the Marrickville elected Council and we thank them for voting to engage the deliberative democracy model in attempting to provide feedback on the assets that Council manages on behalf of the community.

We, the MIJ acknowledge the efforts of Council staff who have addressed all questions and the task asked of them in a professional and timely manner. They are Brooke Martin, Neil Strickland, Steve Kludass, Brian Barrett, and especially Prue Foreman, who stood by us for the entire journey and always addressed us with a smile and a genuine resolve to help. We are thankful to all of them.

We, the MIJ acknowledge the professionalism of the newDemocracy Foundation and thank them for giving us all a voice. We are supportive of their work to revitalize democracy in this country and applaud their dedication to the task. The citizen jury process shows what can be achieved by respecting the intelligence of all members of society and bringing them into the decision making process.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

During August 2014 Marrickville Council issued 3,000 invitations to residents asking for participation in an Infrastructure Jury facilitated by the newDemocracy Foundation. From those who responded 30 Jury members were randomly selected that statistically reflected the demographic of the Marrickville Local Government Area. The Jury met on six (6) occasions during the period from September to November 2014. The Jury was asked two questions:

1) **What Level of infrastructure quality do we want to pay for in Marrickville?**
2) **What are our local priorities for investment?**

The Jury worked hard to understand the information it was given and has produced its report to assist Council's asset management and planning strategies.

In addition to recommendations addressing the two questions above, key recommendations of the Jury are as follows:

Recommendation 1

Council should improve its data management to better inform decision making and facilitate greater community participation

- The MIJ requested, but Council was not always able to provide robust base-line information to inform MIJ deliberations. Identified benefits of publicly available data include increased understanding of infrastructure costs, challenges and trade-offs. It enhances transparency and public confidence in decision making.
- Making data publicly available can stimulate thinking about new approaches or ideas. It provides increased opportunities for early problem identification and for innovative technical and non-technical alternatives and solutions to be developed, drawing on the knowledge and expertise of the general community as well as council and other sources.

Recommendation 2

Council should not increase rates when alternate revenue raising measures are available
- Council should optimise existing capacity, pursue efficiencies and facilitate innovation opportunities
- See section 4.1 for a statement of position regarding increasing rates beyond the IPART determination

Recommendation 3

That Council re-convenes an Infrastructure Jury no later than September 2016
- The Jury provides valuable input and direction to Council on the community's priorities concerning the provision of local infrastructure
- Commencement by September 2016 at the latest would provide Council with the opportunity to incorporate the Jury's findings and recommendations into the formation of the 2017–2021 Delivery Plan and associated Strategies and Management Plans

1. BACKGROUND: ADDRESSING THE QUESTIONS

1.1 Process

In addressing the two questions put to it the MIJ has:
- Attempted to read and get familiar with all the Council published data
- Asked for more and more clarification on aspects of data collection and data presentation
- Asked for clarity on what legal implications exist for assets that are not maintained
- Asked for clarity on risk assessment and claims for damages
- Asked for clarity on sources of funding and grants available from State Government
- Not taken into consideration the discussion of amalgamations of Councils
- Engaged in lengthy debate and deliberation in the quest for understanding and clarity
- Asked Councillors for their feedback and desires for the community
- Not made its decisions with respect to religious beliefs
- Not made its decisions along party political lines
- Made its decision on a collective vision for a united, diverse, rich, prosperous community that is welcoming, and one that wants to work closer with the Council
- Established principles to inform its decision-making
- Recognised the need to balance between asset renewal (i.e. maintenance) and the creation of new assets
- Acknowledged the challenge of competing infrastructure priorities

1.2 Principles

In addressing the two questions put to it the MIJ adopted the following principles:

Principle 1: Equity and access

> The MIJ endorses the vision of the *Our Place Our Vision Community Strategic Plan 2013* for a diverse community that is socially just, educated, safe and healthy; and principle of equal access to all public spaces, services and facilities. In its deliberations, the MIJ recognised the importance of geographic and inter-generational equality in the management of infrastructure assets.

Principle 2: Data driven decision making

> Infrastructure priorities and resource allocation decisions should be made on the basis of high quality, real-time and publicly available data. Data challenges identified by the MIJ underpinned Recommendation 1.

Principle 3: Safety and public benefit

> Safety and broader public benefit (health, community engagement and quality of life) underpin infrastructure priorities, resource allocation decisions and any funding decisions; and underlying factors contributing to infrastructure damage with significant safety or public benefit impacts are prioritised for review and action (i.e. business case with options on site by site basis).

Principle 4: Infrastructure asset Condition 4 is the minimum standard for all assets

> There should be no Condition 5 (very poor) infrastructure assets presented to the community.

Principle 5: That Council first optimises existing capacity, pursues efficiencies and facilitates innovation opportunities before giving any consideration to rate increases, increase in charges for non-profit and community group use of infrastructure assets, or consideration of loans.

