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# Lane Cove Bushland & Conservation Society Inc

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31 January 2023.

The General Manager  
Mr Craig Wrightson  
Lane Cove Council  
Cc: The Mayor and All Councillors

Dear Mr Wrightson & The Mayor & All Councillors,

## **Lane Cove Bushland & Conservation Society Submission the Draft Community Engagement Strategy- SU80**

Although the community consultation for the Draft Community Engagement Strategy closed on 29 January 2023, The Lane Cove Bushland & Conservation Society would hope you may accept this late, brief submission.

### **1. DA Search function**

A simple 'engagement' help online would be to write at the very start of the DA Search function, listed under the Development menu on Council's home page - that you don't include the letters DA, only the DA number, otherwise one gets a very unhelpful, off-putting message, saying the DA doesn't exist.

### **2. We suggest that there needs to be a cross-checking function from submissions received & acknowledged through [service@lanecove](mailto:service@lanecove) & those that appear on a DA/consultation webpage.**

The community should not have to spend so much time chasing their submissions in the way that the LCBCS has had to recently on two recent submissions (**DA147/2022 & DA117/17**). It is enough work just getting a submission done.

Although both these submissions were sent before the closure time & immediately acknowledged by separate automatic Council email responses, neither were uploaded until further investigations, phone calls & complaints by the Society.

It is worrying that they could not be found by the Chief Planner & had to be resent, and even then, once uploaded, one would not open until further checking & complaints were made.

### **3. The Society feels most online surveys are **written & weighted** to get the response Council desires & are not good community engagement, as most often no space or option is given to provide a response different to the narrow options offered.**

4. Community engagement sessions of Council often are just **information sessions**, where the decision appears to have been already made, and alternative views do not appear in the summaries or Reports to Council.
5. **The Bushland Society wholeheartedly endorses and supports the ideas forwarded to us by Lynne McLoughlin and copied just below**, as members of the executive (available over the Christmas period) have been grappling and discussing them.

We believe that there should be a **'black-out'** period for due dates on Council's policies, strategies and DA (i.e. documents under the control of Council) for at least two full weeks before Christmas and 4 weeks after Christmas.

This holiday period 2022-23 we have, or have had, the following:

- The Urban Forest Strategy, due 19 December. This was so close to Christmas and is particularly galling where we believe the relevant Council officer was apparently on holidays until 9 January and not dealing with the responses until then anyway.
- The Sport and Recreation Precinct DA, due date 13 January. sensibly now changed (at the last minute) to 23 January, although some people have already made the effort put in comments. This is a large and previously controversial project that requires substantial holiday time be spent to get across the documentation, understand what has changed and get a submission in by this date.
- 266 Longueville Road modification, now due 23 January, previously closed earlier, but this makes two items due on same day
- Community Engagement Strategy, due 29 January
- Bob Campbell Oval Masterplan, due 5 February.

These are all, bar one, under the control of Council, some with extensive documentation requiring a lot of work to understand and then comment sensibly. To comment, the community is forced to grapple with such issues in the holiday period, or simply not participate. Most will choose the latter if pushed for time. The one with the best timeline (BCO Masterplan) is actually the least demanding issue.

Community members deserve a holiday too, and to be able to prepare for Christmas without this stream of material which they feel deserve input. One gets the feeling that Council officers push to get their work finished before they go on leave, which ends up dumping the documents on the community over the holidays.

This is one of those issues that impact the extent to which the community perceives Council as genuine about wanting community views and feedback and is willing to facilitate participation. Private landowners DAs are beyond the control of Council in their timetables, but Council can at least demonstrate it genuinely seeks community engagement and participation by demonstrating more consideration in its timelines.

Yours sincerely,  
Shauna Forrest, President,  
on behalf of the Lane Cove Bushland & Conservation Society  
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