



Newcastle ● VOICE

**Development Control Plan Reviews:
Heritage Conservation Areas –
The Hill and Newcastle East HCA
Information Session Results**
March 2015

Community information sessions

As part of the review of The Hill and Newcastle East HCAs, two community information sessions were held (details below).

Session 1: Newcastle East Public School: Benson Library	Monday 23 rd March 2015, 6-7pm
Session 2: Newcastle East Public School: Benson Library	Monday 30 th March 2015, 6-7pm

About:

Both sessions served residents of The Hill HCA and Newcastle East HCA. Many of those who attended the second session were members of the Newcastle Inner City Residents Alliance (NICRA).

The purpose of the community information sessions was to:

- provide the community with information about the heritage conservation area reviews and resident surveys that were being undertaken by Council, and;
- to answer any questions the community had about the Newcastle East and The Hill heritage conservation area reviews.

The information sessions ran according to the following structure:

- 6pm start: welcome, Acknowledgement of Country and introduction by Newcastle Voice officer - **5mins**
- Presentation by Council's heritage planner: background information, technical information and scope - **15 mins**
- Discussion - **40 mins**

Attempts were made by the presenter and facilitator to keep discussion within the project's scope. This meant that certain topics raised by attendees that were not relevant to the HCA review were discussed briefly and then 'parked' for later investigation or one-on-one discussion outside of the meeting.

Attendance:

The two community information sessions had a total of 79 attendees. Headcounts at the sessions indicated that 51 community members attended the first session and 28 attended the second session.

- Council's Strategic Planning Manager attended the first session to provide specialist information and input into the discussion and;
- Council's Strategic Planning Team Coordinator attended both sessions in order to provide specialised strategic planning input.

Summary of discussion topics:

Session 1

Discussion topics:

- Discussion about the reasons and scope for citizen involvement in the HCA DCP review process. Many attendees appeared unsure about what was being asked of them.
- Some attendees were very sceptical at the beginning. A good presentation from Council's heritage planner turned the mood around and by the time the discussion period began, comments were mostly constructive.
- One key theme was corruption and the community's subsequent lack of trust in Council to do a good job at preserving heritage into the future. It was resolved that Council needs to gradually re-build trust.
- Discussion moved onto specific items such as the Bishopscourt house and grounds, Christ Church Cathedral development and high-rise/spot re-zoning in the mall. One particular issue for residents was the impact of the buildings that could be constructed as a result of the NSW Department of Planning and Environment approved spot rezoning, particularly the impacts that the new height limits could have on The Hill HCA as well as Newcastle's heritage overall. Also on the topic of this spot re-zoning, residents stated that the consultation being conducted by Council was meaningless, and that "*we're wasting our time here*" (referring to the fact that the DCP is a guideline only and that State Government has powers that can over-ride Council's controls).
- People were generally worried that the State has the real power when it comes to planning and heritage but that it also has the wrong priorities.

Session 2

Discussion topics:

- The Californian bungalows on Brooks St should be included as part of the HCA.
- Views to and from the HCAs are important for preserving their heritage character,
- People wanted clarity on how much influence the community can have on this project. Many were doubtful about the strength of DCPs and the consistency of their implementation. Staff needed to reiterate what kind of input was being sought from the community as part of the review.
- People wanted information on how to add an item to the heritage register.
- Discussion around precedence: Once a poor development is allowed, more can be justified -> a downhill spiral begins and it becomes increasingly difficult to justify an area's heritage significance. The Planners response to this comment was that each DA is assessed on its own merits, and that this shouldn't actually occur.
- Cathedral development, Bishopscourt and King Edward Park bowling club site were raised by a few people, discussed briefly and 'parked' for later.