

# **Northern Beaches Strategic Community Group**

## **Schedule 6 - Submission re: draft amendment to Affordable Rental Housing SEPP (12 room limit in R2 zone)**

**Prepared for:  
The NSW Department of Planning**

**Copy to:  
Northern Beaches Council  
The Greater Sydney Commission  
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## SEPP ARH 2009 Proposed Change

Ref: <https://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/Policy-and-Legislation/State-Environmental-Planning-Policies-Review/Draft-amendment-to-the-Affordable-Rental-Housing-SEPP>

Boarding houses will now be limited to 12 boarding rooms per site within the R2 Low Density Residential zone to better reflect the surrounding area and community.

The proposed changes will help manage impacts on neighbouring properties such as overlooking, overshadowing and car parking.

These proposed changes build on existing rules in the Affordable Rental Housing SEPP that ensure Boarding Houses are only approved where they are close to public transport and comply with parking rules as well as council rules on density and building height.

An Explanation of Intended Effect has been prepared outlining the proposed changes to the SEPP.

## Our Response to this change

Further to previous submissions, the Northern Beaches Strategic Community Group (NBSCG) is pleased to be included in ongoing discussions with the Department of Planning and Environment focusing on a broader review of SEPP planning policy; as it applies to Affordable and Seniors housing.

The Minister for Planning and Housing has invited community comment in relation to specific planning changes to limit boarding rooms for Boarding Houses to 12 per site. The NBSCG is encouraged by the Minister's initiative and response to community concerns with both this short and a long-term review and response to SEPP planning policy.

We have sought opinions from the Northern Beaches community and have attempted to synthesise a range of views into a consolidated practical response. We believe this response generally reflects the communities' position on the matter as it relates to the proposed change.

It is still our position that these developments should not be allowed in any R2 zoned areas away from major transport corridors, or on DEFERRED LAND or biodiverse lands with endangered species, where flora and fauna exist. The application to R1 areas also requires special consideration rather than an assumed blanket approval with no cap.

In addition, this updated 12 room limitation must be retrospective and apply to all current and future DA's across the Northern Beaches Local Government Area and in fact the State of NSW, as these DA's are draining public funds (such as rate payer \$\$\$), as well as volunteer community resources; and council resources required to oppose them. This must STOP!

## Maintaining Neighbourhood Character

It is important to maintain the character of the neighbourhoods and streets of an area; and there is a need for proper planning for the locations where these boarding house developments should be permitted. This can be achieved through:

1. Removing or approving for Council to remove "allowed with consent" from the Council LEP's in an R2 zone.
2. Not allowing boarding houses in R2 in the SEPP AH 2009.
3. Not allowing boarding houses in quiet back streets of neighbourhoods, but only allowing them within 400 meters of a bus-stop **which is a bus-stop that provides increased bus augmentation or a rapid transport link such as a BRT or Trainline**. Including additional services during Peak times and to support shift workers. The SEPP ARH 2009 currently is too broad in this regard.
4. Not allowing boarding houses on deferred lands.
5. Not allowing boarding houses on biodiverse lands or social club lands such as golf courses, bowling clubs, flood prone lands and so-on.
6. Further consideration should also be given to the application of generic requirements in R1 zones particularly in relation to transport, access, cumulative impact and any densification increase to high density in medium density areas.

We need established Affordable housing zoning areas that are included in the Local Environment Plan(s). As outlined above this can be delivered through changing the zones within which they are able to be built.

As previously submitted, we see that the evolution of the housing mix and client type in Sydney to suit various housing needs requires further refinement. This is continually evidenced through the challenges of local councils charged with responding to the application of SEPP provisions, along with the evolving landscape of client requirements.

This is particularly due to the unintended consequences appearing when developers attempt to apply the current SEPP requirements in inappropriate areas. We understand it is basically agreed by Councils and the State, that the current requirements, (when generically applied to some local areas) are detrimental to the surrounding communities they are randomly imposed upon.

