

## **Response to Parramatta Light Rail EIS**

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23 October 2017

This submission is made on behalf of Western Sydney University by the Office of Estate Master Planning and Strategy and the Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research, Engagement, Development and International.

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The University welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the Parramatta Light Rail (PLR) stage one EIS.

We note that Western is the only single entity of size (save the state and local government) affected by the PLR at multiple points across the proposed network: Rydalmere, Parramatta CBD and Westmead. The University's campus at Rydalmere has an enrolled headcount of nearly 15,000 students, and this is expected to be maintained over time. Our Parramatta CBD campus houses the School of Business—some 7,000 by headcount—with the capacity to accommodate up to 10,000 students. The mixed-use redevelopment of the Westmead campus will support student, worker and residential populations of up to 2,500, 2,000 and 1,900 respectively.

In sum, students and staff of Western Sydney University, and members of the public who access our campuses, will be major users across the PLR, activating the whole network throughout peak and off-peak periods from the PLR's earliest operations. Maximising their participation will be a key component of the PLR's success.

### **Rydalmere Stop Location Options**

The University continues to hold a strong view that a Rydalmere stop that does not offer direct access to the Rydalmere campus and links between the campus and the Rydalmere industrial estate fails the students and staff of Western Sydney University and the continued development of the Rydalmere industrial estate.

The University urges the PLR team to reconsider the position stated in the EIS and commit to an additional stop in the south-eastern corner of the Rydalmere campus as part of the stage one conversion of the existing T6 line.

The EIS makes the following remarks in relation to the choice of the existing Rydalmere heavy rail stop as the location for the planned PLR stop:

While it was considered that the additional stop would provide some benefits, including improved public transport connections to the Rydalmere campus and potential improvements to the Rydalmere industrial area, the additional light rail stop was also identified to have the following disadvantages:

- Minor increased project construction and ongoing maintenance/operational costs due to the construction of a second stop.
- An overall increase in travel times for the operation of the project, reducing identified project benefits and therefore reduced patronage of the system.
- Would result in reduced potential vegetation impacts, including potential impacts on endangered ecological communities.

The provision of a single, consolidated stop at the location of the existing Rydalmere Station was therefore considered to be the preferred option.

The project alignment would also not preclude a future additional stop serving the Western Sydney University (Parramatta campus), to the southern edge of the campus in the future, should demand provide an opportunity for this. (3-54)

After an extended consultation period during which two of the key stakeholders in the area – the University and Parramatta City Council – made strong and consistent representations to the PLR project team concerning the deficiencies of the heavy rail stop location, the response contained in the EIS is disappointing. Similarly, it is difficult to imagine what demand case can be put to convince Transport to construct a second Rydalmere stop once a substandard solution is in place.

The following unpacks the rationale for declining a second stop location and provides information concerning the University's proposed second stop location with the intention of prompting a reconsideration of the position stated in the EIS.

#### *1. Increased construction costs*

The costs of building and maintaining a second PLR station at Rydalmere have not been provided by the PLR team. Presumably, there is underlying detail behind this rationale for not providing a second stop. The University would welcome a discussion in which the forecast costs were compared with the increased amenity provided by a second stop.

#### *2. Travel times and patronage*

The claim that patronage would be reduced by the creation of a stop located at the University due to an increase in travel times is without evidence. In fact, current user reactions to the heavy rail stop are poor, suggesting that the use of the existing rail stop will not encourage students to use the PLR to access Western's Rydalmere campus.

During the consultation period the PLR project group indicated that they believed the frequency of service will be the key determinant of increased demand for the PLR service

along the former T6 corridor. The PLR's service frequency, with a pattern of one service every ten minutes, is vastly better than the current twice hourly service on the T6. The EIS estimates that trips from Parramatta to Rydalmere will take 10 minutes. In terms of an on-board journey time, the current heavy rail line provides a 14 minute journey between the same destinations. With the lowest transfer time possible, that journey time increases to 21 minutes. From Clyde to Rydalmere by heavy rail takes eight minutes. Presumably, the PLR will be slightly less – however the EIS is not explicit in this regard.

The University agrees with the PLR team that increased service frequency will be the crucial factor delivering an uplift in demand for PLR services on the former T6 line. In the context of the existing travel time savings estimated to accrue through the PLR over existing heavy rail services, a two minute addition created by an additional stop location at the Rydalmere campus is negligible. Particularly since service frequency, and not speed, will be the major demand driver on the PLR team's own account.

