

To NSW Planning and Environment
Attention Sarah Koshy,
Director Urban Renewal

Submission regarding Telopea precinct proposal and Stage 1 rezoning.

In a city that is

- short of affordable housing
- struggling with pollution from vehicles including buses and passenger vehicles
- part of a nation struggling with a \$10 billion annual obesity cost and associated community penalties.

the provision of modern double track light rail in place of antiquated single track heavy rail is a golden opportunity for urban renewal in Telopea.

Unfortunately the stage 1 proposal is timid, doesn't take full advantage of that opportunity and ignores better examples of urban living in other parts of the world.

* Stage 1 is defined in the report as an area approximately within 800m, or roughly a 10 minute walk from Telopea Station.

In an era when bicycles with generous parking at transport nodes are used extensively for commuting in European cities and share bikes are exploding in popularity, bike travel is not mentioned and it's telling that the images chosen to introduce and explain the precinct study, **very obviously** do not contain bikes. Also **very obvious** is the absence of the significant bicycle parking/storage that will be needed at the station.

Sampling Telopea addresses in Google maps shows a more accurate description of the precinct is "roughly a 10 minutes walk or 4 to 5 minutes by bicycle". Allowing for a street layout that in part was originally designed for cars but not for easy access to the train station, a 10 minute bike ride should give all the precinct access to the station.

* Another current trend in modern cities is the spread of autonomous non polluting mini buses which would support travel to and from the light rail by less agile residents in Telopea. Four manufacturers produce these vehicles which are currently operating in real traffic situations including Australia, USA, Canada, China and Europe.

* Despite the cycling opportunities and later autonomous mini buses, some properties which are only 4 bicycle minutes from the station and half that from Waratah shops have not been given any density/zoning upgrade.

My own experience living a 20 minute walk from Epping station is that it is an acceptable distance to walk. It is also only 6 minutes by bicycle but NSW and Parramatta governments' failure to provide either dedicated bike lanes or paths makes it unsafe for me to ride there.

* Many Telopea examples demonstrate that privately owned properties that have been zoned R3 are typically redeveloped as single homes or duplexes and the higher density multi dwelling housing allowed under R3 has not been built i.e. the proposal and supporting documents are misleading the public by implying multi dwelling housing is likely to be built.

It is also relevant that the image of R3 zoned blocks of town houses between Simpson and Tilley Streets contained in the 2016 supporting documents has been "cherry picked" to be blocks mainly

containing old housing commission stock and are probably government owned. It was very misleading, and is certainly not indicative of the lower density housing typically built on nearby privately owned R3 zoned land.

So in practice R3 is very inadequate 5 bicycle minutes from the Telopea light rail station and half that time from Waratah shops.

In general, R3 without any multi dwelling construction is a major lost opportunity in the precinct.

* Minimum R4 zoning through the whole precinct would give a more appropriate density.

However, the R4 zoning option to add height in return for a commercial/retail level is appealing at face value BUT appears to have failed very severely in Epping where people are complaining that Epping is becoming a commercial desert and losing part of its character. Companies/businesses that used to operate in Epping are having to move away, residents who could easily reach their work place will now be forced to commute and new residents will find less opportunities without travel.

The clearly better alternative is on display in many places in Western Europe where streets of residential density similar to our R4 zoning frequently have a commercial/retail level at ground level, at times in more than 50% of buildings. A wide range of shops are available within minutes walk with low impact businesses like glaziers scattered amongst them and the obvious benefit is that more people can live closer to their place of work and people can obtain a much wider variety of services within a short walk, or via another light rail station without necessarily having to drive to a light industrial estate.

In one example where I have stayed there were three reasonable sized supermarkets under residential buildings operated by different companies with some product diversity. All within a few minutes walk, in contrast Epping has a big Coles with a longer walk for many – indicative of a failed urban renewal/upgrade.

So R4 zoning in the precinct has a strong likelihood of delivering a dormitory area with poor social cohesion and little commercial space. The proposal needs to be changed to assertively create a significant amount of commercial activity on the ground floors of residential buildings rather than leave it to developers who will maximise profits and force residents to travel and drive to search out services for decades to come.

* Once the light rail spurs more redevelopment and locks in street layouts, another opportunity will be lost. The precinct proposal tweaks some street paths near the station but more should be done to deliver enduring time savings for the local community. In many instances the streets do not radiate from the train station like spokes in a wheel reaching the edge of the precinct (which would minimise transit times on foot or bike).

There are blocks of housing that are perpendicular to the needed spokes, some suggested walk/cycle ways follow but proper analysis is needed to minimise walk time: Cox Cresc to Brand St, Sophie St to The Parade, Moffats Dr to Tilley St then Simpson St then Evans Rd, Evans Rd through the middle of Waratah shops to Eyles St, Wade St to Sturt St.

These sort of enhancements need to be inserted in the proposal now to reduce decades of unnecessary lost time and provide clear rules for developers who will otherwise maximise profits to the detriment of future residents.

Overall

The more vibrant the community becomes, driven by a more modern and more assertive urban renewal than the one proposed, productivity will be better, there will be less social and welfare costs, less mental health issues etc.

More diversity in shops and some light commercial services means less travel outside the precinct and more work in the precinct.

Less reliance on cars and buses means less pollution.

A more assertive urban renewal provides numerous other opportunities, for example, having less than one car space per unit of affordable housing to save capital costs as less low income people are pressured into owning cars and it follows to facilitate that, Parramatta Council would also dedicate nearby car spaces to car sharing services eg GoGet.

The health benefits from more walking, more cycling and less cars and buses on the road are huge.

If it seems these views are not widely held I can offer some reasons:

- The earlier documents and the proposal are very misleading talking of multi dwelling housing (in R3) and options for ground floor commercial (in R4) when recent history in Telopea and Epping demonstrate these options are impotent.
- A number of Telopea residents will not have travelled overseas to see how much better urban environments can be, how easy and efficient bike travel can be under supportive governments and how older West European societies provide more of life's necessities without forcing people to use cars as often as Australians have to.
- There may be many like me who feel detached from the community since our elected Parramatta councillors were sacked and who also have been enduring decisions made by the Administrator until we again had a voice with a democratically elected Council and Councillors who are accountable to the electorate for their decisions.

Telopea precinct provides a rare chance to provide an encapsulated urban renewal centred on a modern transport node that would be a model for future Australian areas.

The current proposal is built on outdated excessive emphasis on polluting car (and bus) travel with insufficient emphasis on electrified public transport, bikes, walking and the benefits from more community interaction and more local employment opportunities.