

To Whom It May Concern

**RE: OPPOSITION TO THE RESIDENTIAL REZONING IN ARNCLIFFE AND BANKSIA**

I am writing to express my considerable concerns regarding the proposed rezoning changes under the released 'Priority Precinct'.

The crux of this concern is that the proposed rezoning is excessive in both scale and scope. Instead of a planned approach that considers the existing community and plans a sustainable future for existing community members it is 'urban consolidation to density targets'. In turn the residential plans, as proposed, effectively obliterate the existing community.

The scale and the scope of these plans is highly offensive to current residents as it will destroy the established community networks, culture of place and put excessive strain on local infrastructure which is already at, or exceeding, capacity.

For the purpose of the following explanations, I will refer to the Arncliffe and Banksia Rezoning Report (The Report), the Bayside Council Development Control Plan (BCDCP), Bayside West Precincts, Draft Land Use & Infrastructure Strategy (BWIS) and the Rockdale Local Environment Plan (LEP 2011).

**Desired outcome:**

1. **That the overall residential increase be reduced to a more modest target and than any increases to density be kept within one density capacity level from the existing zone.**

It is inappropriate to take existing community and residential zones as low density, low rise and completely obliterate the local area by the institution of high density, high rise (LEP 2011). Specifically that R2 areas on Station St be amended to medium density, low rise only.

2. **All zoning changes should have a moderated buffer section as identified within the zoning plans.**

As such areas of R2 should only buffer R3 so on. Such a system effectively protects existing communities and sustainably manages future growth to effectively and pragmatically ensure that the authentic integration of new development works (LEP 2011).

3. **No loss of size, quality of functionality of existing green space areas.**

Barton Park should be a free park, open to the public. Improvements should be made to include kid's playgrounds, exercise areas and fenced off-leash areas for dogs.

Current green spaces and parks should not be compromised by shadowing or denial of access due to excessive street parking. Corridors and pedestrian cut through access envisaged and promoted in the Report should be required, not 'where possible'.

4. **No high-rise development in flight path areas.** Allowing high-density levels in areas where planes sometimes reach low levels, is very dangerous.

My opposition to the changes advertised as part of the priority precinct is outlined below.

**Urban Consolidation to excessive targets destroys communities, is socially unjust, out of touch and just a logically terrible idea.**

The proposed plan takes areas currently zoned as R2 and transform it to R4. "This proposed change will encourage higher residential densities within the precinct."<sup>ii</sup> While this is the key means of achieving a target of increased dwellings within the suburbs doing so will destroy the character, culture and community of our existing residential suburb.

*Of key concern is that together the plans indicate that high rise up to 22 storeys is considered appropriate for Arncliffe. This is simply unacceptable.*

As noted within the Report, Arncliffe and Banksia are low rise, low density suburbs characterised by young residential families - at rates greater than both the Rockdale and Sydney average. The damage of the rezoning changes is self-compounding. Not only does it remove established families and community networks but it will replace these with greater rates of transient rental families operating in pockets of spatial exclusion.

The consolidation of residential population as envisaged under the plan is of a scale and scope that will destroy the existing communities in Arncliffe and Banksia and undermine the sustainability of remaining community structures. While the goal of the BCDP is to create communities that are great places to meet work and live there is an inherent failure to recognise that our communities are already great places to live. The plans do not account for the communities in place either factually or culturally and as such the residential rezoning should be constrained to within one density and elevation level in order to preserve and promote a sustainable future for our community.

*The pockets of high-rises created under the plan are counterintuitive to the nature of Sydney community life. Urban development shouldn't just be points along a rail line and isolated clusters of high density living will create 'suburban cellulite'<sup>iii</sup> which will deliver terrible liveability outcomes.*

**This specific plan produces a bad result for my suburb.**

### Roads

The residents of Arncliffe have endured the priority development of Wolli Creek<sup>iii</sup> and endure the weekend chaos that is the M5 tunnel intersection<sup>iv</sup>. Our roads are narrow and key access points are already congested throughout the day. Traffic accidents are common and have a compounding impact on local roads<sup>v</sup>. The population and density targets envisaged in the Report and BCDP will compound existing problems. The BWIS recognises that road are currently at capacity. While the BWIS identifies some of the main road pinch points it highlights the next action as 'possible review' in most instances. In all instances, improvements to road infrastructure as subject to feasibility and ultimate business case.

