

5 February 2026

Mr Craig Swift-McNair  
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Sent to: [records@woollahra.nsw.gov.au](mailto:records@woollahra.nsw.gov.au)

cc. Kiersten Fishburn, Secretary, DPHI  
cc. Minister Ron Hoenig, Minister for Local Government  
cc. Brett Whitworth, Deputy Secretary DPHI, Office of Local Government

Dear Mr Swift-McNair

## **Woollahra DCP 2015: Housing in accessible areas**

I write to follow up Urban Taskforce Australia's first submission on Council's draft DCP on housing in accessible areas.

At a time when housing supply is in crisis, when costs are escalating, and where all areas of Sydney need to increase housing approvals to accommodate a rapidly growing population, it is concerning that Woollahra Council continues to maintain its strongly NIMBYist position against residential development. The perfunctory response from Council officers to the serious issues raised by the Urban Taskforce was disappointing.

In this circumstance, the opportunity to further develop our response generated by the hapless error in the exhibition process, is welcome.

While the State Government is pursuing initiatives to increase housing stock – planning reforms, pattern books, and low and medium-rise housing policies, to name a few – Council seems determined to frustrate these efforts, notwithstanding their bi-partisan support in the NSW Parliament.

### **Woollahra is not delivering housing**

In the 17 months of the National Housing Accord period, to 30 November, 2025, Woollahra Council approved and issued approvals and CCs for just 194 applications.

This places it behind regional towns like Bathurst or Eurobodalla, delivering just 36% of its Accord target to date of 538 dwellings.

Other councils, such as Burwood and Canterbury-Bankstown, are delivering five-to-ten times Woollahra's numbers and on a pro-rata basis, are still considerably out-performing Woollahra LGA.

These councils have had much higher targets set for them than Woollahra, despite already being more densely populated – at 2,223 dwellings approved in the 17 months of the Accord to date, Canterbury-Bankstown has exceeded the 5-year target allocated to Woollahra (1,900 homes by the end of FY29).

In fact, Woollahra has delivered the least number of housing approvals so far in the whole of Eastern Sydney (South).

If councils with higher population densities have higher Accord targets, and yet have delivered more approvals (up to CC stage as measured by the ABS monthly approvals data), the issue for Woollahra is not over development, it's anti-housing.

Woollahra's population has declined since 2017. Its affordability for key workers and young people is poor and the lack of supply is a significant contributor. And its ratepayers are doomed to see their children and grandchildren move to other areas just to be able to afford somewhere to live.

Resistance to the LMR reforms and to delivering more housing risks turning Woollahra LGA into one of the world's largest retirement living facilities.

### **DCPs shouldn't be designed to frustrate LMR**

Unlike its State counterparts, Woollahra Council is actively seeking to stop development, and with the draft DCP it has blatantly admitted to it.

The NSW Government's policies are aimed at delivering cost-effective and affordable housing supply. Council is seeking to continue its efforts *"to minimise the impact of the recently introduced low and mid-rise housing reforms"*, giving applicants *"limited incentive for redevelopment"*, and rendering housing supply policies unworkable.

Urban Taskforce opposes these obstructionist strategies. With a very low Housing Accord target, Woollahra is in an ideal position to deliver good quality, affordable housing that helps to attract long-term ratepayers to the LGA.

Instead, it has espoused a position that seeks to use the past to prevent the future and to create a multitude of reasons why projects should not be able to proceed. Council has emphasised its "activism", reiterating that it has *"consistently advocated against the [LMR] reforms and raised significant concerns regarding their impacts"*.

The rank politicisation of this consultation process – more confirmation than consultation – and the virtue-signalling application of red tape and compliance as a new form of protest, is giving the NSW Government, industry, and homebuyers clear signals that new ratepayers are not welcome in Woollahra LGA.

### **Consultation that stacks the deck**

The last exhibition – the one that fell short of required timeframes by half a day – drew 52 submissions. The vast majority of these were form letters or template emails.

This was clearly the result of a consultation process that deliberately leant heavily on organisations that Council knew would support its anti-development efforts. Resident action groups – notorious hotbeds of NIMBY sentiment – were contacted directly to advise them of the exhibition, a privilege not accorded to representatives of the development sector, or advocates such as Sydney YIMBY.