> Citizens should not be asked to pay higher rates when alternatives are available. The limited financial capacity of non-profit and community groups as well as the community benefits that flow from these activities should be also recognised.

2. ANSWERING QUESTION 1
What Level of Infrastructure quality do we want to pay for in Marrickville?

Recommendation 4

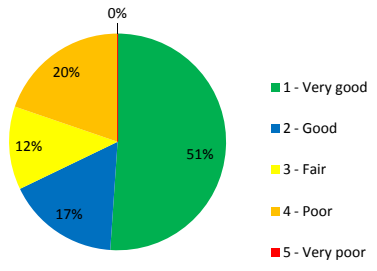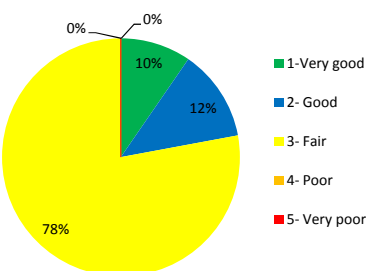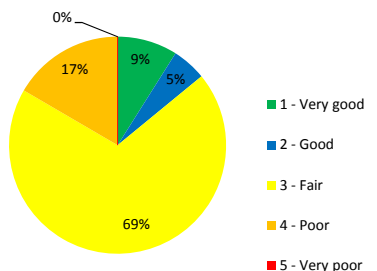- **All condition 5 assets be repaired, replaced and or decommissioned**

Recommendation 5

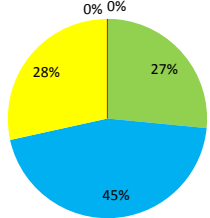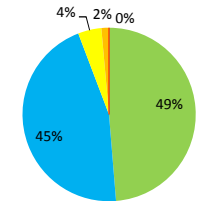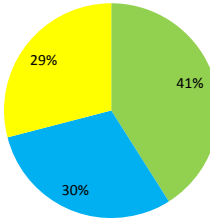- **Infrastructure quality for specific assets is set out in Table 1 (on next page)**
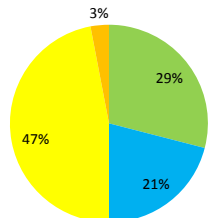
Recommendation 6

- **The MIJ encourages a cultural and organisational shift in the adopted method of assets condition assessment. It is unreasonable and inappropriate to base multimillion dollar expenditure and projects on data that is at times decades old, unclear and not transparent**

RENEWAL - Level of Service (LOS) modelling

Asset group	Current LOS - Condition	MIJ LOS	Pie chart MIJ LOS	Current year annual funding (per the Long Term Financial Plan)	Total annual funding required for scenario	Estimated Annual Shortfall
Roads	80% of roads in very good, good and fair condition.	Endorse Current LOS (80% in condition1-3). No condition 5 roads		$1,360K	$2,418K	$1058K
Footpaths	90% of footpaths in very good, good and fair condition.	Endorse Desired LOS (100% of footpaths in condition 1, 2,& 3). No condition 4 or 5 footpaths		$1,351K	$1,351K	nil
Kerb & gutter	74% of Kerb & gutter in very good, good and fair condition.	Endorse Current LOS (74% kerb and gutter in condition 1, 2 & 3). No condition 5 kerb and gutter		$200K	$363K	$163K

Asset	Condition Summary	LOS Statement	Condition Chart			
Roadside furniture	85% of roadside furniture in very good, good and fair condition.	Endorse Current LOS (85% in condition 1, 2 & 3) No condition 5 roadside furniture assets	0% / 18% 1 - Very good / 6% 2 - Good / 41% 3 - Fair / 35% 4 - Poor / 5 - Very poor	nil	$134K	$134K
Pits & pipes	97% of pits & pipes in very good, good and fair condition.	Endorse Current LOS (97% in 1, 2 & 3) No condition 5. Condition 4s renewed if a flood risk (see map)	3% 0% / 42% 1 - Very Good / 39% 2 - Good / 16% 3 - Fair / 4 - Poor / 5 - Very Poor	$300K	$561K	$261K
Park Buildings	93% of park buildings in very good, good and fair condition.	Endorse Current LOS (93% in Conditions 1-3) No Condition 5 park buildings	0% / 65% 1 - Very Good / 20% 2 - Good / 9% 3 - Fair / 6% 4 - Poor / 5 - Very Poor	$130K	$182K	$52k
Play equipment	98% of play equipment in very good, good and fair condition.	Endorse Current LOS (98% in Conditions 1-3) No Condition 5 play equipment	2% 0% / 17% 1 - Very Good / 38% 2 - Good / 43% 3 - Fair / 4 - Poor / 5 - Very Poor	$60K	$200K	$140K

