



WEPA Submission to WCC Planning Strategy 2016-2036 and Willoughby Housing Position Statement

17 March 2017

Submitted online

Thank you for providing WEPA with the opportunity to comment on the Willoughby City Council *Planning Strategy 2016-2036* and *Willoughby Housing Position Statement*. I am making the following brief comments on behalf of the Willoughby Environmental Protection Association Inc (WEPA):

As has been touched on in the CBD and housing statement, environmental outcomes are as important as economic outcomes in ensuring the resilience, vitality and liveability of Chatswood CBD and the wider residential areas in the Willoughby City Council areas. WEPA notes with appreciation the strategy's draft vision of 'Greening the centre' and reflecting its position on the 'leafy North Shore' through streetscape and new development. We would like to make the following general comments on achieving this vision:

- the options contained in the plan for denser housing developments are predicated on the need to absorb **more residential dwellings**. Is this necessary? We understand that Willoughby Council has already met and exceeded its Sydney Metropolitan Strategy target to 2031 for additional dwellings. Is the community to be penalised for this by being required to absorb even more dwellings. Is it sustainable? The plan does not seem to explore in any detail the problems with the existing road, school, active recreation space and transport infrastructure – for residents these seem to be already at, or well exceeding capacity, with few concrete plans on the horizon to ease the pressure on this infrastructure;
- the overall amount of development, particularly the expanded boundary for the CBD area, is likely to have an irreversible impact on the **environmental qualities of the area**. Replacing the existing homes, which feature gardens, soft landscaping and trees with rows of medium and high rise flats – surrounded in most cases by hard surfaces and water retention devices - seems to be in opposition to the housing vision of respecting and promoting the heritage and environmental qualities of WCC in planning for new housing;
- the number and size of the proposed **new open spaces** in the extended CBD area do not appear to be in balance with the greater area of densification. Increased urban density needs new open spaces with good accessibility, opportunities for recreation and community activities. We need far more open spaces with trees and soft landscaping to assist in climate change adaptation, to offset the urban heat island effect, improve air quality, provide habitat for local biodiversity and allow the community the chance to interact with nature with all the social and cultural benefits this brings;
- WEPA does not support any investigations into impingements on the **existing heritage conservation areas**. These areas were developed with full community consultation, over many years, to value and protect the local character of these areas. It would be totally inappropriate to explore opportunities for high rise or medium development in heritage conservation areas;



- there appears to be a lack of **cycleway infrastructure** within the plan. The community would benefit by the inclusion of an integrated cycleway network.

Meredith Foley
Hon Secretary, WEPA