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November 2020

NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment

By email: publicspace@planning.nsw.gov.au

Submission on the Draft NSW Public Space Charter

The Roads & Transport Directorate, a collaboration between IPWEA NSW and LGNSW, has prepared this submission to the NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment.

The submission provides our response to the 5 questions included in the Draft NSW Public Spaces Charter (October 2020).


We would welcome the opportunity to provide further detail on the issues raised within this submission.

Please do not hesitate to contact Arjan Rensen on 04 2053 1500 or email arjan.rensen@ipweansw.org in relation to this submission.

Yours faithfully,



Mr William Barton
Director IPWEA NSW



Mr Arjan Rensen
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NSW Public Spaces Charter

Submission by

Road and Transport Directorate
A collaboration between IPWEA NSW and LGNSW

November 2020

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I. Executive Summary

The Roads and Transport Directorate supports the importance of public spaces, as spaces where public life happens. Infrastructure assets such as roads and streets form an integral component of public spaces and are themselves, public spaces. The recognition of local roads as public space, is an important aspect that we like in the draft Charter. We also appreciate how the draft Charter acknowledges that there are different users of public space with different needs and that these different perspectives are considered.

Local councils play a key role in the provision and management of these assets. This has implications on the safety, accessibility and provision of these spaces. Thus, to support the implementation of public spaces as outlined in the draft Charter, consideration of the local council perspective is important.

As described in principle 10 (Well Managed) of the draft NSW Public Spaces Charter, well managed public spaces make us proud and encourages us to feel a sense of ownership of the place. To achieve this, there must be recognition that appropriate investment and ongoing funding for maintenance is required. Guidance is needed in assessing gaps and shortcomings with current public spaces to see if these principles can be applied. Also, guidance on incorporating these principles into future projects including building business cases for additional capital funding and recurrent would also be required.

Some aspects that could be refined about the draft NSW Public Spaces Charter include primary considerations of safety. In terms of pedestrian safety, the separation of traffic to maintain function of local roads and streets or the use of streets as shared spaces in areas of low traffic volume, is recommended. Another aspect is that roads are necessary to provide a means of evacuation.

In the application of these principles, the Roads and Transport Directorate would like to see it as an ongoing collaboration with all groups involved. As a user of public space, the focus on safety and being green is important. We would also like to see the principles applied in the development and application of policy across whole-of-government.

II. Introduction

The Institute of Public Works Engineering Australasia NSW Division (IPWEA NSW) is the leading professional association representing Engineers and Public Works Officers engaged in public works and engineering, with the majority of members working in, or providing services to, Local Government (and the NSW Government).

IPWEA (NSW) is a charity with the purpose of advancing the public works excellence in Australia, particularly in NSW by:

- conducting and publishing research into improvements to the processes used in public works and services to enhance NSW Communities
- working with government at all levels to ensure that the interests of the community are represented in regard to the public decision-making process relating to public works and services, and
- providing a forum for all people engaged in the public works to discuss best practice and enhancing the future of NSW Communities

IPWEA (NSW) has adopted a mission to enhance the quality of life of NSW communities through excellence in public works and services. This is achieved through our professional association that effectively informs, connects, represents and leads public works professionals for NSW.

The Roads and Transport Directorate is a joint initiative between IPWEA NSW (IPWEA) and Local Government NSW (LGNSW) to optimise roads and transport outcomes.

The purpose of the Directorate is to support our member Councils to deliver an improved local road and transport network:

- A network that meets the future needs of the community, industry and economy.
- A network that is safer for all users and provides vital and reliable connections to place and people.
- A network that uses resources wisely and is mindful of its impact on the environment.

Member Councils are collectively responsible for the management of over 165,000 kilometres of roads valued at more than \$70 billion representing the single largest community asset in New South Wales.

To succeed in this task, we undertake leading-edge road and transport research which underpins our input to policy development and published guidance on the design, construction and management of the road network and its associated infrastructure.

This submission has been prepared by the NSW Roads & Transport Directorate on behalf of its members.

III. Background¹

The NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment has developed 10 draft principles for a NSW public spaces charter that can be used to help ensure everyone has access to high quality public space that allows them to enjoy and participate in public life.

These principles are:

1. Open and welcoming - Public space belongs to everyone.
2. Community-focused - Public spaces are where communities forge the ties that bind them.
3. Culture and creativity - Public space is where we share our stories and values.
4. Local character and identity - Public spaces make us proud of where we live.
5. Green and resilient - Public space can help us adapt and thrive in a changing climate.
6. Healthy and active - Public space supports healthy lifestyles and refreshes our spirits.
7. Local business and economies - Public space supports more dynamic and exciting local economies.
8. Safe and secure - Everyone should feel safe using public space at all times of the day.
9. Designed for people - Public space that's flexible can meet the needs of our diverse population.
10. Well managed - Public space is more inviting when it's well cared for

This submission intends to answer the questions proposed in the draft charter from an NSW Local Government Road Manager point of view.

