

Local Planning Panel - Appointment of Members

File No: X129914

Summary

The City of Sydney Local Planning Panel (LPP) has been operating since 1 March 2018. When meeting to determine development applications, a LPP consists of 4 members: a chair, 2 expert members and one community representative.

The Chair and 2 alternate chairs are appointed by the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces. Expert members and community representatives are appointed by Council.

A Ministerial Direction was released on 26 May 2024 which provides guidance to Council on appointing members to a LPP and requires that a council must:

- (a) establish a pool comprising at least 15 independent expert members and alternate members and
- (b) establish a pool comprising at least 4 community representatives.

In recent times there have been a number of resignations from the LPP including the Chair, a number of expert members and a community representative. Two alternate chairs, 13 expert members and 3 community representatives remain.

Whilst the LPP can still function with the alternate chairs and the reduced number of expert members and community members this report recommends that:

- (a) Council approve the suggested additional candidates for expert members; and
- (b) Council approve the suggested additional candidates for community representatives.

A separate report will be provided regarding the Chair and alternate chairs once they have been appointed by the Minister.

A copy of the Ministerial Direction of 26 May 2024 - Local Planning Panels Direction - Appointment of Members is provided at Attachment A.

Recommendation

It is resolved that Council:

- (A) approve the appointment of 3 additional expert members to the City of Sydney Local Planning Panel, being Rodney Paesler, Alison McCabe and Ian Armstrong for a period of 3 years from the date of appointment; and
- (B) approve the appointment of 4 additional community representatives to the City of Sydney Local Planning Panel, being Nicholas Sanderson, Terry Mooney, Julie Waters and Gary Pogson as for a period of 3 years from the date of appointment, noting that the appointments are subject to probity checks.

Attachments

Attachment A. Local Planning Panels Direction - 26 May 2024

Background

1. The City of Sydney Local Planning Panel (LPP) has been operating since 1 March 2018.
2. When meeting to determine development applications, a LPP consists of 4 members: a chair, 2 expert members and one community representative. The Chair and 2 alternate chairs are appointed by the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces. Expert members and community representatives are appointed by Council.
3. In recent times there have been a number of resignations from the LPP including the Chair, a number of expert members and a community representative. Two alternate chairs, 13 expert members and 3 community representatives remain. As a result, there is a need to appoint additional members to the panel.

Chairs

4. Due to the resignation of the City of Sydney Local Planning Panel Chair in 2025, a replacement Chair is required to be consistent with a Ministerial Direction that requires Panels to operate with one Chair and 2 alternate Chairs.
5. The Chair and alternate Chairs of the LPP are appointed by the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces from the list of Chairs approved by the Minister.
6. To assist with this process the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (Department) invited Council to provide a shortlist of preferred replacement Chairs, or to consider appointing an existing alternate Chair as Chair and nominating alternate Chair replacements. Council was provided with a recommended shortlist for the Chair/alternate Chair in late 2025. This shortlist was subsequently provided to the Department and Minister for consideration.
7. A separate report will be provided regarding the Chair and alternate chairs once they have been appointed by the Minister.

Expert Members

8. The Department has issued a list of eligible LPP expert members, which City Planning senior staff have reviewed.
9. Three additional expert members from the state list have been selected. These are:
 - (a) Rodney Paesler
 - (b) Alison McCabe
 - (c) Ian Armstrong.

10. Additional experts have been selected on the basis of their:
 - (a) professional standing
 - (b) experience
 - (c) technical ability
 - (d) broad understanding of the development assessment process
11. Rodney Paesler has particular expertise in the architecture and property development industries. Rodney is a registered architect and was previously a Director at Scott Carver Pty Ltd an Australian based design firm for the property industry, specialising in Architecture, Interior Architecture, Landscape Architecture, Urban Design, Town Planning, Transport Planning and communications.
12. Alison McCabe has long standing experience in statutory and strategic planning for state and local government and private practice. Alison is currently a Director of SJB Planning which she started in 2005. Prior to this, she was Director of Environmental and Community Management for Leichhardt Council. She has carried out the role of chair and expert on both Regional Planning Panels and Local Planning Panels over the last 10 years.
13. Ian Armstrong has over 35 years' professional experience as an architect, urban designer and town planner. Over the past 2 years he has been a member of Parramatta Council and Georges River Council Local Planning Panels. He is also a member of both Cumberland Council and Liverpool Council's Design Excellence Review Panels. Ian is a registered architect and is currently a director at DesignInc, an Australia-wide architecture and design practice. Prior to that he was a director at Kann Finch Architects.

