

31st August, 2020

Crows Nest - St Leonards 2036 Plan consigns strip to stagnation

Urban Taskforce Chief Executive, Tom Forrest slammed the release of the St Leonards and Crows Nest 2036 Plan today for promising new parks, tree lined boulevards, public open spaces, more employment space while simultaneously smashing the feasibility of development of the government nominated “strategic sites”.

“While Sydney is crying out for private sector investment to boost our economy, this Plan makes redeveloping the “Strategic Sites” along the Crows Nest to St Leonards corridor a pipedream”, Mr Forrest said.

Mr Forrest said the proposed building height limits mean it will be unfeasible to redevelop many of the key sites along this strip. Urban Taskforce members are calling for a review and a rethink. The Premier needs to step in and take control of the Department of Planning, just like she did at Pyrmont.

“The practical result of this plan is that this tacky run-down wind tunnel will sit idle for years to come because the feasibility for development is just not there with the height and development controls proposed in the Plan.

“This plan will ensure that the mattress warehouses which dominate the landscape at ground level will be an ongoing feature of the Pacific Highway strip. This is a missed opportunity to deliver employment, new homes and a new look for Crows Nest – St Leonards. We call on the Premier to initiate a review with a focus on jobs, opportunities for quality apartment housing and feasible development which will enable the funding of all the proposed benefits.

The NSW Government has spent over \$18 billion on a wonderful new Metro rail line. Crows Nest and St Leonards are serviced by a heavy rail line, 2 new Metro Stations and a veritable ant-line of busses. The NSW Productivity Commission has clearly advised Government (and the /Department of Planning) to increase housing densities where there is existing infrastructure capacity. This means more height where you have just built new metro rail lines – but this plan has cut back on heights, cut back on density and failed to leverage the Government’s investment in the new Metro Rail line.

“For the sake of all of Greater Sydney, locations like Crows Nest and St Leonards need to house more people, need greater heights to make development feasible, need more employment. Why would you announce a new plan with a bunch of benefits which depend on development without consulting the development community?

“This plan will deliver none of those benefits. New employment promised will not happen if the new buildings are not built. The proposed controls render new building development unfeasible. So instead, you will get stagnation”, Mr Forrest said.

Mr Forrest was particularly critical of the process undertaken by the Department of planning for finalising the Draft Plan. There was plenty of consultation with local community groups and local Councils, but there were no discussions on the feasibility of the final height and FSR controls with the owners of the key sites.

“This plan is great news for anyone who does not want to see jobs in the post COVID-19 recovery period and simply opposes development and change. The sad news is, the improved design, tree lined streets and new parkland depends on the development happening – and it simply won’t”, Mr Forrest said.

Some properties have actually seen a downzoning from current control in terms of height, Gross Floor Area and Floor Space Ratio. This is sovereign risk writ large. The Government has come in and knowingly devalued existing blocks of land – no consultation, no compensation. This creates risk and uncertainty and is the last thing we need given the uncertainty already created by COVID-19.

*The **Urban Taskforce Australia** is a property development industry group, representing Australia’s most prominent property developers and equity financiers.*