

Draft Eastern District Plan

Submission_id: 31701

Date of Lodgment: 15 Dec 2017

Origin of Submission: Online

First name: Claire

Last name: Bettington

Suburb: 2035

Submission content: see attached pdf

Number of attachments: 1

Thank you for the opportunity to comment and make a submission.

I live in the Eastern City region of the Greater Sydney Region plan, at Maroubra.

Our area is liveable, and probably could be called a “30 minute city” already. Most people can walk or cycle to the nearest shops, the library, the cinema, schools, the beach, etc within 30 minutes.

It is a pleasant suburb, with wide streets, many houses with gardens, and street trees, although not as many as on the North Shore of Sydney due to the sandy nature of the soil. Street trees have to be tough here.

I want to make some general and specific comments about the GSC plans for our area.

General:

I am interested in planning, but I found it hard to have a great deal of input to the GSC before the plans were produced. There is a problem of communication: 99 people out of 100 have no idea that the GSC exists, or that it might affect their lives.

The GSC Bus Tour was a complete flop: the day the Bus was supposed to visit Maroubra Beach, a surf carnival was taking place, and the bus could go nowhere near the beach. Several people walked around looking for it, or for a stall at the beach, wanting to have a say on site. It was nowhere to be found.

No one saw the Commissioner for our area for the whole year of “consultation” before the Plans were announced; this is very poor form. Forums were very few and either very short or hard to get to. A properly run community consultation would have had sessions in every community centre in every suburb for at least a year. That is how they did it in the “Vancouver Model”.

Specific:

Population density increase

In the past, the State government has forced higher population densities on us, in the form of many high rise apartment blocks at Maroubra Junction, along Anzac Parade and Maroubra Road. From Maroubra Junction towards Maroubra Beach along Maroubra Rd, we have lost dozens of Federation Houses to 3 storey medium density units. There is a massive Meriton estate being built at Eastgardens – probably around 5000 units.

I see that Randwick Council is predicting that another 2250 dwellings in the next 5 years, which can probably be absorbed by the whole area in the form of a few more high rises, some more medium density units and some other subdivisions such as granny flats and duplexes. I find this a fairly reasonable rate of growth, if growth is what we have to have.

The only problem in this plan is that real estate prices have shot up alarmingly for those seeking their first home or for people who want to rent. No one on a low income can afford to live here unless they live in one of the many public housing estates. Several friends and acquaintances have had to move out West or away from Sydney altogether, as they can no longer afford to live here. It is splitting up families.

Affordability is a huge problem around here – what about all the workers on low wages, such as those at the airport, Port Botany and the hospitals – nurses, orderlies, cleaners, restaurant workers – they are being forced to commute long hours from more affordable suburbs. So while there is a good range of jobs in this area, and we are within commuting distance of the CBD, many people cannot afford to live here. None of your plans seems to tackle this problem in a comprehensive way.

Port Botany

Port Botany is a major employer, and has doubled in size in the last 10 years or so. This has caused tremendous problems of endless monster container trucks clogging the roads, spewing fumes, and noise increase – both from traffic and from the port operations – loud beeping occurs 24/7 when machinery, trucks and containers are being moved, disrupting the sleep of all in close proximity of the Port. There’s a plan to double the freight railway line, but it hasn’t happened yet. Meanwhile thousands of residents have had their lives disrupted and wrecked.

Tree Canopy

Our area has one of the very low tree canopy percentages in Sydney, and it is diminishing due to projects such as the Light Rail and the WestConnex. It was heartbreaking to watch a military-style operation when men with chainsaws moved in to remove 60 mature heritage trees along Alison Road for the Light Rail. Dozens more mature fig trees were removed around the Randwick Racecourse and along Wansey Road for the same purpose, including the iconic Tree of Knowledge at UNSW. Hundreds more trees have been removed or are still to be removed along the route of the Light Rail. Most of this destruction was utterly unnecessary – the Alison Road tree removal was an act of bastardry, as the route of the Light Rail was supposed to be along the southern side of Alison Rd, to service the Racecourse, but they intervened at the last minute to change the route so that we lost the trees, the bike path and public park. Many of us will never forgive the State government for such stupid and needless destruction. The Light Rail carnage continued on Anzac Parade, where dozens of 150 year old Fig Trees were removed from the Anzac Avenue of Honour, under which those who were killed at Gallipoli marched their last from Randwick barracks to Woolloomooloo.

Below: Alison Rd bike path under the trees on Friday, 9th January



Below: Alison Rd bike path trees gone on Monday, 12th January



Our street trees are also continually cut to ribbons by the butchers who “trim” the trees to clear the power lines of branches. It looks so ugly and affects the health of the trees, and makes the trees less suitable as habitat.