## Infrastructure Challenges

The Northern Beaches peninsula is a typical example of a locality where the SEPP AH 2009 in its current form is having a detrimental impact on infrastructure and character. We are seeing Development Applications for boarding house “micro-apartments” (some of which are over 100 rooms - that’s 200-extra people plus cars...) in small narrow streets, cul-de-sacs and other R2 zoned low density areas. This is clearly out of character with the area and the streets are not built to hold the additional traffic outputs.

The streets in these areas do not have sufficient supporting infrastructure or regular access to rapid transport links. The majority of people on the Northern Beaches drive at various times. This is because the bus links from inside the suburbs to the arterial roads are insufficient (at this time) to meet transport requirements of the populous. The Northern Beaches is already at capacity from a transport and infrastructure perspective. The North-South B-Line is a great step in the right direction. More infrastructure is needed however, as is an East-West dedicated bus lane and B-line style rapid transport link from Dee Why to Chatswood.

There is also no limit or quota to the number of applications, even in suitable correctly zoned areas. This creates further implications for the at-capacity soft and hard infrastructure required to support these additional density increases on a broader scale. Indeed, how can development be approved if the

supporting infrastructure is not in place? There are already many areas in Sydney suffering from the implication of these poor planning decisions. This acknowledged detrimental impact is the driver for the continuing review of the State Environment Planning Policy.

## The 12-room cap and transport reliance

In relation to the proposed change to cap rooms at 12 for a boarding house “per site”; we acknowledge that this is a great step in the right direction.

**However, we still believe they should not be allowed in an R2 zone at all.**

Our reasoning is simply that normal streets do not contain houses with 12 bedrooms. These are usually referred to as “Mansions” which are only available to a very elite few in society. Most standard suburban houses in an R2 zone are between 2 to 5 bedrooms at best. A 12-room boarding house therefore is more than double the density of a standard family home. It is also not a family home. It is temporary short-term accommodation for 2 people per room. Families don’t buy 12 room houses, and they don’t typically buy into streets which contain entire rows of 12 room houses. The application of boarding houses in an R2 zone is completely out of character with what suburban life is supposed to be like. Families who buy into densification buy into manor and terrace homes and apartments. Others buy into quarter acre blocks etc.

In relation to the current locational restrictions these are also too broad and need further definition. We still see that due to the transport limitations on the northern beaches, these dwellings must be located within a maximum 200m distance from high volume rapid public transport corridors and they must not be in an R2 zone. This would be especially appropriate for Boarding Houses operated by Not for Profit (NFP) type community groups. These cases would need to demonstrate that they meet these specific requirements along with others, to be eligible for the \$10K rebate. Operation for less fortunate or disabled clients would be required for a minimum of 25 years, for example, at a capped rental rate so that it is affordable. On sub-divisions, further analysis should be done during the subdivision application phase, to take into account

how many times a property can be sub-divided when the purpose is to place multiple boarding houses on a multi-subdivided site.

## Onsite Manager

Even with a 12-room cap, there should still be a dedicated manager or carer room and car space for any boarding house development, along with the use of dedicated share car spaces, such as GoGet or PopCar and visitor parking requirements. This is because there will still be 24 people per dwelling which is a high densification level. The ratios would need to be applied in the same way as for unit developments for these types of Boarding Houses, where full time managers are also considered necessary. The role of Manager is important, as it has the ability to prevent “double renting scams” and Air B&B type sub-letting of rooms.

## Social and Affordable Housing stress

It is the Not for Profit groups that are supporting the disabled, those with mental health issues; and those less fortunate in the community. They are the ones that are missing out in the application of the planning provisions in accordance with the original intent of the SEPP (notionally Traditional Boarding Houses) on the Northern Beaches.

