

PETERSHAM

# Diverse voices to



Mia Hellen at the Fanny Durack Aquatic centre at Petersham, where she works as a lifeguard and swimming instructor.

Picture: JOHN APPELYARD

# help plan future

## VOLUNTEERS OFFER UP RECOMMENDATIONS

Sarah Sharples

SHE is only 18 years old but Mia Hellen is having her say on where Marrickville Council should prioritise investing in infrastructure.

Ms Hellen works as a lifeguard and swimming instructor at the Fanny Durack Aquatic Centre at Petersham and is part of a bold experiment in deliberative democracy with the Marrickville Infrastructure Jury, which is made up of a broad range of 32 citizens.

The jury will provide a report with a list of recommendations – but Ms Hellen has been surprised that the whole process wasn't boring.

"I study environmental sciences at university, so I thought it would be a good

### WISHLIST

- New bike paths
- Library
- Green initiatives
- Pool maintenance

idea to get an insight into how council makes decisions," she said.

"We've had five meetings now to come up with this report that we will present to council and it's been really good – I'm surprised it wasn't so boring. It was a large process to get your head wrapped around in those meetings, it was a lot of trying to understand how they tackle problems within council, their processes and what we could come up with to see some difference."

Ms Hellen said she was

eager to see new bike paths and a library, as well as green initiatives and pool maintenance, but understood there is a \$5 million shortfall in funding.

"I think there was a lot of neglect in some issues like with stormwater, because there not really obvious issues to local residents because you can't see those shortfalls or issues and the problems they then have," she said.

"They want to see how you can put money into those things or could prioritise those things on a tipping scale, because if you don't do things immediately there, then there will be catastrophic impacts like on roads and drains and footpaths where they already spend a lot of money."