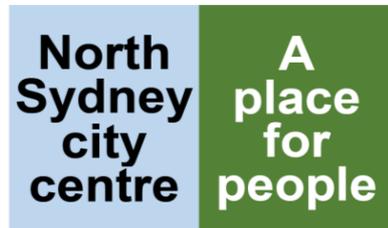


Committee for North Sydney

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The Hon. Gladys Berejiklian MP
GPO Box 5341
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Dear Premier

Pause in Crows Nest – panic in North Sydney?

The Government's response to community concerns in Crows Nest is timely and practical.

Your recent statement suggests that the planning and construction of the Crows Nest Metro station can continue at pace while the impact of the building above it – essentially a private investment – is re-assessed from a proper planning point of view. Such an assessment would weigh all interests and long term value, rather than the extraordinarily narrow and skewed value capture model built into Sydney Metro's business plan, only achievable under the SSD planning by-pass.

That narrow business plan will forever tarnish the public's view of Sydney Metro and undermine the Government's broader goals for Global Sydney.

The business plan is wrong: the metro confers amenity and property value way beyond the stations, then diminishes that value by OVERdeveloping the actual station sites. Furthermore, attempting to recoup the artificially inflated land value too soon – well before the market has appreciated the uplift - means the uplift is privatised while the Government wears the enduring disappointment of the community that a project with the potential to improve city centres ends up damaging them: no value creation, just value capture.

Your welcome decision in Crows Nest proves the business plan always was wrong in another fundamental respect: that the station and the value-capturing private building related to it are inextricably 'integrated'.

Our view, widely shared by the community, is that the claim of 'integration' was primarily a device to allow the otherwise-private development to escape public planning scrutiny and planning objectives. Your recent statement, that the Crows Nest OSD will 'minimise impact on the community' confirms that the normal rules and processes – intended to manage impacts – should apply to all OSDs.

Pause in North Sydney

What applies in Crows Nest applies in North Sydney with far greater force.

1 Build the station, listen, plan the site

The 'not-over-station-development' in North Sydney is a building that includes the relatively small footprint of the entrance and supporting infrastructure for the station, while the actual station is under the Miller Street road reserve. This allows for all options on the very large 4800 m² site acquired by Sydney Metro, from a wonderful civic space through to the option dictated by the business plan: by far the biggest building in North Sydney, with the worst shadows and winds, dominating the entire site, with no public functions or benefits. This is the exact opposite of your pledge in Crows Nest: it maximises negative impacts on one of Global Sydney's critical city centres, where positive civic values are needed most.

This 'not-over-station-development' can be built with, during or after the station, as Sydney Metro acknowledged. In any event, construction of the private building will not commence for some years. We conclude that this situation is best expressed in your words regarding Crows Nest: 'whilst the Metro station planning can proceed, proposals for the above ground development should not!'

Under these circumstances, the community will view a premature contract for the private building as a cynical attempt to even further evade proper public planning processes, and to pre-empt decision-making before an imminent election.

2 The accidental enlightenment of North Sydney Council

In the past few months the North Sydney Council has released two reports by respected planning and urban design consultants, the *Ward Street precinct master plan* and the *CBD public domain strategy*.

The reports document and demonstrate the severe lack of public space and the poor quality (exposed, overshadowed, sloping, windy...) of what little exists. They document and demonstrate similarly dire conditions in relation to most other attributes of a good city centre: sense of place, making the most of a great location, civic functions and facilities, ease of movement, diverse quarters and qualities, room for nature, links to adjoining neighbourhoods. Yet the Metro, and current and planned growth in the workforce, and Global Sydney, all demand that North Sydney rapidly does become a good city centre.

While carefully adhering to briefs that precluded alternative opportunities, the two reports nevertheless prove beyond doubt that *a single initiative could begin the transformation* of the North Sydney city centre: a wide, level, sheltered, sunny public space on the Miller Street axis, along with such civic facilities and the Council's proposed people-place library, and with space for civil society activities.

The two reports tacitly but emphatically reinforce the findings of others: that no matter how and where the planners and designers look for inspiration and ideas, there is *a single site* where a wide, level, sheltered, sunny civic space is even possible: at the corner of Miller and Berry Streets. The facts are presented in our public report on committeefornorthsydney.org.

The Government may regard it as unfortunate – or possibly as a brilliant piece of luck – that Sydney Metro now owns this site, all 4800 m² of it. The Government knows, and the community is well aware of the fact, that half of the site, Tower Square, was resumed for a song.

3 Too soon for North Sydney contracts

The actual Victoria Cross station should proceed while (in your words) 'proposals for the above ground development should not!'

Every aspect of the Crows Nest proposals are amplified in North Sydney. This will be an enduring controversy and a terrible legacy if present plans are locked in, in the face of truncated processes, community opposition, a unanimous call for a pause by the North Sydney Council, and concerns about overdevelopment across the Metro system.

What makes the case for a pause in North Sydney even more compelling is that it is now proven beyond doubt that the opportunity cost at the North Sydney site is the difference between turning the city centre into something great, and condemning it to worsening crowding in unrelieved, overshadowed and windy streets. The latter is what adherence to a flawed business plan will deliver – and it will be seen to be delivered by Sydney Metro.

There are many, better, more effective ways – refined for numerous projects, in many other places – to capture the value of public investments in building the city.

Please listen to the community and intervene in Sydney Metro's plans for North Sydney. A simple statement, and a directive not to enter into pre-emptive contracts, is all that it takes for a fresh look, and to translate the community's and the Council's support for the Metro into the rebirth of North Sydney as a fitting component of the 'Harbour City'.

Your sincerely



Jeremy Dawkins
Convenor