

Newtown
Residents'
Association
(Inc.)

PO Box 7021
Wellington South

June 2013

“The John Street Protocols”

Community expectations about the management of major works affecting businesses and communities

Purpose

1. This paper has been developed by the Newtown Residents' Association (NRA) after reflecting on the experience of recent major road and drainage works on the intersection of John and Riddiford Streets and Adelaide Road, at the northern gateway to our suburb.
2. These works were on a large scale and extended over a long time period. They resulted in some hardship, in particular for the neighbouring businesses, but also impacted negatively on retail businesses throughout the suburb. This has not been positive for community perceptions of the council.
3. The aim of this paper is not attribute blame over past events. Our focus is on the lessons to be learned, and on making recommendations to the council that we believe would lead to similar large and long running projects that impact significantly on local communities, being better managed in the future.
4. The NRA accepts the need for the council to undertake such major works in the broader interests of the City. It believes, however, that more attention needs to be given to understanding, managing, and mitigating the negative impacts that may arise in the neighbourhoods where these works take place. This paper represents this community's effort to make positive recommendations about the sort of practices that would enable the council do this more effectively.

Engagement and Communication

5. The NRA believes that effective engagement and communication with affected communities needs to be regarded as an integral part of the management of works projects. These things need to become routine as part of “standard operating procedure” throughout the full project life cycle.
6. We believe that WCC should seriously consider the advantages of both council project management staff, and contractors being subject to performance measures relating to the effectiveness of the management of the relationship with the local community around their projects.

7. There should be early engagement with the community to provide information to the community about the scope scale and timing of works, and to allow the project planning and management process to be informed by the knowledge of the local community about the negative impacts that might arise.
8. Council officers should be expected to develop and work to a plan for communications with affected residents and businesses. This should include, for instance, the names and contact details (including cellphone and email) of designated staff of the council and its contractors responsible for dealing with any complaints and for managing communications about the work. There should also be an expectation of regular progress reports to affected businesses and residents. The practice of a weekly email that was adopted during the John Street works was perceived very positively and we see it as something that could be taken on board as part of “business as usual”.

Contractors

9. Contractors must be made aware that they are visitors to the community where works are being undertaken, and are in partnership with the council to undertake the work, and that this partnership includes the local community.

We believe there should be clear expectations on contractors. While the specifics might vary from one project to another the sorts of issues that have caused concern in recent works in our suburb have included.

- Understanding that communication is a key element in working with affected parties;
- Keeping dust to a minimum and consult on a daily basis with affected parties to ensure that the dust/work is not unduly affecting them. Appropriate dust mitigation measures must be taken at all times;
- The affected shops/businesses windows should be cleaned weekly and paid for by the contractors while the work is in progress.
- Road and other signs. Agreement is to be sought with affected parties as to the placement of road signs to ensure that as many parks as possible are available. Contractors should ensure at all times that affected parties are in agreement where the signs are placed – if necessary this should happen on a daily basis.
- Tidiness – the site must be kept tidy at the end of each day – this may include sweeping footpaths etc.
- Contractor Vehicle Parking. A designated area should be agreed on and vehicles must only be parked in this area. Sufficient parks must be left for local residents and businesses. This may mean that contractors vehicles not in constant use may need to be parked at a distance from the site.
- Excessive noise and night work. Issues to do with excessive/ongoing noise should be agreed on prior to work starting with affected parties involvement. If regular night work is to be undertaken affected residents must be offered an alternative accommodation option.

Timing and Working Hours and their Impacts on Businesses

10. The timing of work and the hours of work on projects can be key drivers of their impacts on local businesses. These need to be considered when decisions are being made about these things. Based on our experience we believe that in Newtown
 - No Saturday work to be undertaken in Newtown as this is the busiest day for traffic and businesses. No work should be undertaken in Newtown outside any business during the month of December as this is the peak sales period for most businesses and is often a crucial time for business survival.