The University currently provides a shuttle service between the Parramatta CBD (corner of Smith and Macquarie St) and its Rydalmere campus (stop location on the Western edge of the campus in front of the main teaching buildings) on a turn up and go basis. The Macquarie St stop is slightly closer to the heavy rail stop than the planned CBD light rail stop. The shuttle bus travel time between the CBD and Rydalmere campuses is approximately 10 minutes. The University provides these shuttle services free.

Our current shuttle bus passenger numbers are provided in the tables immediately below.

<b>Bus #</b>	<b>0645-1200hrs</b>	<b>1200-1730hrs</b>	<b>1730-2250hrs</b>
Bus 1	1351	655	327
Bus 2	855	566	0
Bus 3	1072	678	274
Bus 4	878	612	0
Bus 5	944	0	367
Bus 6	762	399	0
Bus 7	910	0	0
Total	6772	2910	968

*Table 1: Normal Semester Week. Parramatta City Campus to Building EA (Rydalmere Campus)*

<b>Bus #</b>	<b>0645-1200hrs</b>	<b>1200-1730hrs</b>	<b>1730-2250hrs</b>
Bus 1	814	1606	563

Bus 2	443	951	0
Bus 3	1198	843	314
Bus 4	1078	779	0
Bus 5	745	0	556
Bus 6	1018	502	0
Bus 7	873	0	0
Total	6169	4681	1433

*Table 2: Normal Semester Week, Building EA (Rydalmere Campus) to Parramatta City Campus*

This is a total of nearly 23,000 passenger movements per week to and from the Rydalmere campus during semester.

Our experience is that students travelling from west and south of Parramatta are choosing to use a combination of public transport and shuttle bus services to access our Parramatta campuses. This mode shift has been induced through better communication with students, better recognition of Western's CBD footprint, and, most importantly, the provision of a convenient, reliable and frequent service. The PLR's short-term success depends on it capturing most of these students. However, when one compares the University shuttle to the proposed PLR Rydalmere service, it seems unlikely that these passengers will be won over to the PLR:

<b>Western Shuttle Bus</b>	<b>Proposed PLR Rydalmere service</b>
10 minute journey time	10 minute journey time
Turn up and go	10 minute service pattern
Close to heavy rail station	Close to heavy rail station
Safe drop off with 24hr security at origin and destination	Rydalmere stop: active transport lacking passive surveillance, poor perceptions of student safety
Stops at centre of both campuses	Rydalmere stop located ~8 minutes from campus centre
Free	Paid

To put it simply: the PLR's service to Rydalmere should not be compared only to the existing heavy rail service. The University's shuttle buses offer a safer, more convenient service that is equally fast and frequent. In the face of an inferior service offering that costs them money, students will continue to use the University's free shuttle service unless a better PLR stop option is provided.

### *3. Reduced potential vegetation impacts*

If this is not a typographical error, it would seem strange that the EIS would advance a rationale that claimed a benefit to establishing a second Rydalmere stop was a reason not to establish one.

To take the possible error seriously, we agree. A second Rydalmere stop that connected with the University would remove the necessity for an extensive active transport link back into campus from the existing Rydalmere heavy rail stop. This would reduce clearing in the remnant bushland around Vineyard Creek and would be a better outcome for the environment.

### *4. PLR: stage two*

An announcement was recently made indicating that stage two of the PLR will have an alignment north of the Parramatta River. This alignment was not previously proposed for consultation alongside the previous options for PLR stage one and two provided to stakeholders. Further, on the limited information available, this alignment seems to connect with stage one of the PLR at the point favoured by the University for a second Rydalmere stop location.

**The PLR team should revisit a second Rydalmere stop in light of the junction location of the Carlingford PLR line and PLR stage two. The University welcomes urgent consultation on this matter.**

