



Counterpoint Community Services INC
67 Raglan Street Waterloo NSW 2017



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02-9698-9569



September 21, 2022

Dear Minister,

RE: Waterloo South Redevelopment Response to Submissions

We write at the request of the Waterloo Redevelopment Tenant-Only Subgroup of the Waterloo Neighbourhood Advisory Board (WRG Subgroup).

The WRG Subgroup comprises of elected tenant representatives from the Waterloo public housing estate and other interested Waterloo tenants to elevate tenants' voices concerning the Waterloo redevelopment and related areas.

The WRG Subgroup has been vocal about their dissatisfaction with DPE's response to submissions of Waterloo South and has requested that their concerns be formally submitted.

Since the Waterloo redevelopment was announced in 2015, Waterloo tenants have been consulted by various stakeholders. Over time, tenants have felt that these consultations have been tokenistic and have not reflected a genuine attempt to engage Waterloo tenants in the co-design of their community. In addition, there have been periods of stasis where the politics of the redevelopment paralysed progress and tenants were left in an unnecessary indeterminate and anxious state.

Despite the growing scepticism and apathy of Waterloo tenants, the community welcomed the opportunity to comment on the planning proposal to rezone the south portion of the Waterloo estate. Extraneous circumstances aside including poor weather and the Covid-19 pandemic, tenants felt that the methodology used by the Department to consult residents during the Statutory Exhibition did not do enough to reach a representative number of residents, particularly those without adequate literacy levels or access to technology. Despite these engagement challenges, members of the WRG Subgroup actively engaged with the Department of Planning, attended capacity-building workshops, and wrote informed submissions to the proposal.

The WRG Subgroup appreciates that there are a variety of opinions about the Waterloo redevelopment. DPE must grapple with this diversity when making recommendations for Gateway. However, the Subgroup is deeply disappointed with how DPE responded to submissions and issues presented therein, rather than the changes to the planning proposal.

The report prepared by Keylan Consulting is too general and breaks submissions down to general vital issues and some sub-issues with many dismissed or omitted. For example, in



The Factory Community Centre
67 Raglan St Waterloo NSW 2017



Counterpoint Multicultural Centre
73 Garden St Alexandria NSW 2015



Counterpoint Poet's Corner Pre-school
55 Morehead St Redfern NSW 2016



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relation to housing mix, the only response provided in the Keylan Submissions Report to the issues raised is that “the proposed housing mix is in accordance with the Gateway determination’s minimum number of social homes, and the requirement to determine the appropriate amount of affordable housing. **As such, the mix is considered appropriate to deliver a good redevelopment outcome**”. The response begs the question of what the purpose of a statutory exhibition is if the feedback will simply be dismissed because the proposal meets the minimum set out by the Gateway determination? What is the purpose of community consultation if the decision has already largely been made? Another example is the complete lack of consideration of a Social Impact Assessment even though a large number of submissions raised the need for one.

The WRG Subgroup believes that the community’s views and concerns were mainly dismissed without adequate consideration or explanation.

Given the substantial volume and quality of submissions made to the planning proposal, one would expect that the DPE would respect the time people took to make submissions and respond to the issues raised with care and consideration.

The group also raised transparency concerns, given that the Keylan Submissions Report did not adequately cover critical areas presented by NSW government agencies and the City of Sydney in their submissions that led to changes in the proposal.

Nowhere in the Keylan Submissions Report does it indicate the weight placed on issues raised in submissions to illustrate their importance.

The WRG Subgroup feels that other powerful interests have superseded the interests and wishes of the local community and other independent experts.

As such, the WRG Subgroup feel disempowered to continue engaging in the process and understandably cynical about the aims of the Waterloo redevelopment.

While tenants were pleased to see that the decision was made not to open Pitt St to McEvoy St, the WRG Subgroup does not think this small win excused how DPE responded to other issues.

The WRG Subgroup would like to know why Waterloo tenants should continue actively engaging with the redevelopment process when the first formal statutory exhibition produces a poor response to their input after seven years. Specifically, the WRG Subgroup make the following two requests:

1. Explain why the Department thinks it appropriate to respond to the issues raised concerning what is a very large and impactful project with a few dismissive lines expressed as 'observations.
2. What commitment can the Department make to improving any future exhibition process, including its response to submissions?

The WRG Subgroup thank you for your consideration and look forward to a written response.

Yours faithfully,

Adam Antonelli
Community Development Project Officer

