

MVRA SUBMISSION TO THE MACKELLAR PEOPLE'S JURY ON HOUSING (Final 25-04-2024)

(Submission also to Dr Sophie Scamps MP Mackellar, Paul Scully MP, Minister for Planning and Public Spaces and Rory Amon MP Pittwater)

MVRA acknowledges the pressing housing crisis and generally supports planned and innovative social, community, affordable and specialised housing programs and projects. We consider that Council is in the best position to plan for new housing supply taking into consideration limits of geography, environment, infrastructure and human services. We oppose the Government's top-down rules to create unplanned medium density and 6-7 storey in Mona Vale and other local centres. Council should be allowed to complete its Mona Vale Place (Masterplan) that includes a new housing component in accordance with the Local Housing Strategy taking into account the Local Strategic Planning Statement, Affordable Housing Strategy and Tree Canopy Plan.

Northern Beaches Council has provided a detailed technical analysis of the Government's EIE Changes to Create Low and Mid-Rise Housing. It shows the significant impact the Government's unplanned over-development would have on the Northern Beaches LGA. The development impacts would be comparable to that of the Government's TOD (Transport Oriented Development) SEPP that is due to come into effect this April 2024. The difference is that Northern Beaches LGA doesn't have mass transit, it has poor road access, insufficient urban infrastructure and human services and the B-Line bus service is not a full Bus Rapid Transit service but only an enhanced bus service. It was not designed to facilitate more development in Mona Vale or along its service corridor to the city.

MVRA together with Northern Beaches Council, Pittwater Community Alliance and other Pittwater groups are opposed to the NSW Government's unplanned top-down planning changes to create low (medium density) and mid-rise housing (6-7 storey development) around Mona Vale and other local centres. Council's numerous valid grounds for objection are outlined above.

Housing and planning experts make the valid point that the already developer friendly NSW Planning System with its pro-development SEPPs, fast track re-zoning process and flexible controls has not constrained overall housing supply as alleged. The impact of existing NSW zoning laws on housing supply and affordability has been

exaggerated by the development lobby and simplistic "supply-side" economic doctrine that doesn't support public planning. There are more significant non-planning factors restricting housing supply and pushing up prices that need to be addressed by both Federal and State Governments.

The current obsession with zoning laws and building heights is not going to contribute much to addressing the immediate housing crisis or providing the crucial urban infrastructure and human services necessary to serve a rapidly increasing population.

Under current economic conditions the private sector is unable to provide sufficient supply of housing mainly because of reduced construction capacity due to non-planning factors.

According to Dr John Hewson the current housing crisis is more a matter of market failure than much to do with zoning laws or urban planning. Dr Hewson also advises that much more social housing is needed and amendments made to both negative gearing and the capital gains tax. This position is supported by other leading economists and housing experts.

Proposed top-down rezoning without strategic land use planning and timely provision of essential infrastructure and human services isn't going to provide the quality of housing, neighbourhoods and living standards that the community needs and expects.

Government top-down rezoning in and around centres such as Mona Vale, without a professional Council masterplan, community involvement and necessary infrastructure and human services is "**NOT DENSITY DONE WELL**". It's more a crude form of de-regulation than planned housing supply.

An unintended downside of the Government's unplanned high density policy would be that older 3 storey apartment blocks (mainly rental) would be replaced by luxury high-rise apartments with ocean views - large 3-4 bedroom apartments with one on each floor. Not the type of housing needed.

Northern Beaches Council's approved Local Strategic Planning Statement, Affordable Housing Scheme and Local Housing Strategy already provide for sufficient planned housing supply within recognised

environmental planning, infrastructure and human services constraints. Council's approach to planned housing growth is based on master planned centres including Mona Vale. Council's new draft Mona Vale Place Plan, yet to be exhibited, would include a new housing component specified in Council's Local Housing Strategy.

Council has advised that as currently proposed, Government high density reforms "could have significant impact on Mona Vale with a substantial increase in residential housing, far above those identified in the adopted Northern Beaches Local Housing Strategy and the draft Place Plan".

The simple fact is that the necessary urban infrastructure and human services are not there to support such a high level of development and population increase.

It also must be appreciated that secondary dwellings provide a significant source of affordable rental housing in the electorate. However these don't show as dwellings in official housing data.

MVRA agrees with Council's concerns and comprehensive objections to the Government's proposed top-down changes to create Low and Mid-rise Housing. Such one-size fits all rules, if imposed via a SEPP (State Environmental Housing Policy), amounts to unplanned growth that is not co-ordinated with available or planned infrastructure and human services. Such a SEPP would negate Council strategic plans and make Local Environmental Plans LEPs and DCPs ineffective controls over inappropriate over-development.