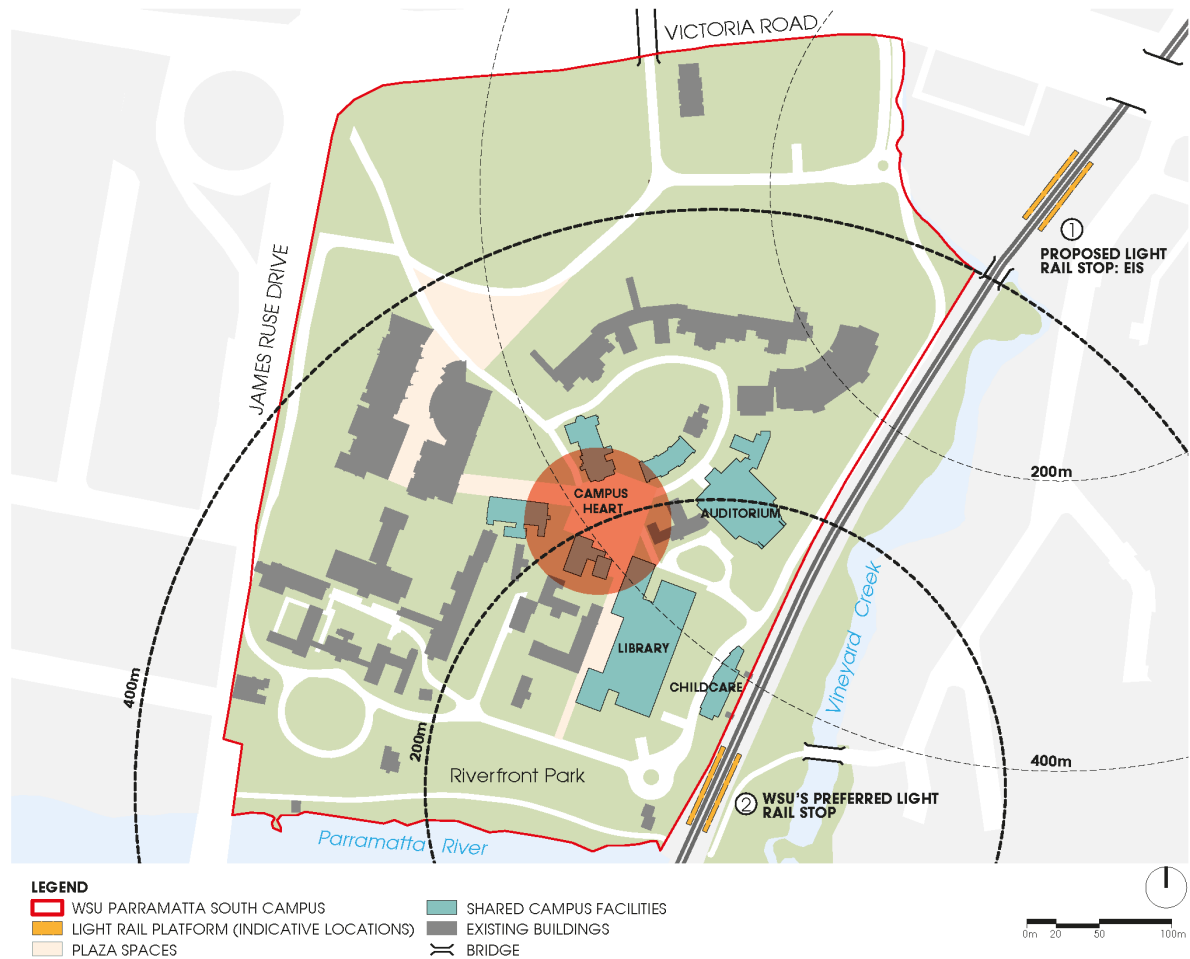
### *5. Proposed second stop: detail*

The following information is provided to the EIS to provide a firmer idea of the location and benefits of a second Rydalmere PLR stop.

Western's proposed second stop is in the south-east corner of the Rydalmere campus, close to the existing active transport link along the Parramatta River into the Parramatta CBD.

