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Director Key Sites Assessments

Department of Planning & Assessments

Application SSD-8874

RE: Application for Integrated Station Development for Victoria Cross Station

Concept State Significant Development May 2018

I have reviewed the EIS for the above Integrated Station Development for Victoria Cross Station in North Sydney and I wish to strongly object to this proposal.

My strong objection is for the following reasons -:

The Victoria Cross Station in North Sydney is a once in a generation opportunity to transform the 6th largest CBD in Australia from just a 9-5 office environment to a vibrant and attractive place where we can enjoy working, learning, shopping, relaxing and enjoying time with friends and colleagues and cultural events.

Currently the North Sydney CBD caters for a large number of office workers, tertiary and school students, and residents. The footpaths are overcrowded and there are little public outdoor spaces in the sun to eat lunch and relax.

With such limited public outdoor spaces and entertainment venues and no cultural facilities, the North Sydney CBD is the exact opposite to the vibrant neighbourhoods Sydney Metro claim they will be creating with their station developments.

The State Government, in its North District Plan, has set housing and office development targets for the North Sydney CBD which will add 21,000 extra workers and 196,000 additional residents by 2036. With this many additional people using local services and public spaces, there will be a dramatic increase in pressure on the NSCBD for quality public spaces and facilities as places for cultural and social interaction.

One of the key objectives of the North District Plan is to deliver high quality civic and public spaces which can be utilised for a variety of cultural and entertainment activities and designing places for people.

Where else can the NSCBD achieve such quality civic and public spaces but on land owned by the State Government incorporating the entrance to the Victoria Cross station? This development proposal should be redesigned as a large public square with any buildings designed to enhance the civic and recreational functions of North Sydney's main public square.

This site is ideal for North Sydney's main public square as it is the only property which faces north west and is guaranteed its solar access by low scale educational facilities to its north.

In marked contrast to Sydney Metro's claims they are 're-imagining places' with tailor-made place-making to realise each area's opportunities, this proposal crams an oversized commercial tower with large floor plates on a site which is obviously too small.

To try and achieve this excessive floorspace, the proposed building envelope encroaches significantly onto the Miller and Berry Street setbacks as defined in North Sydney Council's Planning controls. These development standards have been established to protect the winter sun access to the limited public outdoor recreation areas in the centre of North Sydney. It is astounding that this proposal neither respects or complies with these.

In marked contrast to Sydney Metro claims that it is designing places to encourage walking and social interaction, the public circulation details of this proposal are completely inadequate.

There appears to be an inadequate width of the cross block public link between Denison and Miller Streets leading to the Metro station entry. The EIS documents do not specify any dimension of the cross link but it appears on drawings within the 18m setback from the MLC building. This incorporates retail and the metro station entry which is considered to be too narrow to allow the expected 15,500 commuters using the station in the morning and evening peaks.

The artist's impressions in the Metro publications and the EIS present false images of a very generous station entry and a spacious 3 storey colonnade. The architectural plans and the physical model show no colonnade to Miller Street and only narrow pedestrian access within the 18m wide setback from the MLC building. This is deceptive and misrepresents the reality of the proposed building's inadequate public domain around the Metro station.

Despite claims that Sydney Metro will work closely with local communities, consultation so far has been inadequate, poorly advertised and largely a box ticking exercise which insults the local community. The fact no comprehensive Stakeholder Engagement details or what issues were raised by various stakeholders are included, is clear evidence of this.

Finally there is no Public Domain Strategy included in this proposal just the focus on building envelope and pedestrian access with only vague statements such as; 'Deliver a high quality built form that exhibits design excellence, is a landmark building and responds sympathetically to the surrounding heritage buildings.'

The EIS overview brochures states that 'design excellence principles will support the peacemaking and urban design requirements of creating vibrant public spaces for social and cultural interaction and contributing to the vibrant and accessible streets and open spaces around the station.'

These objectives have not been fulfilled in this proposal for Victoria Cross station.

In conclusion I strongly object to this proposal and urge the Department to reject it as it fails to comply with the North Sydney LEP, key objectives of the North District Plan for the North Sydney CBD and the Sydney Metro's own stated place-making objectives. Finally it fails the community by squandering a once in a generation opportunity to transform the North Sydney CBD with the creation of a high quality civic space in the form of a major public square for North Sydney.

Yours

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