

Objection to the Proposed 43-Storey State Significant Development at 10 Dangar St, Wickham

Housing Delivery and Planning Justification

The proposal states that the tower will deliver approximately 300 dwellings, including 99 co-living units and 42 social housing dwellings. The planning documentation also references the government commitment to deliver 11,100 homes across the region. This proposal, therefore, concentrates approximately 2.7% of the government's total housing commitment within a single tower. Concentrating this level of density into one development cannot reasonably be presented as balanced or strategic planning outcomes for Newcastle, especially when the scale of Newcastle is considered.

The proposal also overrides the planning expectations relied upon by purchasers in surrounding developments. Existing residents purchased apartments off the plan under established local planning controls, such as the Public Domain Plan, the LEP and DCP which indicated buildings in this location would be significantly lower in height. The proposal's own scoping documentation, Figure 7, demonstrates that a tower around 60 metres would integrate appropriately into the skyline while still allowing further high-rise development deeper within the CBD.

Instead, the proposal seeks a tower approximately 133 metres tall, although the documentation appears inconsistent regarding the exact height and number of storeys, casting doubt on the accuracy and quality of the submission. This excessive height blocks views from surrounding developments and risks reducing the value and future financial viability of sites further into the CBD by compromising their own view corridors and development potential. The result may ultimately reduce future housing delivery in the Newcastle CBD.

Inconsistencies and Quality of the Submission

The proposal raises broader concerns regarding the accuracy and reliability of the planning submission. The scoping report previously suggested compliance with the Wickham Master Plan at 38 storeys, whereas the proposal now seeks approval for 43 storeys. A reference is also made to the tower being 39 floors. The documentation's inability to consistently identify the number of storeys or the building height calls into question the overall quality of the submission.

The report also asserts compliance with the Wickham planning framework, including the Public Domain Plan, despite clear departures from the intended scale and character identified in the local planning controls. These statements appear misleading and demonstrate a disregard for the intent of the adopted planning framework.

I was unable to identify any clear statement within the proposal confirming whether gas will be connected to the tower. Given the government's stated affordability and sustainability objectives, it would be reasonable to expect the development to operate without gas services. However, the architectural plans appear to indicate gas cooktop appliances within each apartment and co-living unit, although this could not be conclusively confirmed from the documentation provided.

Lack of Genuine Community Benefit and PDP Contribution

The proposal offers very limited benefit to the existing community. The so-called "community benefits" largely consist of a 3m-wide pathway that existed prior to its closure for construction. The proposed limited retail patio areas are also likely to restrict public movement rather than improve it, as it will be closed off with tables and chairs for customers.

There is still no compliant pedestrian crossing proposed at the Charles Street corner adjoining the major transport interchange, despite this remaining a significant safety issue for the area. The crossing indicated on the drawing is a temporary crossing that is not accessible and does not meet the appropriate safety standards. Responsibility for delivering this infrastructure has continually been shifted between the government, council, and developers, while residents continue to bear the consequences.

As indicated above the scoping report indicated compliance with the Wickham master plan at 38 stories; the design is now at 43 floors, therefore rendering compliance with the PDP untrue. It brings the entire scoping document into question if it can not correctly identify the number of floors it is delivering. This raises questions about the entire quality of the submission. The report is a complete fabrication that purports to demonstrate adherence to the local Wickham PDP and reveals the developer's bad faith in perpetrating this falsehood.

Infrastructure and Accessibility Issues

The proposal fails to address several existing infrastructure deficiencies within Wickham. No meaningful drainage improvements are identified despite the area regularly experiencing flash flooding. Inadequate lighting along Dangar Street, Charles Street, and the surrounding areas also remains unresolved. These issues are important to address, given the likely increase in residents, hotel guests, and visitors who will need to walk long distances to reach parked vehicles due to limited parking availability in Wickham.

Further, the area already contains a higher-than-average proportion of NDIS residents associated with earlier social housing programs delivered specifically in Wickham. Many NDIS residents already struggle to safely navigate the public domain because of inadequate kerb ramps, poor crossings, and inaccessible footpaths. Despite occupying a prominent location, the proposal does nothing to improve accessibility or pedestrian safety for vulnerable residents.

Transport and Parking Concerns

The proposal relies heavily on proximity to public transport to justify its scale and reduced parking provision. However, this argument ignores the reality of employment patterns across Newcastle. Many major employment areas outside the city centre remain poorly serviced by public transport, despite accounting for tens of thousands of jobs across the region.

As a result, many future residents will remain heavily car-dependent regardless of the site's proximity to the interchange. This will place additional pressure on surrounding streets and worsen existing parking issues within the precinct.

Social Impacts and Community Safety

The social impact report itself acknowledges that areas with highly transient populations around transport interchanges (such as Wickham) experience higher crime rates. Despite this, the proposal introduces a 150-room hotel and 99 co-living units, both of which will increase transient occupancy in the area.

The report also repeats the common claim that high-rise development improves passive surveillance. However, studies have demonstrated that passive surveillance is most effective at lower levels, generally within the first four storeys. In this proposal, the lower levels consist of unoccupied foyers and service back-of-house areas on the ground floor, with hotel podium spaces with sealed windows occupied by a transitory population above, meaning the development will not provide the level of surveillance claimed in the report.

Although the social impact assessment recommends measures to reduce crime and antisocial behaviour, there appears to be no evidence that these recommendations have been meaningfully adopted into the proposal.

Conclusion

This submission reflects longstanding concerns held by local residents regarding the ongoing disregard for locally informed planning controls and infrastructure limitations within Wickham. The proposal prioritises building height, density, and development yield, while failing to adequately address transport dependency, accessibility, flooding, public safety, public domain, and community infrastructure.

Residents have repeatedly raised similar concerns about previous developments in the area, and the consequent worsening social outcomes as a result, such as inadequate infrastructure, passive surveillance and the increasing isolation of vulnerable people. The continued overriding of established planning controls through state-significant development pathways further undermines and erodes confidence in the planning process and reduces the community's ability to meaningfully shape the future of their local area. After working for years with the local council to improve outcomes in the area, having the NSW State Government coming in and overruling all the locally informed planning rules is not only dangerous, it is a middle finger to the residents

that have worked so hard to help overcome the previous poor planning impacts in the area. Realistically the locals of Wickham do not expect our objections to be listened to but at least they will be on record so when it goes wrong we will be able to point to our submissions and say that you and the NSW State Government were warned and all the issues are now on your heads.