

Tuesday, 23 April 2013

Key appointment to boost planning community engagement

The Department of Planning and Infrastructure today appointed a senior executive to transform and improve community engagement in the State's planning system – a key aim of the NSW Government's white paper released last week.

Trish Oakley has been appointed the department's Executive Director, Community and Stakeholder Engagement and begins work on May 1.

Ms Oakley has more than 30 years' experience in the development of public policy, strategic communications and stakeholder engagement.

"The cornerstone of the reform process is to comprehensively engage communities in planning the future of their neighbourhoods, suburbs and cities," said Sam Haddad, the Director General of the Department of Planning and Infrastructure.

"The department recognises that, up until now, residents and community groups have not been given sufficient opportunity to have their say about big picture plans for their area.

"Trish will be using her detailed knowledge about best-practice community engagement to drive cultural change and improved community engagement outcomes.

"This will include giving support and guidance to councils on preferred community engagement models as we roll out the new planning system.

"Trish will also be responsible for re-casting how the department engages with the community and key stakeholders.

"I am delighted that Trish has accepted this important position."

Ms Oakley will report to Jill Reich, who was appointed as the department's Deputy Director General for People, Culture and Business late last year. Ms Reich's division was formed last year to specifically support the community participation and delivery culture initiatives outlined in the white paper.

Since 1999, Ms Oakley has worked as an Associate Director at Elton Consulting and Director at Meridian Media, providing communications and community consultation advice to private and public sector clients.

She has worked on major projects including the NSW Long Term Transport Master Plan and the redevelopment of large urban renewal areas such as Darling Harbour and the former Carlton United Breweries site at Broadway.

"This is an exciting opportunity and an enormous challenge," Ms Oakley said.

“Our challenge is to bring the community onboard at the start of the planning process.

“For too many years our planning system has been bogged down fighting site-by-site over individual developments rather than shaping the way we want our suburbs to look.

“It will be my job to help lead a cultural change across the planning profession, both within and outside the department.”

The white paper, released on April 16, outlines an Australian-first Community Participation Charter which will be used by councils and the NSW Government when engaging with the community.

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