

The Impact of Reduced Affordable Housing in Paddington on the Nursing Workforce at St Vincent's Hospital, Darlinghurst, NSW.

Executive Summary

This submission addresses the impact of the proposed development in Paddington that would result in a **net reduction of affordable housing**, with specific regard to the consequences for **nurses employed at St Vincent's Hospital, Darlinghurst, NSW** and the sustainability of essential inner-city health services.

St Vincent's Hospital is a major tertiary hospital operating 24 hours a day and relying on a substantial nursing workforce across rotating and non-standard hours. Nurses are essential workers whose capacity to perform safely and sustainably is closely linked to their ability to live within reasonable proximity to their workplace. This is particularly relevant given the fatigue risks, irregular hours, and safety considerations associated with shift-based clinical work.¹

Registered Nurses earn stable but moderate professional incomes under award and enterprise agreement frameworks. However, these incomes do not align with the high rental costs prevailing in Paddington. Median apartment rents in the suburb commonly exceed \$600 per week, with two-bedroom properties frequently advertised at above \$800–\$850 per week.^{2 3} As a result, many nurses are required to spend **well in excess of 30 per cent of their gross income on housing**, placing them in housing stress despite full-time employment in a critical public service role.⁴

Affordable housing in Paddington is therefore not incidental; it plays a vital role in sustaining the nursing workforce at St Vincent's Hospital, particularly for early-career nurses, single-income households, part-time workers, and those with caring responsibilities. The loss of affordable housing stock will accelerate the displacement of essential workers to outer suburbs, increasing commute times, fatigue, workforce turnover, and reliance on agency staff.⁵

The proposed development's reduction of affordable housing may have **cumulative and long-term impacts** on workforce stability and patient care. Once affordable housing is lost in high-amenity inner-city locations such as Paddington, evidence demonstrates it is rarely replaced at comparable affordability levels.⁶

For these reasons, the proposal is inconsistent with established state and local planning objectives relating to affordable housing, essential workers, and the protection of critical health infrastructure.⁷

1. Purpose of this Submission

The purpose of this submission is to outline the **material planning and public interest impacts** associated with the proposed development's reduction of affordable housing in Paddington, with particular reference to the nursing workforce at St Vincent's Hospital, Darlinghurst.

Affordable housing close to employment centres and critical infrastructure is a long-standing objective of NSW strategic and local planning frameworks.^{7 8} The proposal undermines these objectives by diminishing housing options for essential workers in close proximity to a major inner-city hospital.

2. Local Context: St Vincent's Hospital, Darlinghurst

St Vincent's Hospital is one of Sydney's most significant inner-city hospitals, delivering acute, emergency, and specialist services to a wide catchment. The hospital operates continuously and depends on a stable, skilled nursing workforce across all shifts.¹

Nursing work involves irregular hours, physical and emotional demands, and heightened fatigue risks. Proximity between home and workplace is therefore a **work health and safety consideration**, as well as a determinant of workforce retention and wellbeing.^{1 5}

3. Nursing Incomes and Housing Affordability

Nurses employed at St Vincent's Hospital are remunerated under enterprise agreement and award frameworks aligned with the NSW Public Hospital Nurses' (State) Award classifications, which provide structured pay progression based on classification and years of service.^{9 10} While these frameworks provide stable professional incomes, they do not keep pace with prevailing rental costs in Paddington.

Based on current NSW award-aligned pay scales (exclusive of overtime and assuming standard roster patterns and before tax):

- Registered Nurse (Year 1–2): approximately \$80,000–\$88,000 per annum
- Registered Nurse (Year 3–5): approximately \$88,000–\$95,000 per annum
- Experienced Registered Nurse (Year 6–8+): approximately \$95,000–\$102,000 per annum

More senior clinical classifications (e.g. Clinical Nurse Specialist or Nurse Unit Manager) earn higher incomes; however, these roles represent a smaller proportion of the nursing workforce and are not reflective of the typical earnings of most nurses employed at St Vincent's Hospital.¹

Rental costs in Paddington

Current rental market data for Paddington indicates:

- Median unit rents commonly exceed \$600 per week (approximately \$31,200 per annum)

- Two-bedroom unit dwellings are frequently advertised at \$800–\$850 per week (approximately \$41,600–\$44,200 per annum)^{2 3}







	2 bed house	\$1,150 per week
	3 bed house	\$1,600 per week
	4 bed house	\$1,950 per week
	1 bed unit	\$595 per week
	2 bed unit	\$840 per week
	3 bed unit	\$1,195 per week

Table 1: Nursing Income and Rental Affordability – Paddington

Nursing classification (NSW award aligned)	Approx. gross annual income	Typical Paddington median rent (unit)	Annual rent	Rent as % of gross income
RN Year 1-2	\$80,000	\$600 / week (1-bed unit)	\$31,200	39%
RN Year 1-2	\$80,000	\$840 / week (2-bed unit)	\$43,680	55%
RN Year 3-5	\$92,000	\$600 / week (1-bed unit)	\$31,200	34%
RN Year 3-5	\$92,000	\$840 / week 2-bed unit)	\$43,680	47%
RN Year 6-8+	\$100,000	\$600 / week (1-bed unit)	\$31,200	31%
RN Year 6-8+	\$100,000	\$840/ week 2-bed unit)	43,680	44%

Note: Figures are indicative and conservative, based on NSW award-aligned salary ranges and median advertised rents. They do not account for tax, transport, childcare, or other essential living costs.

