



**Submission on the proposed
Waterloo Metro Quarter
Over Station Development**

Counterpoint Community Services Inc
November 2020

About Counterpoint Community Services INC

Counterpoint Community Services Inc. provides a wide range of community support services in the Inner City and South East Sydney LGAs. We have operated in the heart of Waterloo since 1977, with a particular focus on working with social housing tenants and diverse communities.

We operate The Factory Community Centre in Waterloo, Counterpoint Multicultural Centre in Alexandria, Poet's Corner pre-school in Redfern and act as the lead agency for many local grass-root groups and services.

Our comments

We are writing to express our comments and views informed by our work with the community we serve, concerning the Waterloo Metro Quarter Over-Station Development - Amending Concept and associated DA's.

Context concerns remain

The actual or planned developments within Waterloo and the decoupling of this specific site from the planning of the Waterloo social housing estate continues to make it challenging for the existing community to complete a fully informed assessment of this or any other proposal in the area.

The previous response that the Metro Quarter has been designed to stand on its own merit flies in the face of the shared value and wise principle of integrated planning for self-explanatory reasons. Furthermore, we reject the argument that the Waterloo Estate SSP Study has been mainly progressed in parallel with the Metro Quarter as it is clearly untrue given the ever-changing nature of the plan. An example of this is the Metro Quarter plans make no indication of its solar impact in the potential public space on the Waterloo estate site, and the reason given is because it doesn't yet exist, which we find very concerning as well as the community.

Many of our clients, the bulk of whom are immediate neighbours of this site, are the people most likely to be impacted. These people remain disempowered, confused, ill-informed and concerned. Many are disengaged through no fault of their own, and those who are engaged are left frustrated by broken promises and by the ever-shifting landscape of their community and the planning landscape that is supposed to be led by their input.

Community consultation concerns

There are those in the community that object and others that support the concept. However, the community engagement process for capturing such legitimate views remains from our perspective inadequate.

Locally agreed community engagement standards were not met and made worse by the withdrawal of LAHC/DPIE resourcing of the independent community development worker, capacity builder, Aboriginal liaison officers and bilingual educators in June 2020. This disappointingly reignites previously addressed concerns of equality for social housing communities in the planning process.

The pre-lodgement consultations by the proponent was welcome. However, were significantly disadvantaged by Covid19 restrictions and the effectiveness of which questionable. The offer of exhibition space and meeting of groups in person within Covid19 safe spaces was not taken up, leaving many groups and individuals not reached.

The refusal of DPIE to make available print copies of the exhibition material or have face to face drop-in points and reliance on online engagement and confusingly splitting the site into five separate DA process has caused a significant number of excluded the waterloo residents from this statutory process.

General comment on amended proposed plans

We congratulate and thank the proponents for their attempts to address concerns raised during the original planning exhibition approval process.

We are confident that many in the community will welcome the reduced density, height reductions, and increase in the commercial focus as many believed this is more suited to the site.

However, some of our original previous submitted concerns remain

- We remain disappointed that there was no health impact study completed, nor was there any community safety strategy or poverty strategy

embedded in the project. The impact of immediate residents during the tunnelling of the station was clearly evident to local support providers.

- The reduction in building height will be welcomed by many. However, it is not clear that planning controls will protect any future request to extend these heights in the future as has happened in other nearby sites.
- We are also aware of the nuance of the proponents talking about volume floor reduction when commercial floors tend to be higher can be wrongly interpreted.
- There will be those that also argue that by not maximising the previously approved envelope of higher buildings may lead to a missed opportunity in terms of providing more social and affordable housing.
- The re-focus of the development to a student demographic provides concerns in that the previously overstated government policy of balanced social mix policy appears not to be met. This is also in the context that there has been a significant number of student focus developments in the local area in recent times and the potential danger of oversupply for one demographic. This is also true with the ongoing short term misplaced focus on building smaller apartments.
- The commitment to retaining the original 70 new Social housing is welcomed; however, again not adequate in the context of need/demand. We note that there will be a reduction in affordable housing units due to the lower density proposal, which is also disappointing.
- Student accommodation is supported where needed; however, the proposal of student accommodation appears to be opposite of what the community was advised from the planners of the last decade
- student accommodation makes it problematic when building a community with a connection or sense of place given the transient nature of the cohort in question and may present a unique set of challenges to the immediate neighbourhood.
- Student accommodation that has the potential to morph into boarding housing tends to be smaller and not as high quality as other developments and potentially inferior to what was initially promised, driven by economics rather than public demand.