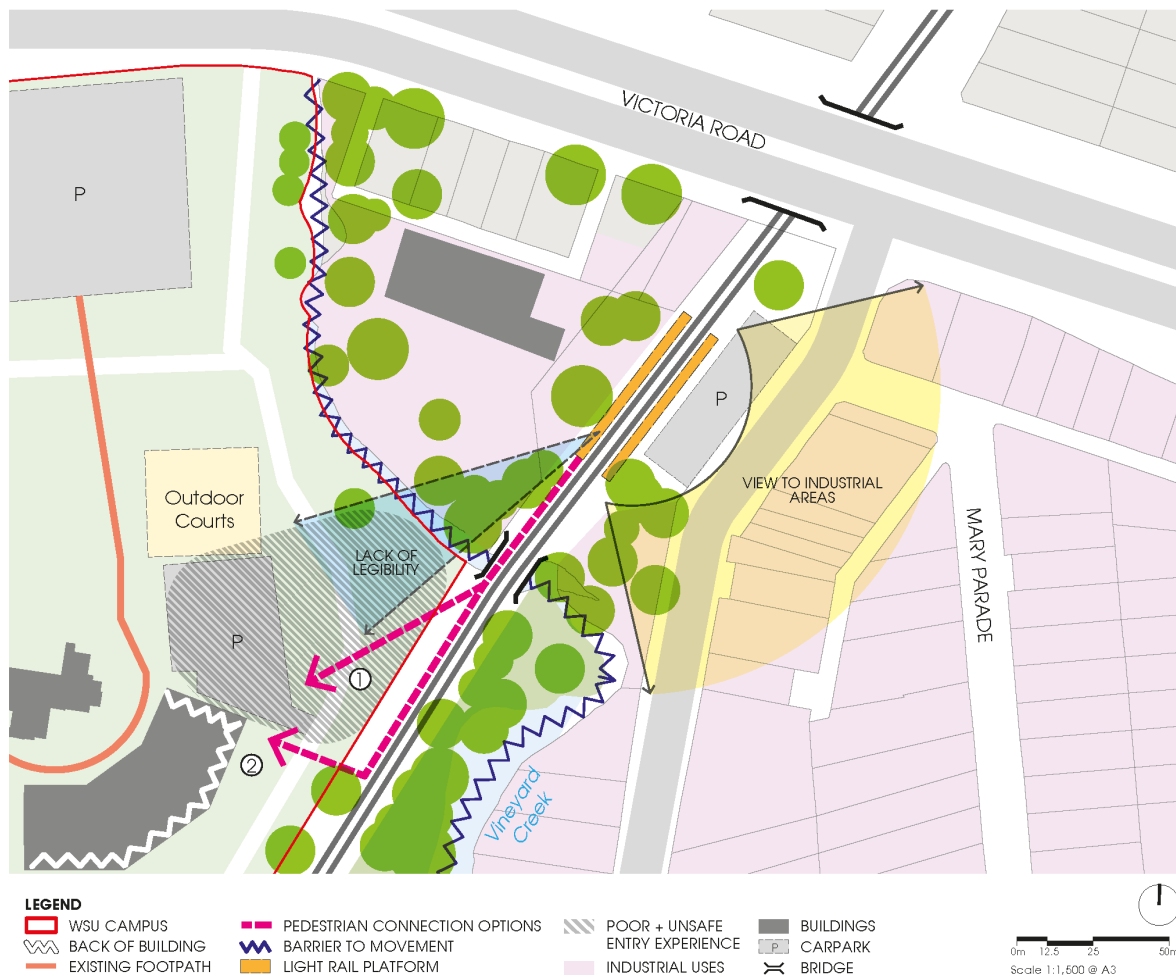
From the second stop students may directly access the campus, with the centre of the campus 200m from the stop and the entire campus footprint within 400m of the stop. Access to the Rydalmere industrial estate is across an existing footbridge adjacent to the station.

Conversely, the existing Rydalmere stop requires those wishing to access the campus to double back to their destination through a less intensively used section of the University via an as yet uncreated active transport link.



The difference in access distances between the two stops is significant, but not remarkable. However, the access experience is very different.

The diagram below outlines some of the deficiencies of the existing Rydalmere stop.

