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Your submission for this review:

The LCBCS is an advocate for the environment and conservation and has representatives on Council Advisory Committees, including Bushland Management. We support the Lane Cove Council in meeting its commitments under (LEP) and Plans (DCP). Lane Coves bushland is in close proximity to almost all residents and it proved to be a particularly vital outlet during Covid. But it also brings a higher need for maintenance than in other LGAs, such as repair of bush tracks, weed growth and damage from stormwater after recent heavy rains. Our request for an increase in the funding allocation for all Lane Cove Reserves in Councils 2024-25 budget was rejected on the grounds that funding had been allocated to other areas. Lane Cove has been recognised as one of the hardest hit councils affected by cost shifting. Handling of waste, is an important issue for conservation but the local Council argues that the benefits of the levy are not returned to them. The costs are eventually born by the ratepayers. Due to the pressure from development, Council is being called upon to deliver more services without a corresponding revenue increase. This will be exacerbated by the plans for increased density. Densification threatens to damage the urban bushland with run-off from development sites, and smaller lot sizes will mean a reduction of tree canopy. Fines for infringement of rules are a totally inadequate deterrent for developers. We seek increased funding from the State Government to local councils.



Lane Cove Bushland & Conservation Society Inc

ABN 50 518 833 556

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15 March 2024

Lane Cove Bushland & Conservation Society (LCBCS) Submission to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART)

Re: Review of the council financial model in NSW.

The Lane Cove Bushland & Conservation Society (LCB&CS), is grateful for the opportunity to make a submission to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) in relation to the financial models impacting financial sustainability of local councils. Local Government directly affects the daily lives of the community and, of council services, protection of the environment is our major concern.

The LCBCS is an independent, well respected community group and has been a strong advocate for the environment and conservation, not only at the local level but at state and federal levels for over 50 years. We work to preserve the natural bush and wetlands of the Lane Cove area and to advance ecologically sustainable development for the urban and natural environment.

The LCBCS has representatives on Council Advisory Committees, including Bushland Management, and supports efforts by the Lane Cove Council to meet its commitments under the Local Environment Plan (LEP) and Development Control Plan (DCP).

Importance of Urban Bushland:

Lane Cove's bushland confers great amenity to all areas of Lane Cove as it is threaded through the Local Government Area (LGA), placing bushland in close proximity to almost all residents, and it proved to be a particularly vital outlet during Covid. But it also brings a higher need for maintenance than in other LGAs. The bushland has subsequently been further impacted by the recent heavy rains and bush tracks need repair, weed growth requires management and damage from stormwater corrected.

Increased funding needed:

Regeneration work has become more expensive yet the bushland budgets were not fully restored after cuts during the Covid period and a 3.5% increase last year did not keep pace with inflation. Our request for an increase in the funding allocation for all Lane Cove Reserves in Council's 2024-25 budget was rejected on the grounds that funding had been allocated to other areas, such as the Emergency Services Levy, award salaries and wages that were greater than expected and an allocation for legal expenses. Insufficient overall funding meant the Council was under pressure to 'rob Peter to pay Paul', and funding for the

environment did not receive the priority it should, given issues of climate change and environmental sustainability.

Cost shifting:

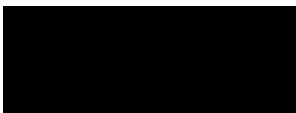
Lane Cove has been recognised as one of the hardest hit councils affected by cost shifting such as the waste levy, the cost of libraries of which there are three in LGA and the aforementioned Emergency Services Levy. Handling of waste, a major item for councils, is an increasing cost and an important issue for conservation to discourage landfill disposal and promote the use of biodegradable materials; but the local Council argues that the benefits of the levy are not returned to them.¹

These costs, originally the responsibility of State Government, have been passed to Local Government and eventually are born by the ratepayers.

Development and densification:

The LGA is also under pressure from development which has meant the Council is being called upon to deliver more services without a corresponding revenue increase. This will be exacerbated by the plans for increased density proposed by the State Government. Densification potentially threatens to damage the urban bushland with run-off from development sites, and smaller lot sizes will mean a reduction of tree canopy. Council officers inspect sites but fines for infringement of rules are a totally inadequate deterrent for developers.

We seek increased funding from the State Government to local councils so that preservation of the environment becomes a priority in the allocation of grants. Cost shifting should cease and funding returned to the council to support environmental sustainability and to relieve ratepayers. Increased funding is also needed to meet the demand for services due to densification in the LGA.



For the Lane Cove Bushland & Conservation Society.

¹ Source: https://www.lgns.w.gov.au/common/Uploaded%20files/Cost_Shifting/ML_Report-LGNSW-Annual_Cost_Shifting.pdf