There is a project which you have not included in the draft plans: the extension of the WestConnex (Stage 3) which is known as the "A2MP" project. This stands for "Alexandria to Moore Park". I have sketched it in pink on top of your map, see below:



We will suffer the loss of a great many more mature Fig Trees along this route, at Waterloo Oval on McEvoy St, and at Dacey Avenue where it traverses Moore Park West. This road extension is also totally unnecessary, as it is being pushed upon us by the powerful SCG and Sports Stadium Trust – a cabal of powerful men: Alan Jones, Tony Shepherd, John Hartigan and Barry O’Farrell so that they can bring punters to the newly re-built stadium at Moore Park. Car parking will be in Moore Park East and West, connected by the Tibber Cotter Bridge built at great public expense some years ago for \$38m. The leaseholders of the Entertainment Quarter want this road too: Gerry Harvey and his mates are planning a huge revamp of the EQ, Fox Studios, the Hordern Pavilion, etc. so that they can make more profit. No one around here wants the loss of more mature Fig Trees, the new road, the loss of more public open space in Moore Park to car parking, the \$2bn spent on knocking down and rebuilding a perfectly good stadium (the SAME SIZE!!) which is never full, and all the other secret plans no one seems to know about until the contracts are written. Please look into this and see if you can find out more and stop it.

Light Rail

The Light Rail has already been mentioned in relation to the horrible loss of our beautiful trees. The Light Rail will be at capacity the day it opens. Nevertheless, developers have seized on the opportunity to lobby the State Government to rezone vast areas along Anzac Parade so that high rise apartments can be built, and huge profits made. The Light Rail will not cope. This is not good planning. If the developers and the government want high rise along Anzac Parade, they should invest in proper underground rail, as in Hong Kong and elsewhere around the world.

For the above reasons, it is IMPERATIVE that the Light Rail is NOT extended to Maroubra Junction. We will lose thousands of mature trees along the route, and have to suffer more high rise development. It is the wrong technology, simple as that.

Urban Bushland:

We are blessed in our area, that through an accident of geography we still have some remnant vegetation. Our wonderful bushland has been protected by distance from the city – Botany Bay National Park – and by the presence of the Anzac Rifle Range on Malabar Headland – now Malabar Headland National Park (MHNP – see graphic at right).



Both these bushland areas contain Eastern Suburbs Banksia Scrub (ESBS) a critically endangered vegetation community.

They are both suffering at the moment from the savage cuts to the NPWS, from lack of Rangers to police unauthorised activities. Further pressure from denser population can only have one outcome: deterioration and destruction of the delicate ancient sand dune soils upon which ESBS grows. ESBS cannot be recreated, it is unique. Therefore the visitors and nearby residents who access the NPs must be controlled. This is not possible without NPWS staff. NPWS budgets must be expanded in these days of massive government surpluses. Instead of spending our money on knocking down and re-building perfectly good stadia, the State Government should put money back into NPWS instead. Plus a whole range of other things: schools, health, etc.

Open Space

In Figure 26, you have shown MHNP and Botany Bay NP as “open space”. They are not open space, they are bushland. Open space is golf courses and parks like Heffron Park and Centennial Park. They are used for completely different purposes, such as organised sport. Bushland is there to admire, for habitat, for relaxing, for walking through, for cherishing. Open Space is artificial, although very necessary for recreation, especially since population densities are increasing. I suggest that no development increase should take place unless there is a concomitant increase in open space, otherwise existing open space will be overused, ruined, crowded, fought over. New Open Space should be mandated if there is to be an increase in population density. How this will be managed is a mystery, but I suppose that golf courses could be commandeered. There are dozens hearabouts.

Empty Units

There are a QUARTER OF A MILLION empty units in Sydney and the same in Melbourne. This is called “land banking” – people put their money in real estate, and sit on it to get 10% returns per annum. No bank account will give you 10%pa. The owners are using negative gearing and are looking forward to a half-price capital gains tax when they eventually sell. No wonder they are not interested in renting the units out to tenants. I suggest that a hefty tax be placed on these dwellings so that the owners are forced to rent them out. After all, we have a housing affordability and a homeless crisis.

Sustainability

Randwick Council prides itself on its sustainability credentials. I suggest that there is one glaring omission from their program: at Maroubra Beach, urban stormwater is not treated at all before it enters the sea. It is filthy stuff, much worse than sewage: dust, dirt, bits of rubber from cars, metal, kids toys, clippings, insecticides, fertilisers, bottles, cans, straws, cigarette butts, and dog poo all wash into the sea in a black toxic cocktail during a storm. We have Gross Pollutant Traps which catch many of the bottles and cans and larger objects, but the slurry enters the sea. At Bondi Beach, Waverley Council has installed a huge stormwater collection and treatment tank, so that this does not happen. The water is used to water parks. Could the GSC do something about mandatory cleansing of stormwater throughout Greater Sydney? It would do much to cleaning up all waterways. With urbanisation and densification, this is going to be another huge issue unless something is done beforehand.

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission.

Yours sincerely,

Claire Bettington