

10 August 2016

## Sydney Matters vows to improve council service for residents

The Sydney Matters Independent Team will introduce a new independent resident's body to help them navigate everyday problems involving the City of Sydney, utility providers and Government agencies.

Lord Mayoral candidate and leader of Sydney Matters Independents Cllr Angela Vithoulkas said the Residents Task Force is one of the initiatives that Sydney Matters would bring to the City to increase transparency and make the City easier to deal with.

"As a Councillor for the past four years, I have heard too many war stories from residents who have suffered terribly," Cllr Vithoulkas said.

"The problems range from rubbish removal through to residents losing direct access to their home for 18 months to facilitate a new development.

"I have found that often residents don't know who they should be speaking to, their rights and how they can appeal decisions and actions of local government and other parties.

"Unfortunately the current administration at Town Hall has promoted a culture that doesn't have its ratepayers as the primary focus - instead if anyone makes more than one complaint they are advised that they are a serial complainer and council will no longer respond to them."

Cllr Vithoulkas said the Residents Task Force, which would be fully funded by the City of Sydney, would provide residents with a single contact point where they can have their problem 'triaged'.

"The Charter of the Taskforce is simple, help residents address their issues quickly," Cllr Vithoulkas said. "This will significantly improve the liveability of the City."

The Residents Task Force, which will have a membership consisting of representatives from local and state government community groups and resident groups, will:

- Operate a website and 1300 number for residents to be able to get support for their issues/problem, with KPI's set in regards to response times.
- Provide input into a simplified DA process, so that residents do not have to hire professionals to help them in their objections against local developments.
- Make available a low cost dispute resolution service.
- Provide input to Government agencies and service providers to help them develop information sharing strategies.
- Advocate and connect residents with people in appropriate organisations that can address their needs/questions.

- Work with established community groups to disseminate information and assist resident consultation on key issues impacting the community.

The Residents Task Force will be a priority for the Sydney Matters Independent Team during the next Council term.

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