Urban Taskforce
AUSTRALIA

12 November 2026

Ms Louise Kerr
General Manager
Lane Cove Council
PO Box 20
LANE COVE NSW 1595
Sent to: service@lanecove.nsw.gov.au

CC: mbrisby@lanecove.nsw.gov.au

Dear Ms Kerr

Amendments to Lane Cove Local Environmental Plan

I write in relation to Lane Cove Council's proposed amendments to its Local Environmental Plan (LEP). Urban Taskforce Australia has reviewed the proposed amendments and is generally supportive of the changes.

However, we are concerned with the proposed introduction of a new design excellence clause which applies to the entire Lane Cove area.

While design excellence clauses are introduced with all good intention, they often just frustrate and slow down, if not stop development entirely. While it might sound good to tell the community that Council is concerned to deliver "design excellence", the fact is that this is a highly subjective process and the outcomes very much depend and rely upon the quality of the reviewer. Further, the need for proportionality is now a legislated Objective of the EP&A Act (1979) and Council needs to be mindful of both the mandate across the entire LGA as well as the possible legal challenges arising from conflict with this Objective.

Design excellence implies a higher standard of design quality than 'good design' and is often described as 'the highest standard of architectural, urban and landscape design.

It comes at a significant cost to the developer. through an array of compliance and prescriptive measures, which reduce the ability of proponents to innovate and deliver creative solutions, which otherwise would ensure the feasibility of projects and lead to better urban planning outcomes.

Nowhere in the proposed new clause is it mentioned that proponents will be given a bonus of height or Floor Space Ratio associated with the designation of "design excellence" as a way to incentivise them for meeting this high standard of development.

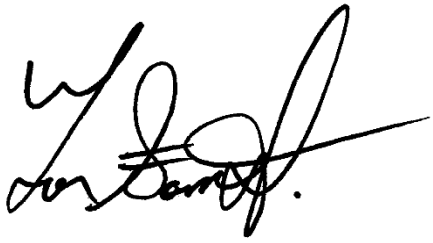
If the experience of Urban Taskforce members at St Leonards South is anything to go by, the proposed design excellence clause will simply reduce yield, add to the cost of construction, cause enormous time delays and uncertainty, and ultimately reduce development feasibility and lead to less housing supply.

At a time when Lane Cove is performing poorly against the NSW Housing Accord pro-rata housing delivery targets, having only approved 41.5 per cent of its pro rata completions target to September 2026, now is not the time to put in place amendments to the LEP which will simply hinder or stop development.

Congratulations on the work undertaken to date. I trust you will consider our submission before finalising this matter.

Should you wish to discuss any aspect of this submission further, please call our Economist and Planning Analyst, William Hughes, on 0418 286 530 or via email will@urbantaskforce.com.au

Yours sincerely



Tom Forrest
Chief Executive Officer