



Council of Social Service of New South Wales

66 Albion St, Surry Hills NSW
phone 02 9211 2599 fax 02 9281 1968
email info@ncoss.org.au web www.ncoss.org.au

abn 85001 797 137

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Strategic Assessments
Department of Planning and Infrastructure
GPO Box 39
SYDNEY NSW 2001
plan_comment@planning.nsw.gov.au

Dear Sir or Madam

Re: North West Rail Corridor Strategy

As the peak body for the non-government community services sector, NCOSS welcomes this opportunity to comment on the draft North West Rail Corridor Strategy.

We note that the North West Rail Corridor has been identified as a key 'city shaper' in the draft Metropolitan Strategy for Sydney, which is open for separate comment. The development of eight new railway stations – Cherrybrook, Castle Hill, Showground, Norwest, Bella Vista, Kellyville, Rouse Hill and Cudgegong Road – along the new rail line provides obvious opportunities for the development of new housing and employment opportunities.

Existing employment along the corridor is estimated to be 43,100 with 10,850 dwellings. The draft Strategy suggests that there is capacity to accommodate an extra 49,500 jobs and 27,400 homes over the next 25 years. Most of the jobs growth is projected to be in the commercial and retail sectors, and the extra housing predominantly apartments, with some townhouses.

NCOSS supports locating new housing and employment along new or upgraded rail corridors, in accordance with the principles of transit oriented development. To this extent we are supportive of the broad thrust of the draft Strategy. We make no comment, however, on the specific capacity assessments for each station precinct that underlie the draft Strategy.

We note that the draft Strategy repeatedly says that the development of the North West Rail Link (NWRL) will "provide opportunities to increase residential densities within walking distance of the station(s), involving a variety of housing types **to ensure there is affordable and appropriate housing for all members of the community**" (pages 14, 16, 18, 20, 24, 26, 28, emphasis added).

While welcoming this statement, NCOSS expresses concern that the draft Strategy does not contain any target for the provision of additional affordable rental housing or any explicit mechanism to deliver such housing. In our view the well documented shortage of affordable rental housing in Sydney results from market failure and can only be addressed by explicit government measures, involving federal, state and local governments and the development industry.

Whilst the draft Strategy highlights the opportunity for continuing growth in professional and managerial jobs, it only makes passing reference to lower paid workers who will be needed by new commercial developments (p. 9). NCOSS would also add that the retail sector is characterized by large numbers of lower paid workers.

In this regard The Hills Shire is already one of the least affordable areas for rental housing in that part of Sydney, with Housing NSW data for the December 2012 quarter revealing median rents for a 1 bedroom flat being \$380 per week (compared to \$333 in Parramatta and \$240 in Blacktown) and \$460 per week for a 2 bedroom flat (compared to \$390 in Parramatta and \$350 in Blacktown).

We note that the draft Strategy makes no reference to where these additional lower paid workers are likely to live and, if they cannot afford to live within the Corridor, how they will access the promised new jobs.

NCOSS recommends that the finalized Strategy contain an explicit target for additional affordable rental housing as part of the announced target of 27,400 new dwellings. This target should be at least 5%.

If you require further information please contact Mr Warren Gardiner, Senior Policy Officer, on 9211 2599 ext 112 or email warren@ncoss.org.au

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Alison Peters".

Alison Peters
Director