

NEW COMMUNITY PANEL TO IMPROVE THE AREA FETCHES MASSIVE RESPONSE

RESIDENTS UP FOR THE TASK

THE launch of a new community panel has struck a chord with residents.

The new project, run independently by the newDemocracy Foundation, has sparked a flurry of suggestions from the community eager to participate in the transparent approach.

Suggestions from water parks to outdoor dining, farmers markets, sculptures by the river and more parking were posted on the *Penrith Press* Facebook page.

Mayor Ross Fowler said he was encouraged by the "fantastic response" and the community getting on board right from the start.

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PENRITH

Panel plan proves a hit

Ian Paterson

INDEPENDENT GROUP LOOKS INTO POSSIBLE IMPROVEMENTS

RESIDENTS have leapt at the chance to have their say on Penrith's future.

The response from the community has delighted Mayor Ross Fowler, who said Penrith Council was venturing into uncharted territory with the project.

"This is an open-book process, council has no idea what the community panel's recommendations will be," he said.

"I'm very excited about what the community panel, comprising everyday people, may come up with."

Residents can expect to

see an invitation awaiting them in their letter box shortly with 5000 notices sent to addresses across the entire Penrith LGA by the newDemocracy Foundation.

A council spokesman said one in every 13 addresses would receive an invitation.

"They will be received by homeowners, people who are renting, and business owners too," the spokesman said.

"They'll be received by people from across all of our suburbs, because we want all of our local communities

to have the opportunity to participate."

More than 50 comments were posted on the *Penrith Press* Facebook page with readers highlighting a few key issues in the area.

Parking, night-time entertainment and outdoor dining options, improvements to the Nepean River walk and launching art initiatives were some of the popular suggestions.

Some readers on our Facebook page did question whether the process would be truly independent as the

project was initiated by council.

A council spokesman said independence would be maintained as council had no involvement with the selection and running of the panel.

"Once the interested invitees have contacted newDemocracy to say they're happy to be involved then newDemocracy will create the panel of approximately 35 people who reflect our demographics and our local suburbs," he said.

The community panel will

first get together on September 5 and will meet six times before passing on recommendations to Penrith Council.

Panel members must be 18 years or older to participate.

Residents not selected to be on the panel can have their say by visiting the council's interactive map at yoursaypenrith.com.au/community-panel/maps/community-panel-map.



What do you want think needs to be done to improve Penrith?

READER'S IDEAS

■ James Hill said: "Encourage people back into High St with more outdoor dining."

■ Marie Chitos said: "Have a competition and encourage waterproof art works to upgrade High St."

■ Tania Younan said: "Dining and shopping could be vastly improved."

■ Gretta Watson said she would like to see: "Regular farmers markets, improved dining and cafe options, a water park, nothing like Wet and Wild, sculptures by the river and Nepean Nippers buses need to be brought back."