*The roads in our suburb do not cope with the current levels of traffic and certainly don't have capacity for increased traffic. Local roads are not factored into any assessment and would bear the brunt of additional traffic chaos.*

The lower portion of Station St is one way traffic with another section unpassable as two way traffic due to street parking. Rezoning and redevelopment as envisaged is inappropriate and would cause even further flow issues. Further, the nature of any developing works occurring after rezoning would render the street virtually unusable as demonstrated by the Arncliffe St, Wolli Creek example.

### Public Transport

BWIS also acknowledges that the existing public transport infrastructure is also already at capacity. Adding 5000 dwellings to the area will logically exacerbate the problem with little option by State Rail to meaningfully fix it due to overall network capacity.

Proposed expansions of the Bus network will do little to impact overall commuter needs which are CBD focused.

*Our roads and our rail cannot support the current community let alone the increase planned.*

#### Local amenities

Changes to the Arncliffe Park Neighbourhood Centre are aimed at 'activating' this space. The space is already active with a vibrant community of users who meet, play and enjoy the space. Crowding and shadowing the park space with high rise residential not only will undermine the character and quality of our existing community space which is utilised and valued it

*In a suburb that was given a largely pointless or redundant \$17m pedestrian tunnel<sup>vi</sup>. The allocation of \$10million for infrastructure upgrades is laughable. Instead, don't shadow and don't overcrowd what we already use.*

Arncliffe and Banksia are suburbs of families. Much of the anticipated demographic growth is to come in the form of families and our area lacks the schools to meet the educational needs. BWIS references the potential for a school within the Cooks Cove precinct but this really cannot be seen as a reliable solution to the provision of educational needs moving into the future. Certainly of concern is that a single school isn't even a logical solution to the problem given the general tendency of primary school children to continue into high school.

Medical services and St George Hospital will also be unable to cope if the consolidation rezoning goes ahead unchecked. Waiting times, ambulance capability and quality of service - already issues in our community<sup>vii</sup> will experience considerable aggravation.

*Population growth that will accompany the proposed rezoning will overwhelm our local schools and medical services which are already straining to meet community needs.*

The application of this overall plan has been to consolidate to a density target in the suburbs of Arncliffe and Banksia. Rezoning to high density high rise destroys the existing vibrant and dynamic communities that are well established and puts illogical strain on every local amenity and infrastructure. Quality of life, health outcomes and patient lives will be compromised because of inappropriate urban consolidation.

#### **Concerns about the planning process and responsible government.**

Given the planning and development context across Sydney; the 'fast tracking' of Cooks Cove<sup>viii</sup>; the Westconnex debacle, the absurdities of Arncliffe St, Levey St,<sup>ix</sup> Wolli Creek development<sup>x</sup> or even lessons from other suburbs like Lewisham<sup>xi</sup> it isn't farfetched for residents to have lost faith in the representative government and administrative regime.

While Rockdale City Council voted in favour of the priority precinct status, there was backlash from the community and the information provided at the time was for much more modest residential rezoning. The

new plans were developed in consultation with Bayside council, an entity that has only been in existence since the 2016 amalgamation and does not constitute elected representatives.

Public consultation has been for appearance sake. Two public forums, neither in the affected area; notice provided via a website, a subscriber service doesn't send information, no mailout and an online survey constructed to gain approval, cumulatively indicate a genuine effort to keep the community in the dark about the scale and scope of proposed changes.

The information available for consultation is also designed to confuse people and obfuscate planning. The range of illustrations provided change scale and must all be read together to gain a true understanding of the changes and their application. This is not effective consultation or transparent communication with the community.