Park paths	100% of park path in very good, good and fair condition.	Endorse Desired LOS (100% in Conditions 1-3). No Condition 4 or 5 park paths.	0% 0% / 27% 1 - Very Good / 45% 2 - Good / 28% 3 - Fair / 4 - Poor / 5 - Very Poor	nil	$200K	$200k
Park assets	90% of park assets in very good, good condition.	Endorse Current LOS (90% in Conditions 1-3) No Condition 5 assets	4% 2% 0% / 49% 1 - Very Good / 45% 2 - Good / 3 - Fair / 4 - Poor / 5 - Very Poor	nil	$40k	$40k
Commercial Car Parks	79% of carparks in very good, good, fair condition.	Endorse Desired LOS 100% very good, good, fair	41% 1 - Very Good / 29% 3 - Fair / 30% 2 - Good / 4 - Poor / 5 - Very Poor	nil	$148K	$148K
Property Buildings	85% of property buildings in very good, good and fair condition.	Endorse Desired LOS 90% very good, good, fair. No condition 5 property buildings	3% / 29% 1 - Very Good / 47% 3 - Fair / 21% 2 - Good / 4 - Poor / 5 - Very Poor	$712K	$870K	$158K
TOTAL				**$4,113K**	**$6,467K**	**$2,354K**

3. Question 2: What are our Local Priorities for investment?

Recommendation 7

The MIJ's investment priorities are as set out in Table 2. Council should have regard to the comments by the MIJ contained in Table 2 when considering this recommendation.

Table 2

Asset type	Comments and/or Recommendations
Town Centre Upgrades	MIJ supports investment in Town Centre upgrades in conjunction with regular community consultation. Town Centres are essential for healthy and vibrant communities.
Storm Water – Flood Mitigation	MIJ supports investment in Storm Water upgrades. Assess flooding areas and prepare designs for those which expose the Council to the greatest risk first.
Car Park Lighting Upgrade	MIJ supports investment in car park lighting upgrades. Council to engage in an assessment of LED lighting throughout the LGA in an effort to minimize the energy dependence and the overall running cost.
Properties – facilities renewal with upgrades to current standards	MIJ supports investment in property upgrades. The MIJ recommends that Council increases its cycle of audits of Council property building assets every 5 years in order to provide better baseline data.
Kerb ramps (pram ramps)	MIJ supports investment in Kerb ramps for purposes of safety and accessibility.
Bicycle Plan	MIJ supports investment in Council's bicycle plan
Local Area Traffic Management (LATM)	MIJ supports continued investment in LATM plans from 2017 onwards
Integrated Property Strategy	MIJ supports the Integrated Property Strategy and recommends that this be undertaken in conjunction with LEP and other statutory plans
LED Street Lighting	MIJ supports investment in LED lighting replacement strategies to minimize the cost of and dependence on power

4. ADDRESSING THE FUNDING SHORTFALL

The following recommendations are based on projected annual shortfalls of:

- Asset Renewal shortfall: **$2,354k**

- New Asset shortfall: **$4,075k** in 2015/16 and **$4,475k** from 2016/17 onwards (these figures are approximate and do not include LED street lighting)

4.1 Statement of position on increasing rates beyond IPART determination:

- **Council should not increase rates when alternate revenue raising measures are available (Rec 2)**
    - Council should optimise existing capacity, pursue efficiencies and facilitate innovation opportunities

- **In the available time the MIJ was unable to arrive at a consensus about how Council should fund any remaining shortfall once other options are exhausted**
    - The MIJ suggests that Council make this an explicit point of focus if it follows Recommendation 3 to convene another citizens jury in preparation for the 2017–2021 Delivery Plan and associated Strategies and Management Plans

4.2 Revenue Raising Measures:

Recommendation 8

- **Information provided to MIJ suggests that Council is not adequately pursuing parking control through the use of parking rangers. Data suggests that significant revenue could be generated in this manner. Net revenue in 2013/14 was $3,378k. The MIJ recommends that Council at least double net revenue from this source.**

Recommendation 9

- **Introduce parking meters in all council car parks by end of 2015**

Recommendation 10

- **Introduce resident permit parking across residential streets throughout the LGA**

THANKS

The MIJ take the opportunity of thanking everyone involved in bringing together this citizen jury process. All jurors regard it as having been a valuable process. We have provided feedback in good faith and are hopeful this report will assist the difficult decisions Council undertakes on behalf of the people of Marrickville.

DISCLAIMER

When reading the previous findings and recommendations it should be noted that:
- This was not an audit
- That the Jury members have relied on representations and information supplied by Council and independent expert sources
- These findings relate to the information as it was available during September to November 2014
- That whilst some Jury members have special knowledge in particular areas, their engagement in this process has been in their capacity as ordinary citizens of the Marrickville Council area
- The Jury agreed that an 80% majority on any decision was considered a consensus