However, volume does not equate to substance. A large number of the same pro-forma comment does not give extra weight to the validity of that comment.

Council's responses to feedback – rushed into the Environment and Planning Committee **just 12 days** after the exhibition period closed – suggested that decisions had been pre-determined, and staff were not willing to consider alternative views.

Despite several comments, and clear opposition to some of the proposals, only one very minor change was proposed to the DCP. None of the concerns about feasibility were sufficiently addressed.

Council has taken a dogmatic and stubborn approach that cries out for intervention from the State Government.

### **Addressing feedback**

Some of the responses to stakeholder feedback are addressed below:

#### ***Comment: The Draft DCP controls introduce unnecessary constraints that undermine the reforms and reduce development feasibility:***

**Urban Taskforce Response:** Council claims that the DCP “*does not prohibit or fundamentally alter the type or scale of development*” but provides “*guidance*” for new development and aims to improve design outcomes.

However, the DCP clearly restricts development through certain controls, specifically heritage, dwelling mix, parking, and setbacks. The dwelling mix alone will restrict what proponents can build, ignoring market reality and affecting feasibility.

Given that Council itself said that the intent was to “*mitigate*” the LMR reforms, it is disingenuous to suggest that the DCP will not “*fundamentally alter*” what is allowable. If it doesn't, then it raises questions as to why additional development controls would be needed.

#### ***Comment: The Draft DCP will slow down the delivery of housing in the LGA:***

**Urban Taskforce Response:** “*Staff contend that the Draft DCP will not slow down the supply of housing in the Woollahra LGA*” but provide no evidence to support their claim.

It is also the opposite position of what they told Council when proposing the DCP.

Assumptions made by staff show a lack of understanding about the development industry and what constitutes feasibility.

The claim that dwelling mix controls will increase housing yield per site are not realistic. If proponents are forced to build unit sizes that are not sought by the market, they will not be able to sell them.

Restrictions on parking will equally kill feasibility.

If dwellings cannot be sold, they will not be built.

So, housing delivery will be restricted.

#### ***Comment: Reducing on-site parking will lead to more cars parking on the street and cause congestion:***

**Urban Taskforce Response:** Council dismisses concerns about reducing parking with the claim that it is in line with LMR dwellings being in close proximity to public infrastructure and local amenities.

It assumes that the only reason people have cars is because of a lack of access to public transport.

It ignores the myriad other reasons to own vehicles and to require parking – taking children to school or childcare, caring for elderly relatives, shopping trips for groceries or appliances, travel for sport or for cultural activities, shift work, work in trades, work in less accessible areas, transporting heavy equipment, and weekend travel.

800 metres is a long way to walk with a lot of shopping.

Restricting car parking will not necessarily restrict cars, and Urban Taskforce members have observed that developments that do not include parking are less likely to be feasible.

Car parking space numbers should be decided on a project-by-project basis, by the market, not dictated by one-size-fits-all planning controls.

**Comment: Counting parking as part of the GFA will increase housing prices:**

**Urban Taskforce Response:** Council argues that the inclusion of parking within GFA “helps discourage the provision of excessive parking in new development and the reliance on private vehicles in areas close to public transport infrastructure and local amenities.”

In reality, it reduces flexibility for developers and the feasibility of projects.

Once again, Council is making assumptions about what residents need and why they might require a private vehicle.

Homebuyers usually want parking and are less willing to purchase in a development that doesn't have it. Eating into the floorspace of a development to provide parking reduces project feasibility while trying to deliver amenity to new residents.

In justifying its position, Council has played a regulatory shell game:

- the Draft DCP clarifies that car parking is not a requirement of the consent authority;
- so, there is no maximum number of spaces, unless an applicant seeks to provide parking;
- so, any parking would be taken out of GFA and FSR;
- but the LMR reforms require parking, but only specify requirements for R2 buildings, not for R3;
- plus, the R2 requirements only apply if there are no maximum numbers of spaces in the Draft DCP;
- but there are maximum numbers, so the Draft DCP takes precedence;
- however, because parking is not a requirement under the Draft DCP, the ADG does not impose an obligation.