- It is unclear if the quoted employment creation figures are realistic, short term or long term or what protection will be in place to ensure these opportunities remain local. As highlighted in the previous submission, a local employment strategy would have addressed this concern.
- We are concerned that earlier proposals of a community centre and joint health one facility appear to have been lost and dropped during recent government restructures. We are concerned by the indication of the proponent that they have providers secured. This was without input from the community or local providers and with no overall facility and social infrastructure plan for Waterloo.
- We are of the view that the proposal does not adequately address long-standing concerns regarding traffic congestion around the site or safe pedestrian accesses /connectivity and is a missed opportunity by the government, not the proponent.
- During the planning process, many issues raised by the community are deferred to be addressed during the proponents contracting and tendering phase. However, the community has not had input to that processes to date and unlikely to have, which in our view is a deceptive practice, which is repeated in other development proposals.

Specific comments on:-

Northern Precinct SSD-10440 (Commercial Building)

- Possible light pollution from the office building at night
- Decrease of affordable housing from the original residential to commercial
- Our view is that there is inadequate provision of parking for workers and customers evidenced by lack of current parking before any increase in density. The assumption that all stakeholders utilising the space regularly will use the metro system is flawed.
- We note no guarantee that commercial aspect will have balanced affordable, space for startups or reduced or rent-free space for community providers.

Central Precinct SSD-10439

- No social mixed considered; this may create a sense of exclusivity for the building, especially when it comes to local amenities and community space.
- The proposed affordable housing (24 dwellings) is grossly insufficient, given the high demand for affordable housing in the local area. That it is not held in ownership by a government agency is further concerning. However, we commend the commitment to maintain the proposed affordable housing in perpetuity.
- Private open space including Level 1 planting and a rooftop residential terrace only accessible by the residents of the building; discouraging holistic community development may create a disjointed community.
- The private management of public space is, in our view, ill-advised and it should be handed over to public control.

Placemaking /management

- Nature of use for the “community hub” not specified.
- Funding model of community / cultural/social / health facilities and activities were unclear.
- Missed opportunity for a Social Impact Assessment (SIA) to consider shared use of facilities in conjunction with the overall Waterloo Redevelopment.
- Placemaking strategies are lacking for the area with limited attention to the physical, cultural, and social identities that define Waterloo Metro Quarter and support its ongoing evolution.

Southern Precinct

- We disappointingly note that there is no provision for Aboriginal housing.
- It is the strong position of Counterpoint that there should be a minimum of 5% affordable housing in all new developments and 5% Aboriginal specific affordable housing.
- The amount of social housing should be measured by the number occupants as 70 dwellings could be all studios/1 bedroom apartments.
- There was no health impact statement provided, including concerning effects of small dwellings. Small apartments may increase affordability, but they also create other problems – such as isolation leading to health issues.
- Isolating social housing within a single building may create stigma.

Basement Car Park

- The communities' views on the topic of parking are diverse. On the one hand, it is recognised that there should be minimal parking (as proposed in the DA) as the development sits above a Metro station. However, others will argue that the increase in residential and commercial will increase existing problematic parking issues in the area.

Other issues

- Pedestrian traffic was also raised as a concern, particularly movement across Botany road to South Eveleigh.
- Concerns exist in regards to the currently congested traffic on Botany Road, and surround will be heightened to unmanageable levels
- The surrounding streets are already congested and will be worsened by the proposal and WestConnex.
- There needs to be adequate pedestrian and bike paths around the Metro Quarter to maximise the safety of pedestrian and bike riders and to encourage walking/public/bike transportation.
- Limited details on cultural/community dynamics strategies for residents from different backgrounds; such as ATSI, CALD, social housing, migrants, families, youth etc.

THANK YOU

For further info, kindly contact:

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