



INNER SYDNEY REGIONAL COUNCIL

FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

CBD and South East Light Rail Environmental Impact Statement Response

Inner Sydney Regional Council for Social Development

Inner Sydney Regional Council for Social Development (Regional Council) is a regional peak community organisation that works in the Inner Sydney and Eastern Suburbs region providing Non-Government Organisations, Not-for-Profits, community groups and individuals with information, advocacy and support, and community development opportunities.

We advocate for and represent community organisations and residents to government and other relevant organisations.

We assist communities, organisations and individuals to take action to address their issues and needs. Community development philosophies underpin all of our activities. We believe in Social Justice, Social Inclusion and the participation and empowerment of local people.

General Comments

Inner Sydney Regional Council for Social Development welcomes the opportunity to comment on the CBD and South East Light Rail Environmental Impact Statement (CSELR EIS).

We commend the NSW government for planning transport solutions for Sydney, including the extension of the current light rail system to Randwick and Kensington. We appreciate light rail is a better option environmentally than the current buses used to carry the majority of travellers along the planned routes and to the termini.

This submission has a particular focus on the Surry Hills precinct, namely the Devonshire St corridor, as identified in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), but all of the concerns raised apply across the whole of the CSELR route.

We facilitated three community consultations events with the tenants of the Northcott Housing Estate over a number of weeks and much of the content of this submission is a reflection of their concerns, issues and ideas.

Regional Council also believe, as the regional peak for community organisations in the CSELR area, we are best placed to assist Transport for NSW (TfNSW) in facilitating consultation and disseminating information among service providers providing community services along the route, especially those engaged with the tenants of the Northcott Estate.

Community Consultation

Regional Council sees the community of residents and workers along the route of the CSELR as key stakeholders, yet the community feels it has never been genuinely consulted on the project. In fact, using the

International Association for Public Participation 2 (IAP2) Public Participation Spectrum, TfNSW is at the very lowest end of the scale. The only tools used have been information sheets and open houses. The most common response Regional Council received from community members when working with the community was ‘they’ve (Transport for NSW) already made up their minds. Doesn’t matter what we think or say.’

Regional Council would request genuine models of community consultation are undertaken to allow community members to have input in to the design, amenity, mitigation of impacts, etc of the CSELR, and would propose that all consultations are undertaken by an independent body with experience and a good reputation in community consultation.

Route

Regional Council is of the opinion Devonshire St is not the optimal route. Much of the route runs alongside the Northcott Estate, which by its very nature as public housing, is home to many frail, aged and disabled people. The loss of the tree canopy, parking and traffic access and noise were raised as concerns by a large number of these tenants, for whom these outcomes would have a greater impact on than the general populace. The alternate sub-surface route on Foveaux St would see less disruption to the heritage and social nature of Surry Hills, allow for better traffic flow and less destruction of LGA significant listed trees.

Parking

We note table 13.4 in Volume 1b of the EIS describes the loss of 128 general kerbside parking spaces and 23 special use spaces on the Surry Hills route, including the loss of five disability parking spaces on Devonshire St. Tenants of the Northcott Housing Estate residing in the walk-up properties on the south side of Devonshire St will require parking and drop-off and pick-up zones. These zones will need to be large enough to accommodate emergency services vehicles, community transport buses, patient transport vans and wheelchair accessible taxis.

There is concern that the frequency of the light rail vehicles (LVR) will not allow a comfortable time-frame for frail, aged and disabled people to embark and disembark these types of transport. Regional Council would recommend Housing NSW utilises some of the available land in front of the Devonshire St walk-ups to put in some off-street drop-off and pick-up zones. We would allow there is not enough room to provide off-street parking for all tenants with their own cars, but it is possible that arrangements could be made to use some of the under-utilised car-parking spaces underneath 166a Devonshire St and other adjoining Land and Housing Corporation properties.

Traffic

The closure of Devonshire St during construction will impact the surrounding streets and it is likely, during peak times, the area will become grid-locked. The EIS appears to offer no solution to this particular issue.

The frequency of LRVs in peak times allows little time for pedestrians, especially for those with limited mobility, to cross Devonshire St.

Ward Park

There were major concerns voiced about the loss of Ward Park during construction. Tenants of the Northcott Estate reported impacts from a previous occasion when the park had been closed off for a period of nine months whilst the City of Sydney (CoS) upgraded and re-surfaced the park. There was a growing sense of tension at the time, driven by people’s inability to access the only local open space, which erupted on a number of occasions in to verbal and physical assaults. The health and well-being of tenants, especially those with limited mobility, suffered as a whole. High levels of social exclusion are reported on the Northcott Estate and access to Ward Park reduces this exclusion by providing a safe space in which tenants can socialise. The park also provides a buffer for much of the anti-social behaviour experienced on a large public housing estate. This open space was identified by tenants and other local residents as critical to community well-being.

Regional Council would recommend an alternate long-term construction site to Ward Park and that as little impact was made on the park as possible. There are other areas of spaces, e.g Langton Carpark, Moore Park, where constructions yards could be sited to minimise impact on the Northcott Community.

Ward park is also a major thoroughfare and proper wayfinding processes will need to be implemented to assist people to navigate around any construction sites within the park and elsewhere along the route.

Noise and Vibration

The EIS identifies exceedances of acceptable noise levels on Devonshire St, west of Marlborough (Volume 6 – table 13). Regional Council supports the speed restrictions along the Surry Hills route. This would not only mitigate the noise of the LRV on the tracks, but also allow pedestrians more time to note the approach of a LVR, meaning the drivers would have less need to use warning bells.

Regional Council would also recommend the use of very high attenuation track forms in areas where LRVs pass in close proximity to residential buildings and other sensitive receivers. It supports the double-glazing of windows in residential properties adjacent to the track.

Landscape and Visual Impact

Regional Council is disappointed by the proposed loss of a large number of trees along the route, many of which are registered as Significant Trees. The canopies of the larger trees abutting residential zones provide much needed protection from the summer sun; the canopy can reduce ambient temperatures by up to 5° Celsius. We would suggest an alternate route along a wider street through the Surry Hills precinct, e.g. Oxford or Foveaux, would have lessened the loss of trees within that precinct.

Regional Council would like to see community consultation undertaken specifically around vegetation offset. The expectation of the community is that any landscaping mitigation will be done as close to site of tree removal/landscaping damage as feasibly possible and that mature trees be used.

Visual pollution created by light rail wires should be minimised by laying them underground, along with electrical sub-stations.

Safety

In areas of high pedestrian movement, the LRV's should be speed-restricted. The safety of pedestrians, especially those of limited mobility, crossing in front of LVRs is of concern. There are also concerns for the safety of patrons at the six licenced venues along Devonshire St. A number of these venues have egresses that spill directly on to narrow pathways, which often see patron's overflow on to the road. Currently, the line of parked cars provides a buffer of safety. Barriers will need to be erected for patron's safety.

Pricing of travel

Regional Council would like assurances that the pricing of travel on the light rail will be equivalent to other public transport models in Sydney and will include the student and pensioner concession tickets.

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