

Presentation to Independent Planning Commission Meeting 20 May 2019

Thank you for the opportunity to address this meeting. My name is Liz Gill and I shall be speaking from a number of perspectives

Firstly, in my role as a Research Fellow at the Kolling Institute of Medical Research at RNSH. I will now reflect on the impact the overdevelopment flagged for this area including SLS will have on existing local health infrastructure. The issues that must be addressed include:

- Where will all these extra residents go for GP services? Many GP practices in this area are taking no new patients. There are virtually no bulkbilling practices.
- The A&E department at RNSH is seriously clogged with primary care/GP type patients and this will only worsen
- The resultant blow out in wait times in the A&E Department will create a potential nightmare for the Minister for Health, and
- With the increase in the population will come an increase in vehicles and traffic in an area that is frequently gridlocked at peak times. This will impede emergency vehicle access to RNSH, compromise the well-being of patients and create further ministerial pressures.

In summary, it is imperative that the health infrastructure impacts of this draft SLS planning proposal on RNSH must be considered in the context of the St Leonards Crows Nest 2036 plan and the other major buildings that LCC has already approved and are either completed (The Embassy Tower) or under construction (Mirvac and JQZ). It is unbelievable that the well-known health and social impacts are largely being ignored with this draft SLS planning proposal.

Wearing my second hat as a local resident, I am most concerned about the whole process that has transpired with the development of this draft SLS planning proposal. A process that has been driven by resident and developer greed and a Council that extended their original proposal to accommodate this greed which no doubt also relates to Council increasing its revenue through developer contributions, VPAs and future rates.

To prevent objections from the community LCC confined its consultation process to a very small area. It failed to consult me as a resident of the local Greenwich community until well after the plan was drafted and significant knee jerk amendments had been made to extend it.

When Council finally did under pressure consult the community it was too late for the community to have any meaningful input to help shape a good plan. **SLS is a very poor plan.** All the I could do was raise my objections and reasons for objecting. Then LCC has just sat on this plan and done nothing to appropriately respond to my submission along with the rest of my community. This highlights a complete disregard for consideration being given to the health and social consequences that will result for those who will continue to live in this area. I note that the Commission has a copy of my submission to LCC which outlines the reasons for my objections.

Finally, I would like to refer to the health impacts of the totality of this proposed overdevelopment of SLS and St Leonards Crows Nest and draw on the academic literature.

Bearing in mind the topography of SLS, solar exposure even in green spaces will be severely compromised due to the significant overshadowing caused by tall buildings on a steeply sloping site. This we know will impact on people's bone health

Further, accessible, level and appropriate child play spaces within close proximity will be virtually impossible. I point to the 2018 Deakin study (*Fiona J. Andrews, Elyse Warner & Belinda Robson (2018): High-rise parenting: experiences of families in private, high-rise housing in inner city Melbourne and implications for children's health, Cities & Health, DOI: 10.1080/23748834.2018.1483711*) which highlights that

- A lack of readily available access to outdoor play areas restricts active play that is important to identity and belonging, social skills, risk perception, capabilities and overall wellbeing.
- A lack of exposure to natural light has been linked with obesity in children. In addition
- Evidence has shown that living in high rises hinders the possibilities for the spontaneous play and exploration that young children thrive on, and
- It results in a decline of children's physical activity and independent mobility resulting in increased rates of child obesity and other health concerns that have been well described by psychologists and medical professionals

Robert Gifford in his article "*The Consequences of Living in High-Rise Buildings,*" (*Architectural Science Review, vol 50 no 1, 2007, 2–17*) highlights that the literature indicates that high-rise living is less satisfactory than other housing forms for most people, that they are not optimal for children, that social relations are more impersonal and helping behaviour is less than in other housing forms, that crime and fear of crime are greater, and that they may independently account for some suicides.

The health of our existing and future local community is paramount so I hope that the IPC will take the issues I have raised into consideration in formulating their advice to the department.

Dr Liz Gill
Research Fellow
Kolling Institute of Medical Research

Post Script

A recent article in the *Journal of Urban Design and Mental Health* 2018 points to an association between multi-storey housing and physical and mental health. This relationship has long been recognized in the literature. Yet the physical aspects of social sustainability receive little attention in the realm of the built environment by planners, urban designers and architects.

In fact, the sheer number of people sharing a single building can also increase the threat from communicable diseases such as influenza, which spread easily when hundreds of people share a building's hallways, door handles and lift buttons. Further, sharing semi-public spaces with strangers can make residents more suspicious and fearful of crime. Many high-rise residents have been found to feel an absence of community, despite living alongside tens or hundreds of other people.

A renowned Australian architect Professor Kerry Clare has also highlighted that high-rise living creates social isolation and diminished realm amenity with a concentration of high-rise towers leading to a what she calls a city that will be unliveable within a generation. Surely, it's time to realise how harmful high-rise living can be for its residents. There are better solutions.