The draft charter: http://www.dpi.e.nsw.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0006/327732/Draft-NSW-Public-Spaces-Charter.pdf

¹ Draft NSW Public Spaces Charter, October 2020

IV. Response to the Consultation Questions

1. What do you like most about the draft NSW Public Spaces Charter?

An aspect we like most about the draft NSW Public Spaces Charter is that it acknowledges that there are different users of public spaces, with different needs and considers the perspectives of these various users. Also, we like the recognition of local roads as public space in the draft Charter and that public spaces, particularly roads, have multiple, beneficial functions to perform.

2. What could be refined or changed about the draft NSW Public Spaces Charter?

The draft NSW Public Spaces Charter could be refined to further consider the nature of roads and streets within public spaces. This is because roads and streets form an integral part of public spaces and are essential to providing access to these spaces.

Infrastructure assets (e.g. parks, water, sewerage, roads, footpaths, etc.) form the physical foundation of public spaces. Local councils play a key role in the provision and management of these assets. Thus, to support the implementation of public spaces as outlined in the draft Charter, consideration of the local council perspective is important.

The Charter could also be refined to consider the Future Transport Strategy 2056 and Movement and Place Framework, to integrate current and future innovation.

The aspects that could be refined and changed for some of the principles specifically, are described below.

- *Principle 5 (Green and Resilient) and Principle 8 (Safe and Secure)*

For public spaces, there are primary functions and primary considerations such as safety. In terms of pedestrian safety, the separation of traffic to maintain function of local roads and streets or the use of streets as shared spaces in areas of low traffic volume, is recommended.

Another aspect is that roads are necessary to provide a means of evacuation. However, evacuation from public spaces in times of previous natural disasters, has highlighted the issue of congestion and the need for alternative evacuation routes. Also, vegetation in public spaces could also present fire risks and thus needs to be planted strategically. This may be beyond the scope of the principles of the Charter, but are key considerations that can be considered for the safety of the community and in making these public spaces more resilient.

- *Principle 10 (Well Managed)*

Well managed public places enhance the life of every resident and visitor, and there must be recognition that the ongoing success of public spaces require appropriate investment, ongoing funding for maintenance and for community-participation to be balanced with appropriately skilled and experienced experts.

There a case for acknowledgement of primary function and the need to preserve this primary function or at least not reduce the capacity for the space to deliver this primary function. For example, in the face of increasing traffic demand, we cannot afford to reduce some road/street capacities without offset or careful management.

3. If you are responsible for planning or managing public space, how would you apply these principles in your work and what guidance and support would you need to do so?

To apply these principles, guidance would be needed in assessing gaps and shortcomings with current public spaces to see if these principles can be applied. Guidance on incorporating these principles into future projects including building business cases for additional capital funding and recurrent would also be required.

With the change and increase in infrastructure assets associated with public spaces, guidance would be needed to support and implement these changes at a local council level. Furthermore, guidance would be required on funding mechanisms to support public spaces (e.g. ongoing servicing requirements) to ensure that both the source of funding and management of assets by local councils are feasible and sustainable.

4. As a user of public space how would you like to see these principles applied?

As a user of public space, we would like to see these principles applied as an ongoing collaboration with all groups involved (e.g. community groups, government, planners, business owners, industry bodies). We would also like to see these principles applied with a focus on safety and being green (e.g. using trees as shade). Additionally, we would like to see these principles applied in the development and application of policy across whole-of-Government.

5. Is there anything further you would like to say about the draft NSW Public Spaces Charter?

With regards to some of the individual principles, some thoughts are described below.

- *Principle 1 (Open and Welcoming) and Principle 9 (Designed for people)*

In addition to public spaces being "easy to get to by walking, by cycling or on public transport", cars on roads will still be necessary. Future vehicle technology will drive consideration for how the space contributes to a safe and accessible environment e.g. "silent" electric vehicles.

- *Principle 2 (Community-focused)*

In the suggested idea of local regulations supporting possible street closures or encouraging the activation of parks, significant coordination is required by various aspects of local councils. For example, the role of the road operator would change.

Overall, creating public spaces with the implementation of the 10 principles will change the way we currently look at roads and transport. Ongoing guidance and support are important for local councils managing these assets, to ensure successful implementation of the principles and the provision of these sustainable public spaces.