Also noted within the Report, Arncliffe and Banksia are culturally diverse communities with many experiencing housing stress and low average household incomes. These two factors represent key vulnerabilities when it comes to exploitation in residential development plans and practice. It is incumbent on elected officials to make all efforts at genuine and meaningful consultation if they are to effectively consider or even respect these communities as important stakeholders in the changes that directly affect them. Information surrounding the 'repurposing' of the existing government housing in the area reinforces just how much of a 'done deal' local residents feel this plan is.

Additionally I have considerable concerns about the quality of development forecast. As mentioned, existing development of Wolli Creek has shown striking little proactive or well-considered government management. One has only to consider the eyesore of Top Garden or the balcony to balcony views on Brodie Spark Drive to question just what is meant by 'quality development'. Simply put, government at all levels has demonstrated a significant lack of will or interest in regulating the activities of developers in the interest of the existing or even future communities. In this light, the rezoning to high density occurs to not only meet state targets but also to provide enough economic incentive for such development to occur. Whilst medium density or low rise development may produce a better liveability outcomes, development won't occur under such modest constraints because not enough profit can be made.

*I implore NSW Department of Planning and the Environment to recognise the needs and interests of the existing community ahead of growth targets and developer dollars.*

A Plan for Growing Sydney highlights the need to meet the growing population of Sydney as a world city. The application of this overall plan has been to consolidate to a density target in the suburbs of Arncliffe and Banksia. Rezoning to high density high rise destroys the existing vibrant and dynamic communities that are well established and puts illogical strain on every local amenity and infrastructure. Feasibility studies have found this, international urban planners have said this is a bad solution and as a member of this community I am strongly opposed to urban consolidation in the manner to be implemented under the plan.

Sincerely

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<sup>i</sup> Arncliffe and Banksia Rezoning Report.

<sup>ii</sup> <http://www.smh.com.au/nsw/high-rise-living-at-train-stations-suburban-cellulite-warns-healthy-cities-expert-20151106-gkt23c.html>

<sup>iii</sup> Sydney's Worst Road. 2016. Channel 7 News <https://www.facebook.com/7newssydney/videos/1169110066446458>

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- <sup>iv</sup> Sydney Airport road gridlock. 2016. Sydney Morning Herald <http://www.smh.com.au/nsw/gay-concedes-teething-problems-in-work-to-reduce-sydney-airport-road-gridlock-20160218-gmxfhc.html>
- <sup>v</sup> Just google 'traffic chaos Arncliffe' - I dare you.
- <sup>vi</sup> \$17 million cost of Arncliffe pedestrian tunnel 'shocks' country cousins. 2016. The Sutherland and St George Leader <http://www.theleader.com.au/story/3157923/17-million-cost-of-arncliffe-pedestrian-tunnel-shocks-country-cousins-video/>
- <sup>vii</sup> Extreme Hospital Bed Shortages. 2016. Sydney Morning Herald <http://www.smh.com.au/national/health/extreme-hospital-bed-shortages-ambulances-told-to-avoid-st-george-hospital-20150805-gis76x.html>; The Worst Hospitals in NSW. 2016. The Daily Telegraph <http://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/news/nsw/nepean-hospital-the-worst-in-nsw-with-more-patients-waiting-longer-in-emergency-departments/news-story/03b7e5824cf9530eef39e90ba60da4e3>
- <sup>viii</sup> <http://www.theleader.com.au/story/4418924/bairds-letter-on-cooks-cove/>
- <sup>ix</sup> <http://www.smh.com.au/nsw/the-wolli-creek-apartment-block-so-close-you-can-touch-it-20160221-gmzw2s.html>
- <sup>x</sup> <http://www.theleader.com.au/story/2891480/proximity-not-a-blessing-for-some-wolli-creek-residents/>
- <sup>xi</sup> <https://www.domain.com.au/news/fivestorey-tower-springs-up-next-to-adjoning-semi-in-lewisham-20161024-gs97su/>