

Draft North District Plan

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Submission content: Thank you for the opportunity to comment. My main concern is with the North District Plan due to my knowledge and interest in conservation of the natural and built heritage within this area. I am concerned that the revised draft Plan is still inadequate in terms of how it will implement the ESD objectives which are the guiding principles for the Commission's work. Without over-arching strategies that sustain our natural capital and ensure a cohesive, equitable society it will be difficult to guarantee that an ever-expanding resource-hungry Sydney can exist in equilibrium with a healthy functioning environment. Sydney is uniquely positioned to be a global city that continues to support and value indigenous culture, heritage, native wildlife and biodiversity at its core. This will not be possible if the level of growth continues at the current pace. The assumption that we can continue with the annual increase in population that we have been experiencing is highly questionable. I would ask that the Commission uses its position to influence the State and Federal governments to reduce intake numbers to a level where our major cities have the capacity to cope without social disruption and environmental deterioration. Our built heritage must be better protected and respected, and our bushland and public open space managed for its intrinsic values. I am fortunate to live in a suburban area where

significant reserves have been protected by powerful community action - such as Kelly's Bush and the Field of Mars - and many other bushland remnants have also been saved by local residents across the Sydney basin, and will continue to be. Many of us are concerned by the loss of mature tree cover and trees in our neighbourhoods since the introduction of the 10/50 rule which weakened a strong culture of tree protection that had grown over recent decades. The level of development we are now experiencing is putting even more of our urban forest at risk. The impacts of climate changes, including the heat island effect, will place further stress on our trees and vegetation. Strategies for mitigating climate change need far greater prominence in the Plans. The development industry would seem to have limited constraints placed on it by the state government. The community, not developer interests, must be the driver of how our cities grow and I don't believe enough voices and views are being heard. Across the suburbs, residents are appalled by what they see. The rapidly changing skyline, the lack of any aesthetic or design quality, constantly congested roads and over-crowded public transport systems - all seem to bear little resemblance to the future scenarios for Liveability & Sustainability described in the Plans. The push for high density is troubling. Gardens are disappearing, putting ever more pressure on green open spaces for recreation and connection to nature. Properly functioning neighbourhoods are harder to sustain in a high density residential environment. We need a planning system that takes social and environmental imperatives into account in equal measure with economics. I hope the work of the Greater Sydney Commission will engage the community in protecting the unique characteristics of our city and determine a better managed level of growth that benefits all.