Some comments on the *Final Social Baseline Report – Waterloo* by GHD for Urban Growth, dated September 2018

This report provides a good social profile of the Waterloo Estate and suburb and includes useful lists of some services and facilities open to the public in these areas. However, as a social baseline report, it is conventional in scope and there are some important omissions.

1   **Definition of social sustainability**

Section 3.1 is titled Definition of social sustainability. This section does not provide a definition of social sustainability. This is a basic flaw.

The section states that a socially sustainable community 'can be achieved through high quality outcomes'. Without a definition it is unclear what this concept means or what is needed to achieve it.

The outcomes statement includes reassuring words such as inclusion, diversity, safety and equity, These motherhood words are easy to bandy about but as outcomes they are difficult to achieve without a clear definition as a starting point.

As a result, this section is misleading because it doesn't provide a definition and treats outputs as inputs.

2   **Omissions**

The Report omits some important social issues including:

i   the increasing social and economic divide in the Greater Sydney metropolitan area to which this development will add
ii   the role of licenced and gaming premises as social infrastructure
iii   privatisation of social infrastructure
iv   current Department of Planning development strategies which result in dense concentrations of new dwellings in prescribed areas (rather than being spread across more areas) E.g. the policy currently known as 'planned precincts' which focuses on transport hubs.
v   inadequate health and building inspection regimes resulting in buildings with construction problems
vi   social impacts on residential areas of online retail
vii   the street as social infrastructure
viii   Aboriginal issues and concerns.

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These are described briefly below.

i   **The social divide**

There is an extensive body of social research pointing to the role of relative equality in achieving stable social environments including in areas of urban density. Among other things, relative equality requires clear controls over the number, proportion and distribution of social and affordable housing. This study does not address this issue. The study notes the social gradient of health on individuals but not the social and health consequences of spatial segregation of income groups.

This project will add to the current divide in Sydney (both the LGA and GSCCA) because

- The proposed development only aims to maintain the current number of social housing dwellings, not the same, or anywhere near the same, proportion
- low income housing is one of the promises at risk of being abandoned early in the development.

The report says that the new developments in Waterloo will increase housing diversity, but this statement only makes sense vis – a – vis the current concentration of social housing on the estate. It does not make sense with regard to the broader context. In the broader context it is clear that the new development will not be providing increased diversity, but will reduce the proportion of housing available for people on low incomes. It is misleading to represent this in these terms and to report it as a social benefit.

ii   **Licensed and gaming premises**

The City of Sydney LGA has more than two thousand licensed premises[1], a policy of encouraging late trading and large areas which are hotspots for alcohol-related crimes. These hotspots are much larger than the public housing estates in the LGA as Figure 14 in the report makes clear. Further, research by the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research has established that alcohol-related violence is associated with trading after midnight, not the presence of elderly public housing residents.

The report does not address the fact that licenced on-premises, including bars, hotels and clubs are the social infrastructure most widely used by the anticipated incoming younger residents. Their distribution, density and trading

[1] 2307 on 1 November 2018

hours will affect all residents not just the people who frequent them. The City's emphasis on alcohol as recreational infrastructure is part of the social baseline.

iii **Privatisation of social infrastructure**

In describing various facilities and services currently available, the report does not make clear the relative distribution of publicly available / free and privately provided facilities and services. Privatisation of social infrastructure results in differential access for residents based on capacity to pay. Privatised social infrastructure includes coffee shops, pools and gyms. Privatisation of social infrastructure adds to the social divide and is likely adversely to affect social housing residents.

iv **Planned precincts around transport hubs**

This policy results in significant population densities around transport nodes while leaving other areas, for example established low rise, high income suburbs, relatively untouched. The effect of this policy is to add to the social divide in Sydney. The policy is not new and is part of the social baseline.

v **Construction failings**

The currently inadequate building inspection and certification regime is part of the baseline because of its social consequences. For public housing tenants there is the reasonable concern that construction short cuts will be used to deliver cheaply constructed buildings which look good but have a number of inadequacies. This is not a new issue, the Waterloo Estate currently contains several buildings which are examples of poor construction in the past. These buildings and this issue are part of the social baseline.

Grenfell Tower (London) is the clear example of the fact that construction short cuts have serious social consequences. Although the report says that public housing should be well constructed, 'should' is no guarantee.

vi **Social impacts of online retail**

The study does not deal with the shift in retail from street front premises to online. This is part of the current baseline social environment. Gentrification will add to this trend by placing small local retailers under increased pressure and encouraging expensive (high end) retail in street front premises. There are several significant social issues e.g.

    a   loss of local fresh food retailers

    b   issues associated with delivery services (evening delivery of alcohol, security and theft, as examples)

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c   the interface between residential towers and the street - change to the profile of retail at street level raises questions about surveillance, safety and opportunities for public use.
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vii   The street as social infrastructure

The study does not present the (pedestrian) pavement as social infrastructure and thus does not raise any issues about conflicting uses of pedestrian walkways. For example, pedestrians are vulnerable to bicycles (if there are no separate cycle paths) skateboards, and scooters. When the street is considered social infrastructure, it raises questions about seats, shade, safety and general amenity. The baseline has not been documented.

viii   Aboriginal issues and concerns

The baseline study proposes that the interests of ATSI residents can be dealt with by consultation - while the planning is finalised and construction gets underway?

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