There is great concern within the community for more social housing to be provided to help people who need to quickly change their living circumstances due to a variety of reasons; as well as to reduce those at risk of, or who are currently homeless. The issue is to ensure that more social housing stock is provided but it must be applied in higher zone type than R2, to ensure incompatible areas are not compromised. In addition, tighter controls on post-inspection of boarding houses is required as we are seeing developers directly obtain approval and then directly contravene the policy requirements on which they were granted. See: DA No: Mod2018/0314

<https://eservices.northernbeaches.nsw.gov.au/ePlanning/live/Public/XC.Track/SearchApplication.aspx?id=1534094&fbclid=IwAR2cBzGL4cJTqv0HXQoEW-A0mPJ4glwF1ezFnQzYmgv3ipq1S4hpPknAMjQ>



## Missing Middle Housing Needs

There is a genuine concern that we need more affordable housing of varying types. This is especially so in the suburbs; because as housing costs rise more and more, families are being priced out of the market and the suburbs they grew up in. This is forcing people into a decentralised position away from their families and friends. Parents want their children to be able to grow up and live in the same suburbs.

We see that a missing middle layer of housing is sorely needed on the Northern Beaches, to enable young families to enter into the market or to enable seniors to downsize. This could be provided through a wider expansion of manor and terrace housing overlays in R1/R2. In addition, more seniors housing is needed to meet the needs of our ageing population.

Manor and Terrace Housing have a smaller human densification footprint and is more relevant to the R2 zone type as these developments are less intrusive than (new or social) boarding houses which hold a higher density of people and cars. Boarding Houses however, should not be allowed in R2 zones to ensure the complete character of a street and quality of life for existing residents who have bought into those quiet R2 streets is not changed. This is the quintessential reason why people invest in those streets – it's to maintain a quiet quality of life and to reside within a certain character of a specific area.

## New Generation Boarding Houses

New Generation Boarding Houses (or Micro Apartments) are typically more suitable for other client types - notably some key workers, remote area professionals and displaced individuals on the Northern Beaches. This is confirmed by the rental incomes these types of developments are currently attracting in the marketplace. It is also expected the same provisions should apply across Sydney, and in the rest of NSW, to these and the abovementioned traditional Boarding House developments.

We remain of the view that given these client types the implications of one parking space per room should be mandatory for these types of developments and after consideration of cumulative effects on traffic and infrastructure.

Again, all boarding house types of developments (new age or social) should occur in correctly zoned areas suitable for medium to high density home unit accommodation (or a new Affordable Housing Zoning as previously submitted).



These developments should also meet the same boundary setback and character specifications etc that are required of apartment developments today. This should be as agreed in consultation with local councils, through their LEP's and broadly in compliance with Greater Sydney Commission planned quotas.

## Quality of Life

There remains a need for more suitable accommodation for Key Workers on the Northern Beaches; as it is not considered that Boarding Houses provide an appropriate solution to the majority of Key Workers' needs.

It is important that this aspect is not neglected in the housing affordability considerations under contemplation by the State. Best practice reviews indicate that old style boarding houses are subject to negative health impacts for long term occupants. Provision within mixed use developments is also beneficial.

This could be resolved through providing larger floor space ratios incorporating better streetscape activation, green space requirements and noise and privacy proofing should also apply. Every room should have a window. All these considerations are fundamental for improving resident quality of life. It is important to ensure that the surrounding communities welcoming these new developments can continue to reasonably expect to live in 'quiet enjoyment' of their local area.

It is important for our Planning Laws to work in conjunction with our Environmental Laws and Policies to complement our needs for growth and urban renewal whilst also protecting what we hold dear to our hearts, which is our greenspace including bushlands, rivers, parks, beaches, oceans, leisure centres such as golf courses and sporting fields, bowling clubs, neighbourhoods, schools, homes, backyards and so-on.

We look forward to continuing our work with Council and the NSW Department of Planning and the Greater Sydney Commission, toward driving positive well thought out planned and structured change and growth that **"benefits"** instead of **"destroying"** our community assets.

We thank you for your time and consideration of these issues.

Your sincerely

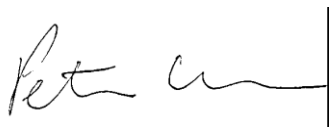


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