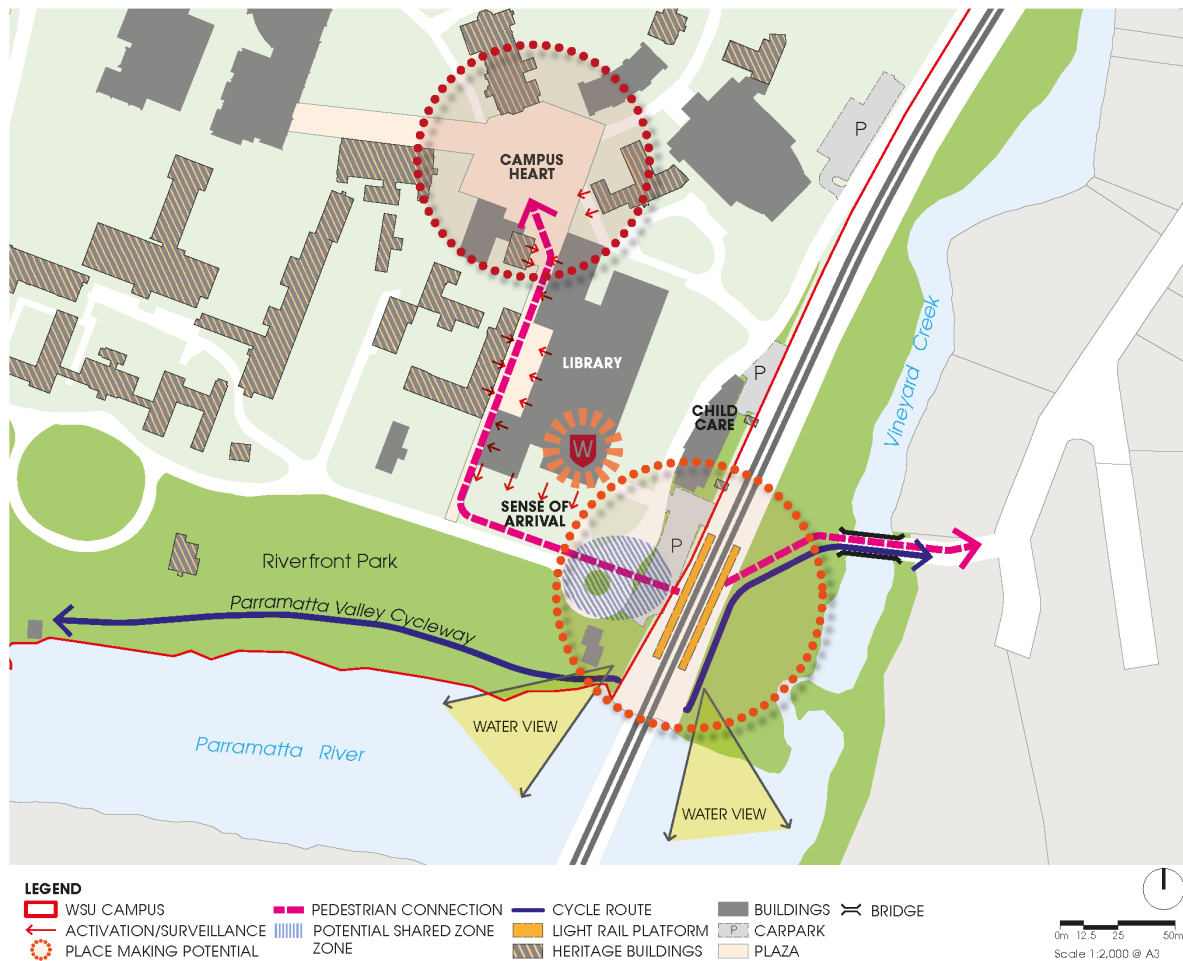


CAMPUS ACCESS FROM PROPOSED LIGHT RAIL STOP LOCATION: CONSTRAINTS

Ostensibly, the PLR Rydalmere stop is intended to serve Western's Rydalmere campus. However, the stop has no line of sight to the campus. Passengers alight with an industrial zone to the east, a large shed to the west, and the busy Victoria Road to the north. Remnant bushland screens the campus. While the PLR anticipates that urban uplift will evolve around PLR stations over time, there is no existing sense of place at the Rydalmere stop, and it is difficult to see, given the ownership and uses of the contiguous sites, how one will emerge.

Student safety is a major concern for the University. While we note the PLR team's commitment to incorporating safety into their design, any active transport link back into the University from the Rydalmere site will provide poor passive surveillance along a less intensively used side of the University campus.

A number of benefits accrue from the station location of the proposed Rydalmere second stop, illustrated below:



CAMPUS ACCESS FROM THE PREFERRED LIGHT RAIL STOP LOCATION: BENEFITS

- > Legible sense of arrival at Rydalmere campus
- > Passive surveillance (Library, Cafes, teaching spaces)
- > Proximity to active transport link along Parramatta River
- > Access to non-University users for heritage and community use sites – Whitlam Institute at the Female Orphan School; Graduation Auditorium; Library; Restaurants/Cafes
- > Access to potential future redevelopment sites along northern side of Parramatta River to the east of the Rydalmere campus.

### Rydalmere: access, site works, and impacts

Construction of the light rail may have an impact on sensitive materials characterisation equipment housed in the northern wing of building EHa, located in the north-east of the campus. The University looks forward to consulting on this matter.

The University requests more detail and consultation concerning the proposed compound arrangements on its Rydalmere campus (see 6-27). In particular, the retaining and fill work to create a flat site adjacent to the Camellia bridge may be extensive – and disruptive – due to the slope of the site.