Community Representatives

14. Staff sought expressions of interest from the community for the role of community representatives in line with the guidelines published by the Department. This included:
 - (a) advertising in the City of Sydney News/the City of Sydney website
 - (b) advertising on City of Sydney LinkedIn post
 - (c) advertising in the City Hub
 - (d) advertising on the Architecture Australia website
15. Advertising was for approximately 4 weeks ending on 31 October 2025. In total 75 initial expressions of interest were received. Each applicant was provided with information regarding the role requirements and selection criteria and was requested to complete a nomination form if they wished to proceed.
16. Of the 75 persons who expressed interest, 26 completed a formal nomination form and provided information to address the selection criteria.

17. Community representatives were selected with consideration to:
 - (a) area of expertise that may be relevant to the panel
 - (b) understanding of issues affecting the City of Sydney and planning/urban development matters
 - (c) general availability to attend and participate on local planning panel meetings
 - (d) appreciation of conflicts of interest
 - (e) judicious and independent thinking and decision-making capabilities
18. The shortlisted candidates that are recommended will be required to be subject of required probity checks before being appointed. These are:
 - (a) a public register of real estate agents check
 - (b) a bankruptcy record check
 - (c) a National Police check (ACIC)
19. The four community representatives that are recommended are:
 - (a) Nicholas Sanderson
 - (b) Terry Mooney
 - (c) Julie Waters
 - (d) Gary Pogson
20. All of the above attended a short "interview" with the Executive Manager Planning and Development, and the Manager Planning Assessment to discuss the purpose of the role and assess their suitability for the role.
21. Nicholas Sanderson has been a resident in the Local Government Area (LGA) for 8 years and has a keen interest in community development issues, and welcomes the opportunity to contribute to transparent, accountable planning for the City.
22. Terry Mooney has been a resident in the LGA for many decades and has a passion for architecture, design, and how planning decisions shape our community. He has worked for 10 years part-time at North Sydney Council as a Customer Service Officer.
23. Julie Waters has been a resident in the LGA for 19 years and participates in activities across community centres and libraries in Pyrmont.
24. Gary Pogson lives in Waterloo and has a keen interest in how planning decisions affect the community. He has past professional experience in planning and development law.

Key Implications

Strategic Alignment - Sustainable Sydney 2030-2050 Continuing the Vision

25. Sustainable Sydney 2030-2050 Continuing the Vision renews the communities' vision for the sustainable development of the city to 2050. It includes 10 strategic directions to guide the future of the city, as well as 10 targets against which to measure progress. This report is aligned with the following strategic directions and objectives:
- (a) Direction 1 - Responsible governance and stewardship - the operation of the LPP is a collaboration between City staff, applicants, objectors, independent members and the NSW Government.
 - (b) Direction 4 - Design excellence and sustainable development - the LPP determines development applications and reviews conditions of consent which provide for sustainability, renewal, and design excellence.
 - (a) Direction 10 - Housing for all - the LPP determines development applications which contribute to housing diversity and good design.

Organisational Impact

26. City staff provide secretariat and operational support to the Local Planning Panel.

Risks

27. If new members are not appointed and there are subsequent resignations the LPP may not be able to meet and determine development applications. In addition, if Council does not meet the requirements of the Ministerial Direction the Minister may appoint panel members and/or delegate/s without council endorsement, to determine development applications.
28. Councils approved Risk Appetite Statement provides guidance about the amount of risk the City is willing to take in order to achieve its strategic goals, while ensuring the protection of its assets, reputation and the wellbeing of its employees and community.
29. There is no appetite for non-compliance with legislative and service delivery requirements relating to adequately servicing the Local Planning Panel.

Financial Implications

30. LPP member remuneration is based on meeting attendance.
31. City of Sydney LPP remuneration rates are as follows:
- (a) Chairpersons - \$2,000 plus GST per meeting (one per meeting)
 - (b) Expert members - \$1,500 plus GST per meeting (2 per meeting)
 - (c) Community representatives - \$1,500 plus GST per meeting (one per meeting)

32. The number of panellists at each meeting will not change, therefore there will be no change to the cost of administering each meeting of the City of Sydney LPP.
33. There are sufficient funds available in the 2025/26 operating budget and future years' forward estimates for the operation of the City of Sydney LPP.

Relevant Legislation

34. Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979.

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