Additional costs and losses

11. It may sometimes be inevitable that a works project that is necessary or beneficial in the interests of the city as a whole will nonetheless have significant impacts on some businesses in the area where the work is taking place. This may still be the case even with the best managed of projects and the best available mitigation in place. There is a question of basic justice involved here. It does not seem satisfactory that the livelihood's of some people within the community should simply be expected to "take the hit" in the interests of the broader community
12. We believe that the WCC needs to consider what steps it can take to mitigate or offer compensation for the financial impacts on businesses that are negatively affected by works projects.

Recommendations

13. The immediate driver for writing this paper was the experience of the businesses and residents around the intersection of John and Riddiford Streets and Adelaide Road during the long period of major roading and drainage works during 2012. In acknowledgement of this we have decided to title our recommendations "The John Street Protocols".
14. Our community accepts that at times there will be a need for major infrastructure works in our neighbourhood, but we believe we have a right to expect that the Council will take positive steps to understand the local impacts of such work, and to mitigate those to the best of its ability.
15. We expect:
 - early advice of the scale and timing of significant works in our suburb;
 - early engagement with our community to identify who may be adversely affected, how they may be affected, and how these affects might best be mitigated;
 - a willingness to agree in good faith to reasonable steps to mitigate adverse affects;
 - a genuine commitment by Council to deliver on mitigation steps that have been agreed with the local community;

- regular communication with those residents and businesses who are most affected so long as a project continues;
- a willingness to consider the payment of compensation to those whose livelihoods may (in extreme cases) be put at risk;

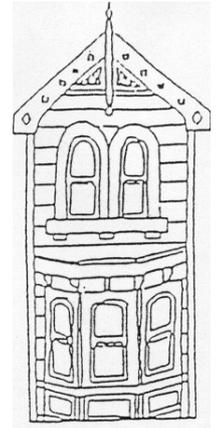
16. We believe that successfully managing relationships with local communities and mitigating the impacts of works projects in them need to be made an explicit priority of Council. Specifically we recommend that:

- Performance measures the management of community relationships be developed for Council (and Council Controlled Organisations) staff responsible for the management of works projects;
- These should cover engagement, communications, and their record of delivery on agreements made with and undertakings given to communities;
- That contractors delivering works on behalf of council be subject to as part of the conditions of the contract to equivalent measures of performance.

17. A public works project that achieves its engineering and financial objectives but leaves behind it a frustrated and disillusioned community and does damage to the Council's reputation should not be regarded as a successful project.

The John Street Protocols

Communities accept that at times there will be a need for major infrastructure works in our neighbourhoods, but believe they have a right to expect that the council will take positive steps to understand any negative local impacts of such work, and to mitigate those to the best of its ability.



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- early advice of the scale and timing of significant works;
- early engagement to identify who may be adversely affected, how they may be affected, and how these affects might best be mitigated;
- a willingness to agree in good faith to reasonable steps to mitigate adverse affects;
- a genuine commitment by Council to deliver on mitigation steps that have been agreed with the local community;
- regular communication with those residents and businesses who are most affected so long as a project continues;
- a willingness to consider the payment of compensation to those whose livelihoods may (in extreme cases) be put at risk;

Communities believe that managing community relationships and mitigating the negative local impacts of works projects should be made an explicit priority of Council. Specifically we recommend that:

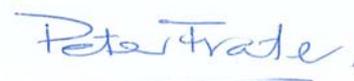
- Appropriate performance measures be developed for council (and Council Controlled Organisations) staff responsible for the management of works projects;
- These should cover engagement, communications, and their record of delivery on agreements made with and undertakings given to communities;
- That contractors delivering works on behalf of council be subject to, as part of the conditions of the contract, equivalent measures of performance.

A public works project that achieves its engineering and financial objectives but leaves behind it a frustrated and disillusioned community, and does damage to the council's reputation should not be regarded as a successful project.

This Paper and its Protocols were prepared by the Newtown Residents' Association.
Confirmed by resolution passed at the June 2013 members meeting.


Martin Hanley
President, Newtown Residents Association




Peter Frater
Treasurer, Newtown Residents Association