

# MEDIA RELEASE

22<sup>nd</sup> August, 2014



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## Camden Town Strategy Community Forum

The Camden Chamber of Commerce and Industry Inc. is inviting the community to its Community Forum on the Camden Town Centre.

The Camden Chamber will use the forum to help form our response to council's proposed town strategy.

'We are inviting the community as this matter goes well beyond the needs of business.' said Camden Chamber President Mrs. Miriam Roberts.

Mrs. Roberts said 'This is about building an enduring future for Camden. Council is proposing to spend a lot of community money. They are also considering what to do with vital community assets.

Our chamber believes strongly in the community being aware of what is being proposed and to contribute to the discussion about what we want Camden to look like well into the future.

It may be the council endorsed strategy to build a 2 level car park in Oxley Street is what the community wants. However we don't believe the community would want the monstrosity that it could look like based upon our research. Councils own consultants acknowledge there is no need for the \$3.6M car parking project.

Is \$38,000 per car space on such a proposal the best allocation of community funds? Are there not greater needs facing Camden where these funds could be used? Funds are limited – why not maximize their potential on real priorities?

Why not use the Oxley Street land for commercial/retail/business/residential innovative development?

Pedestrian safety needs to be addressed as a priority. Our elderly, vision impaired and disabled need to be seriously considered.

Stage 1 of the proposed foot path improvement in Argyle Street doesn't address the whole street but only 1 block. It would be smarter to address the Argyle street upgrade in one project after community engagement, drainage and accessibility studies have been received and properly analysed.

We need to explore many alternatives where the town atmosphere and shop footfall traffic are not compromised - the focus needs to be on being pedestrian friendly rather than making it easier for cars.

What will happen to the existing council buildings in John Street when council moves to Oran Park Town? Camden Chamber has been asking council for many months that our chamber and other community representatives be involved in discussions on the future of those community assets. Our requests have fallen on deaf ears.

Why is that? Why does council not wish to seriously engage with its community as opposed to tinkering at the edges with surveys that carry no decision weighting?

Camden Chamber believes council buildings should remain as community assets. They should provide a Return on Equity for ratepayers. The existing John Street buildings could be used for business start-up opportunities / work spaces /tourism generators / flexible adaptation to changing community and local needs etc.

Currently Camden has a low vacancy rate (less than 5%), with a great mix of service and retail. There is a multiple ownership pattern; we have tertiary, medical, legal and other services in town and small businesses that work in synergy. To remain successful, we need to ensure that interventions are thought out, well-considered and contribute to the long-term viability of Camden.

We accept that council needs to move to Oran Park however Camden Chamber has requested, unsuccessfully, on several occasions to be part of councils exit planning.

Camden Chamber has concerns that Council has seemingly released their strategy with no overall design vision and direction that involves the council buildings.

Would you commence building a house before the architect has finished their plans and the engineer's report is done?

We would like council stop and wait for all the studies and feedback to come in and review their strategy in a collaborative manner with its community. After all isn't that the purpose of council – to work the benefit of and with its community.

We extend an open invitation to the Camden community to attend our free Community Forum on Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> August. Commencing at 5 for 5:30pm the forum will be held at the Camden Civic Centre.' Mrs. Roberts said

Speakers on the night will include;

**Roderick Simpson** | Associate Professor  
Director Urban Design Program | Faculty of Architecture, Design and Planning  
The University of Sydney

**Jon Johannsen**  
Lane Cove Alive Chairman  
Architect and Urban designer

**Maryann Strickling**  
M.Urb.Des., BLArch (Hons)  
Urban Designer, Landscape Architect

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