This logistical twisting and turning serves Council's purpose, but will ultimately kill feasibility, which appears to be the main goal of the Draft DCP.

**Comment: Parking rate reductions should not apply to Rose Bay:**

**Urban Taskforce Response:** Council argues that Rose Bay was nominated by the Government as a LMR centre due to its proximity to existing transport infrastructure

and local amenities, so reducing parking is consistent with the objectives of the reforms.

However, it has also recognised that access to public transport in Rose Bay Centre is more limited than other LMR areas, so is putting in a restriction that it knows will make housing unattractive to homebuyers.

The (only slightly) higher parking rates in Rose Bay are still not required by the Draft DCP and so will still come at the expense of GFA and FSR allowances.

**Comment: There need to be more visitor parking spaces:**

**Urban Taskforce Response:** Council opposed providing more visitor parking spaces because it argues that these spaces would be excluded from the FSR calculations, which would act against the intent to reduce parking overall.

It would *“undermine the proposed approach to discourage the provision of excessive car parking and reduce building bulk”*.

In other words, the restrictions on parking have nothing to do with a desire *“to alleviate traffic pressures”* but are aimed at reducing the size of buildings and restricting development.

This suggests that the Draft DCP does indeed *“prohibit or fundamentally alter”* what is allowed under the LMR reforms.

**Comment: Dwelling mix limits would restrict the availability of larger apartments suitable for families and retirees:**

**Urban Taskforce Response:** Council argues that the Draft DCP will allow up to 70% of any development of six or more dwellings to be two or more bedrooms, but that there aren't enough studios or one-bedroom dwellings within the LGA.

This argument runs counter to market realities within the area.

Just because there are single occupant households, it does not mean that they automatically want small apartments. In many cases, these households may be downsizing retirees, or professionals who want more space for a study or a guest room.

The assumptions by Council are pre-judging what the market actually wants, in a push to enforce a philosophical outcome.

Before enforcing the mandatory provision of smaller apartments, Council would be well advised to do some market research into what clients are actually seeking.

Otherwise, it will compel the delivery of dwellings that will not sell.

**Comment: The DCP should include “desired future character” provisions:**

**Urban Taskforce Response:** Council states that it has references to desired future character in its aims and in the objectives for land use zones, minimum lot size, height of buildings, and FSR.

While character statements *“do not fully align with the development permitted under the LMR reforms”* it states that it will continue to use them to inform assessments regardless.

It is not clear how these statements can still be used if they do not align with the LMR reforms.

**Comment: The Draft DCP selectively applies ADG guidance in its setback standards:**

**Urban Taskforce Response:** Council said that it sought to apply existing provisions within the DCP across all areas subject to the LMR reforms.

In reality, it has picked and chosen the standards that best suited its opposition to LMR, rather than maintaining a consistent position.

**Comment: Proposed heritage conservation controls risk limiting proposals and reducing feasibility:**

**Urban Taskforce Response:** Council said that it was important to protect “*areas that make an important historic, aesthetic, and social contribution to the character of the LGA*” and that the controls “*provide additional guidance to mitigate the scale of new infill development*”.

These provisions will not be used as guidance, they will be applied as a tool to restrict development by claiming that it is “*out of character*” for the area.

The Draft DCP has been written in such a way as it gives staff the ability to raise objections on almost any grounds. Unless there is intervention from the State Government, it will reduce feasibility and kill off housing development projects altogether.

**Key provisions**

Urban Taskforce Australia continues to oppose Woollahra Council's proposed draft DCP, and its boldly stated underlying intent to frustrate the Minns Government's LMR reforms, thereby preventing the delivery of housing within the LGA.

Apart from what has been raised above, our key concerns are:

- **Parking rates** – Council has already complained to the NSW Government that it has a lack of parking within the LGA but is now proposing to restrict parking for new LMR developments.

This will not discourage people from owning cars but will discourage them from moving into Woollahra LGA. Buyers look for parking in apartments so that they don't have to park in the street – the very issue Council raised in February 2024.

