

I wish to express my strong objection to the provisions of the draft SEPP 65 amendment and the draft Apartment Design Guide that would allow apartments to be built within 400 metres of light rail stops with **no minimum controls on on-site parking**.

If introduced, this would create an almost continuous corridor along the inner west light rail extension where councils had little ability to manage demand for limited on-street parking. Inevitably there will be a significant deterioration in amenity and quality of life for both current and new residents in these areas, while likely making little contribution to improved apartment affordability in an environment where unprecedented demand driven by local and overseas investors is setting housing prices.

Specific recommendations and further comments on each follow.

- 1) **Clause 30(1)(c) should be recast to specify a robust performance based control mandating sufficient on-site parking provision. For certainty, this should be in the SEPP itself and specify that the proponent must demonstrate that a proposed apartment development provides sufficient on-site parking to meet reasonably foreseeable demand from its residents.**

The public exhibition material makes much of the introduction of more performance-based controls into the SEPP 65 package, yet a clear performance control on on-site parking provision is clearly lacking. Criteria 3J-1 of the draft Design Guide states that car parking should be provided based on proximity to public transport, but via “acceptable solution 1” and Table 2 becomes meaningless by deferring to a hierarchy of prescriptive minimum standards (and critically a standard of zero on-site parking within 400 m of stations and light rail stops). This effectively precludes a sensible case by case solution being enforced by councils in the face of inevitable developer pressure to minimise their own costs.

- 2) **The references to “no minimum parking controls” within 400 m of light rail stops should be removed from Table 2 of Section 3J of the draft Apartment Design Guide.**

The apparent assumption behind the proposed amendments is that urban densification around light rail stops can occur in the same way as around heavy rail stations. Yet this is not justified in any way in the publicly exhibited information. Light rail is not a mass transit system in the same sense as heavy rail and the task and patronage levels of light rail stops west of Jubilee Park are comparable to that of well-used bus services. Most expert literature supports this – for example a 2011 comparative study of ten US cities by University of California found that densities around light rail stops need to be little more than half of that around heavy rail stops (see <http://www.its.berkeley.edu/publications/UCB/2011/VWP/UCB-ITS-VWP-2011-6>).

On-street parking is already close to or at capacity in neighbourhoods around the light rail corridor, driven by demand from current residents and, increasingly, park and ride commuters. In the western part of Leichhardt suburb there are approximately 1000 new apartments proposed across 4 major sites in the near-term development pipeline. Reports in the Sydney Morning Herald on 30 October 2014 are that 4-5000 will be proposed around Taverners Hill when Urban Growth NSW finally reveals more details of the Parramatta Road/WestConnex strategy. Sufficient on-site parking will be absolutely critical.

The quoted statistics in the exhibition materials about decreasing number of younger people gaining drivers licences are of doubtful relevance to communities along the light rail corridor. According to the Leichhardt Council *Community and Cultural Plan 2011- 2021*, in that LGA is that almost 90% of dwellings have one car or more, 50% of residents travel to work by car and around 25% travel by bus. It is unrealistic to suggest that the profile of people moving into that

area will be significantly different. Many people do not work in the Sydney CBD and the reality is that so many other household activities (eg 'major' shopping, transporting children to care or school, taking elderly parents to medical appointments, taking pets to the vet) all require a car.

Councils intimately understand traffic and parking provision issues in their local areas and are best placed to tailor their local development controls and make sound decisions on a case-by-case basis without having prescriptive developer-oriented controls imposed upon them via SEPP 65. Leichhardt Council, for example, has demonstrated its ability to make calls on balancing parking provision and traffic generation for new apartment developments near public transport (most recently on 28 October 2014 with the rezoning of 141 and 159 Allen St Leichhardt).

Further, if as is suggested by the Minister's media release and some other exhibition material the purported objective is to improve apartment affordability, removing minimum parking controls near light rail stops is at best a blunt instrument and highly experimental. Apartment prices in locations such as Sydney and Parramatta CBDs where there are already no minimum on-site parking controls are hardly affordable. The reality is that cost savings of not providing on-site parking spaces could easily just flow into increased profits for developers. Provision of more affordable housing is essential, but if it is to be achieved it needs much more direct obligations to be placed on proponents than are currently contained in the SEPP 65 package.

- 3) **It is inappropriate to be giving the effective legal force of a SEPP to the RMS *Guide to Traffic Generating Development* (also in S. 3J) given that it is currently subject to review. Levels of on-site parking provision should be explicitly included in the Apartment Design Guide.**

According to the RMS website, the 2002 vintage *Guide to Traffic Generating Development* is currently being reviewed, although no timeframe for completing this appears to be specified. With the proposed amendments, this publication will apply as "law" in areas between 400 and 800m from stations and light rail stops and heavy rail stations. The fact that this publication is subject to current review does not appear to be discussed in the exhibition materials for the SEPP 65 amendment package and so could be seen to compromise the consultation process.

Accordingly, in the interests of transparency levels of acceptable minimum on-site parking provision should be extracted from the updated *Guide to Traffic Generating Development* and included in the Apartment Design Guide. Further, before finalising the proposed amendment package public information should be provided as to the scope and timing of the review of the RMS publication and the implications of the changes that are to be made.

I would stress that I am not opposed to urban consolidation and recognise the need for more apartments to be built to accommodate a growing population and minimise urban sprawl. There is much merit in pursuing transit-oriented development, but light rail cannot be treated in the same way as heavy rail and councils and other consent authorities should retain the discretion to determine the most appropriate level of on-site parking provision for apartment developments based on local need. Robbing them of this power not only risks adverse outcomes on local communities but also risks creating an increased groundswell of community anger over the Government's urban consolidation agenda.

I trust you will take account of the issues I have raised in finalising the proposed amendments.

Yours faithfully,

(Mr) **M A Bowles**