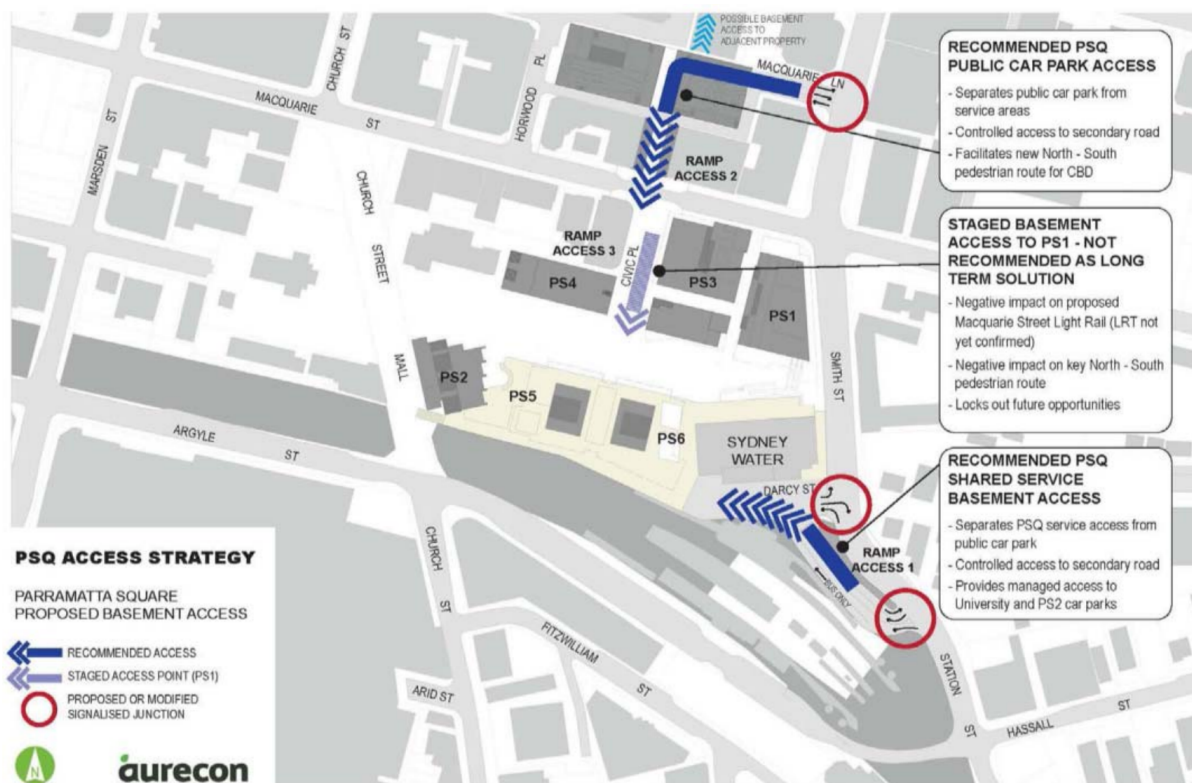


We remind the PLR team of the regular vehicle traffic between 7am and 7pm on the Rydalmere campus ring road mooted as the access road to the two construction compounds. The University strongly recommends that the transfer of large plant and materials be conducted outside of these times, and welcomes further discussion of how disruptive heavy vehicle traffic can be minimised.

The University notes that the construction compounds will require provision for worker parking. The University's campuses at both Rydalmere and Westmead have significantly constrained parking availability.

### Parramatta CBD: changed traffic conditions

The University notes the planned traffic changes to Macquarie St and, in particular, the plans for car park access to Parramatta Square outlined at 5-43 of the EIS. While the existing carpark access to 1PSQ is located where figure 5.16 suggests, a more permanent solution to access to public underground car parking at Parramatta Square is contained in the Parramatta Square Access Strategy (Aurecon 2015). In this strategy, the underground carpark in Parramatta Square is accessed via Civic Place and then, Macquarie Lane.



PSQ Access Strategy

The University looks forward to working with the PLR team to resolve any difficulties that may arise with the changed Macquarie St traffic conditions, including:

- > Any difficulty in turning in to the Civic Lane 1PSQ vehicle access
- > The provision of safe sightlines in exiting if the PLR stop is in use

- > Managing increased pedestrian movement.