



20 April, 2013

Rev Fred Nile, MLC
Parliament House
6 Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Rev Nile

PROPOSED CHANGES TO PLANNING LEGISLATION

The Glebe Society is the residents' group for the Inner West areas of Glebe and Forest Lodge. We have been commenting on planning issues since our formation in 1969.

The NSW Government wants to make two changes to planning legislation affecting residents. The first is through a Public Participation Charter to ensure greater resident participation in the assessment of large-scale planning proposals that affect large areas to determine the character of future development.

The Society knows from long experience that, although public participation at this stage is desirable, it is difficult to achieve, even using the latest technology. This is despite the willingness and enthusiasm of government to engage with residents.

There are two main reasons. First, large-scale changes, such as rezoning, appear remote and abstract. It is difficult for residents to grasp their scale and significance when they cannot see if, and how much, they will be affected. Second, even the simplest planning proposal is quite complex, involving maps and plans that residents are unaccustomed to reading, and figures, formulae and rules that are difficult to interpret.

Hence, although greater public participation at this early stage is desirable it is notoriously difficult to achieve, and equally difficult to ensure it is soundly based and well informed.

The other change the Government wants to make assumes that greater public participation has been successfully achieved. The Government proposes to remove the right of residents to object to a proposal at the development application stage.

However, this is precisely the time when residents are likely to become interested and concerned, because this is when they become aware of the likely impact on themselves. It is one thing to give theoretical approval to changes affecting a whole

neighbourhood: it is quite another to consider the practical impact that changes to the neighbouring property may have on your own. Hence the Society believes that depriving residents of the right of objection at the development application stage would cause greater anger, disillusionment and concern than any benefit earlier public participation would achieve.

Therefore the Society asks you to support greater public participation where possible, but also to maintain in the strongest possible terms the right of residents to raise their concerns about development applications that affect them.

Yours truly

JOHN GRAY
President, Glebe Society