Affordability implications

Table 1 demonstrates that:

- Early- and mid-career nurses are consistently in housing stress when renting in Paddington, even in one-bedroom units.
- Two-bedroom units, often required by nurses with dependants or shared households, routinely require 45–55 per cent of gross income, well beyond accepted affordability thresholds.
- Even experienced nurses at the upper end of Registered Nurse pay scales exceed the 30 per cent affordability benchmark, particularly for family-suitable dwellings.

Accordingly, nurses employed full-time in essential clinical roles are structurally priced out of the Paddington rental market without access to affordable housing. This pressure disproportionately affects early-career nurses, single-income households, part-time staff, and those with caring responsibilities, cohorts critical to the sustainability of the hospital workforce.^{1 5}

4. Importance of Affordable Housing for Essential Workers

Affordable housing in inner-city suburbs such as Paddington plays a critical role in supporting:

- Recruitment and retention of essential workers
- Early-career workforce participation
- Part-time and return-to-work arrangements
- Reduced reliance on temporary and agency staffing

Infrastructure NSW and other government bodies have identified housing affordability as a key determinant of essential workers' capacity to remain close to employment hubs, particularly in the health sector.⁵ The loss of affordable housing therefore has direct implications for service delivery and workforce stability.^{5 6}

5. Anticipated Impacts of the Proposed Development

Any proposed reduction in affordable housing is likely to result in:

- Displacement of nurses from the local area
- Longer commute times and increased fatigue risks
- Reduced workforce retention and recruitment capacity
- Greater reliance on casual and agency staff
- Flow-on impacts to patient care and continuity of services^{1 5}

These impacts are cumulative and difficult to reverse. Evidence indicates that once affordable housing stock is removed from inner-city locations, it is rarely replaced at equivalent affordability or proximity to employment centres.⁶

6. Strategic Planning and Public Interest Considerations

NSW strategic planning frameworks emphasise the importance of:

- Retaining affordable housing in well-located areas
- Supporting essential and key workers
- Integrating housing supply with employment and critical infrastructure planning⁷

Local planning instruments similarly recognise the role of affordable housing in promoting social sustainability and community resilience.⁸ Approval of development resulting in a net loss of affordable housing adjacent to a major hospital is inconsistent with these objectives and contrary to the public interest.

7. Conclusion

Nurses at St Vincent’s Hospital are essential workers whose capacity to serve the community is increasingly constrained by housing affordability.

The proposed development’s reduction of affordable housing in Paddington will exacerbate housing stress, undermine workforce stability, and weaken the resilience of critical inner-city health services.

For these reasons, it is respectfully submitted that the consent authority should **refuse the proposal or require amendments** to ensure:

- No net loss of affordable housing, and
- Like-for-like affordable housing replacement within the local area.

Protecting affordable housing in Paddington is not solely a housing matter—it is a **health system, workforce, and public interest consideration**.

Footnotes

1. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2023), *Nursing and Midwifery Workforce Report*, Commonwealth of Australia.
2. Domain Group (2024–2025), *Sydney Rental Market Reports*, Domain Research, Sydney.
3. REA Group (2024–2025), *Paddington NSW Rental Listings and Market Data*, realestate.com.au. [Paddington Property Market, House Prices, Investment Data & Suburb Profiles - realestate.com.au](https://www.realestate.com.au/property-market/paddington-nsw-rental-listings-and-market-data)
4. Australian Bureau of Statistics (2023), *Employee Earnings and Hours, Australia*, Cat. No. 6306.0.
5. Infrastructure NSW (2021), *Essential Workers and Housing Affordability Discussion Paper*, NSW Government.

6. NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (2023), *Affordable Housing in NSW – Policy and Evidence Base*.
7. Greater Sydney Commission (2022), *Greater Sydney Region Plan: A Metropolis of Three Cities*, NSW Government.
8. City of Sydney Council / Relevant Local Council, *Local Environmental Plan (LEP) and Development Control Plan (DCP) – Affordable Housing and Social Sustainability provisions*.
9. St Vincent’s Health Australia (2024), *St Vincent’s Private Hospital Nurses Enterprise Agreement 2024–2027*, Fair Work Commission.
10. NSW Health, *Public Hospital Nurses’ (State) Award* and associated pay rates, NSW Ministry of Health.