RECOMMENDATIONS

(Submitted to Dr Sophie Scamps, MP Mackellar with copies to Paul Scully MP Minister for Planning and Public Spaces and Rory Amon MP Pittwater.)

1. Northern Beaches Council is in the best position to implement planned housing growth via its comprehensive Local Strategic Planning Statement and other strategies including the Local Housing Strategy.
2. Support secondary dwellings as a form of affordable rental accommodation. Secondary dwellings (granny flats) have provided a steady supply of extended family and rental accommodation for years. The idea was developed by Pittwater Council and adopted by State Government as part of a State Environmental Planning Policy. Note that

credible data on the current supply of secondary dwellings is not available. They are not included as dwellings in official housing data.

3. Policies to encourage house sharing and better use of existing housing floorspace e.g. allow pensioners to take in lodgers (cheap rents) without impacting pension benefits.

4. NSW Government to urgently build housing (5-10% of stock) to supplement private sector supply under current economic conditions. It is clear that the private sector is unable to build the housing supply and types of housing required because of significantly reduced construction capacity. This is due to non-planning factors. There are many existing development approvals, sites able to be developed under the existing NSW Housing SEPP and suitably zoned land but without actual development activity taking place because of the deep recession in the construction and building sector.

5. State and Federal Governments to consider Dr. Cameron Murray's "HouseMate" housing scheme that has been inspired by Singapore's PHB housing program.

6. State and Federal Governments to significantly boost the funding of basic urban infrastructure and human services to facilitate housing supply. Timely funding and provision of infrastructure and services are needed to facilitate increased housing supply.

7. State and Federal Governments to support both Government constructed social housing and the "not-for-profit" community housing sector.

8. Federal Government to review and amend taxation rules around negative gearing and capital gains tax along the lines of Dr Hewson's suggestions.

9. Federal Government in consultation with the States to prepare a "National Settlement Strategy". Such strategy to include infrastructure funding for "Regional Development and Decentralization" programs. In addition for NSW and extended Sydney Region the "Six Cities Strategy" should be further developed, supported by a faster train service. In addition the existing "Sydney-Canberra Corridor Regional Strategy" should be reactivated as a major growth corridor supported by a faster rail system. This corridor could easily be activated together with current planned development within the Sydney-Newcastle rail corridor to reduce growth and population pressures within the Sydney metropolitan area.

10. Restrictions on B&B and similar short term stay accommodation.

11. Address the significant vacant housing issue with suitable Federal and State measures.

12. Federal Government to address speculative investment in existing housing stock via stronger foreign investment laws and regulations that are enforced. Close the loopholes.

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ATTACHMENT A

One size does not fit all – Northern Beaches Council calls on NSW Government to scrap its high density housing reforms

(Source: Northern Beaches Council Website: Media Release by Mayor Sue Heinz)

- *Northern Beaches Council is calling on Government to abandon the low and mid-rise housing reforms as outlined in the Department's 'Explanation of Intended Effect: Changes to Create Low and Mid-rise Housing' (EIE), noting that Council already has the capacity to plan for future growth.*
- *Northern Beaches Mayor Sue Heins said the anticipated scale of development that is proposed in the EIE would have long lasting environmental and social impacts for the local area.*
- *"We want to be part of the solution to Sydney's housing crisis, but unplanned development of this scale will lead to greater congestion on local roads, put pressure on community infrastructure and overload the very limited public transport options available on the Northern Beaches," Mayor Heins said.*
- *"The proposals do not require the provision of any new affordable housing units".*
- *"In some areas, it will change the local character of our neighbourhoods, reduce tree canopy and threaten local heritage."*
- *Government radical proposals are also in conflict with current and proposed Council-led precinct planning in places like*

Frenchs Forest, Brookvale and Mona Vale. For example, the proposed number of dwellings under the Brookvale Structure Plan is based on detailed analysis of traffic capacity along Pittwater Road. The additional dwellings proposed within 800 metres of Warringah Mall under the Government's proposals have not been accounted for and will likely exceed the capacity of the local road system.

- The Government has failed to demonstrate that there is adequate existing capacity or sufficient funding for essential road, stormwater, sewer, water and waste infrastructure upgrades to support increased density or demonstrate adequate existing capacity or sufficient funding for essential road, stormwater, sewer, water and waste infrastructure upgrades to support increased density.***
- Council requests the Government to provide Council a period to identify alternative strategies for growth and infrastructure to meet housing targets in existing Local Housing Strategies, and***
- Fund and deliver major infrastructure projects including Mona Vale Road West Widening project, a Bus Rapid Transit system from Chatswood to Dee Why, grade separation of Warringah and Pittwater Roads to support more housing in Brookvale and regional traffic infrastructure to support more housing in Frenches Forest.***

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