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St Leonards Crows Nest 2036 Draft Plan - Special Infrastructure Contribution (SIC)

1. Introduction:

The proposed SIC is a new approach by the Department of Planning to up-front funding to be paid by developers and to be used for priority infrastructure delivered by government at the same time development is occurring. The St Leonards Crows Nest precinct proposed SIC is set at \$15,100 per dwelling and is just another form of tax. Like planning, spending on Infrastructure is required before not concurrent with the construction of buildings.

In the SLCN precinct the amount that is indicated to be collected is \$113,628,000. This suggests there will be 7,525 dwellings (the Draft Green Plan nominates 6,800 dwellings)

2. Feedback

I object to the introduction of this proposed SIC because:

- The planning package for SLCN is based on a 100% increase in population from 13,250 in 2016 to 26,400 in 2036. This is non-sustainable and well above the increase in the Greater Sydney population of ~36% and substantially above the increase in the North District plan of 22%.
- The number of apartments already approved by the Lane Cove Council or Independent Panels will significantly reduce the number of apartments that will contribute to the SIC over 20 years. This is especially so if the St Leonards South project does not go ahead as planned – which it certainly should not.
- The great majority of spending is allocated to Willoughby Council LGA part of the precinct yet that part of the precinct contributes very little if anything at all to the SIC fund,
- The plan is theoretical and must be rethought entirely based on a lower population increase and a lesser number of apartments.
- Spending on major infrastructure must be made well in advance of the developments proceeding. It ignores the basic requirement that infrastructure planning needs to be done well in advance and not on ad hoc developments dreamed up by developers for individual sites. That is why Councils are best suited to dealing with In-Kind agreements (VPAs) for particular community issues.
- Government's role is to provide basic infrastructure funded from existing taxation and grant funds raised from things like Stamp Duties and Commonwealth contributions.
- The SIC is just another form of tax ultimately paid by consumers
- The SIC will not help in the pursuit of affordable housing.
- The report from the department's consultant SEC is hardly an endorsement of the SIC. Instead it points to the finite nature of the ability to raise even more tax.
- 1800 people have raised objections to this SIC plan in signed petitions. The local members for Willoughby, Lane Cove and North Shore have each been served with copies of petitions having 500+ signatures yet have not done anything to recognise the fact.
- Councils will lose the ability to raise money or In-Kind agreements by the abolition of Voluntary Planning Agreements.

- The thought that negotiations with developers will be led by government and not at the coal face with Councils is abhorrent.
 - It is micro management to the extreme.
 - It is further evidence that the planning system would be open to manipulation, negotiation and deals without the public being able to have a say. It is bordering on a corruption-prone system.
 - The proposal is designed to achieve or has the result of more central control by removing the ability of local government to perform its proper role.
 - The proposal in its present form provides no guarantee that money collected will be quarantined for its intended purpose and no guarantee that it will actually be spent at all. If past experience is any guide, the funds collected will go into consolidated revenue where it will be lost in the perpetual arguments between state and local government to release funds.
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