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The Queen Street & West Woollahra Association

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19 March 2024

The Hon Paul Scully, MP
Minister for Planning and Public Spaces,
NSW Government, Sydney

Subject: Response to “Explanation of Intended Effect: Changes to create low- and mid-rise housing”, December 2023

Dear Minister,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Queen Street & West Woollahra Association to express our concerns about the proposed reforms to planning. The Queen Street & West Woollahra Association is a community organisation representing local residents and businesses in the Queen Street and West Woollahra area. The Association is very much focused on preserving and maintaining the unique 'village' atmosphere and charm of Woollahra resulting from the preservation and protection of heritage buildings. The Association was originally founded in 1972 to protect the local environment from various then proposed reforms that would have resulted in the demolition of heritage buildings. This was a time when Woollahra had no planning protections and the attractive Victorian facades of Queen Street and the surrounds, including Paddington, could be bulldozed and replaced by light-coloured brick inelegancies popular with architects at the time, a scenario we want to prevent happening again now.

From 1974, the Association worked closely with Woollahra Council to develop a model for proposed planning and zoning principles which was finally adopted by the Council in 1980. Its most important elements were a height limit of 9.5 metres on new buildings and a conservation zoning over the whole area. This has worked well over the last 44 years and is a key reason Woollahra and Paddington are now recognised internationally as two of the most intact Victorian terrace suburbs in the world. The proposed planning changes to allow 6-8 and 4-6 stories would completely overwhelm the 2-storey scale of the terraces and shops in Woollahra and Paddington and have a devastating impact on the heritage of this area, which is so important to our history and who we are.

The Explanation paper appears to propose a 'one size fits all' for all suburbs. We note that Woollahra is one of the most densely populated suburbs in Australia already. Despite that, Woollahra Council exceeded its 5-year housing target in 2022 by 70% while managing to protect local heritage. We are confident that the Council will be able to meet its current targets while continuing to protect our heritage buildings. We urge the NSW Government to abandon this proposed 'one size fits all' approach and work with individual councils, including Woollahra Council, to develop targets and development plans suitable for each area which will meet the needs of the government while respecting the unique constraints and challenges of individual suburbs.

Yours sincerely

Giles Edmonds



President, The Queen Street and West Woollahra Association