The restriction is cynical and will undermine project feasibility.

- **Mandatory car share spaces** – parking is optional, but car sharing parking will not be. This is counter intuitive. It will require a high number of spaces that dwarf the actual supply.

As of 2021, Woollahra had 12,914 high density dwellings (70-80 dwellings per ha.) and 7,746 medium density dwellings (20-70 dwellings per ha.). This could roughly equate to around 350 car share spaces if these apartments were to be built under the Draft DCP.

GoGet has 3,500 vehicles across Australia. So, this would effectively mean that Woollahra would be providing spaces for 10 percent of its fleet. It is a rather excessive position.

- **Dwelling mix** – the Draft DCP shows that Council has little interest in what the market wants or needs. The proposed dwelling mix control is an apparent attempt to force artificial demographic change, rather than allowing applicants to cater to the needs of home buyers.

It risks creating supply that is not sought by the market in order to justify claims that Council is addressing affordability.

In reality, if a developer is unable to sell the smaller units, there is a real risk that some of the cost will be put onto the other dwellings, making them less affordable.

- **Heritage** – the proposals seek to restrict the redevelopment of contributory buildings in heritage conservation areas, thereby limiting the ability to deliver LMR projects.

However, while individual heritage listed buildings are protected under the LMR policy, other buildings within a HCA are not, so the Draft DCP is in conflict with State Government policy.

Heritage controls in the Draft DCP are simply an attempt to discourage development, and they should be called out for the cynical anti-housing exercise they represent.

- **Built form** – streetscape alignments, heights, setbacks, and articulation measures all appear to be highly subjective controls in areas that are not homogenous. They could potentially be overruled by the State Government as being inconsistent with the LMR reforms – and they should be.

The assumption that LMR developments will be unsympathetic and inconsistent with local built form has not been supported with evidence, and the potential for new low- and mid-rise housing to be delivered within the LGA gives Council an opportunity to work with applicants to ensure that their projects fit the local area. Instead, Council seeks to restrict and control, making what should be a collaborative process into an adversarial one.

The Draft DCP sets a level of development control that automatically assumes the worst of applicants, rather than encouraging early engagement, collaboration, and negotiation to deliver housing supply that suits the needs of all parties.

Council's stated intent to oppose "*the LMR reforms, and their impacts on local character, heritage conservation, infrastructure, and surrounding amenity*", does not give any confidence that it is willing to work for a better outcome for new and future residents.

## Conclusion

Woollahra Council's old-world NIMBYism and modern-day social engineering – restricting new development on the heritage grounds, then adding parking and dwelling mix controls – shows that it will stoop to almost any means it can to frustrate LMR policy.

It is the regulatory equivalent to erecting a stone wall and putting up a sign that says, "GO AWAY!".

This approach will see resident numbers continue to fall, housing continue to increase in price, and a whole generation prevented from becoming a Woollahra ratepayer.

It is not too late to reject this position and to focus on the delivery of new housing.

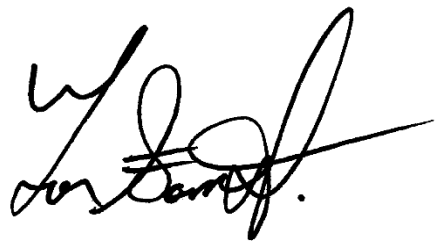
Woollahra LGA should look to see what its colleagues in Burwood, Canada Bay, and even Hawkesbury Council (which has approved almost three times the number of dwellings that Woollahra has managed) are doing to meet their targets under the National Housing Accord.

The LMR policy is designed to help to deliver cost-effective and affordable housing for the residents of this State – it should not be undermined by local political grandstanding.

Woollahra Council should be embracing the best that progress has to offer – new homes, new residents, new ratepayers – and turn its back on those who say by default “Not in my backyard!”.

Should you wish to discuss any aspect of this submission further, please contact our Policy, Planning and Research Analyst, Paul Waterhouse, on 0411-875-366 or via email at [paul@urbantaskforce.com.au](mailto:paul@urbantaskforce.com.au)

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tom Forrest', written in a cursive style.

**Tom Forrest**  
Chief Executive Officer