

RE: Submission to Transport for NSW Central State Significant Precinct rezoning proposal

Dear Secretary - Transport for NSW,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input into the NSW Central State Significant Precinct rezoning proposal

Homelessness NSW is a not-for-profit organisation that operates as a peak agency for its member organisations to end homelessness across NSW. We exist to build the capability of people and the capacity of systems to end homelessness. We have a vision for a future where there is enough quality and safe housing and support services to ensure no one is homeless in NSW. Our 150 members include specialist homelessness services, allied organisations and services working to end homelessness.

Homelessness NSW fully supports the proposal to deliver a technology and innovation precinct by enabling development over and adjacent to the railway lines at Central Station, providing new jobs, homes and open space. Our submission focuses on the unique opportunity to invest in social and affordable housing within this precinct to support both Aboriginal and Youth homelessness.

The rezoning proposal should be amended to include the following recommendations

1. Commit to 30% of dwellings within the Central State Significant precinct being social and affordable housing (15% social and 15% affordable). The social houses should be available for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members.
2. The development of the social housing should follow culturally sensitive housing design principles implemented in close consultation with Aboriginal community representatives.
3. Commit to the development and ongoing operational funding of a Youth Foyer in the Central State Significant Precinct

We welcome the opportunity to provide this submission. Please contact Joshua Greenwood, Partnerships & Governance Lead at joshua@homelessnessnsw.org.au should you wish to discuss any element of our submission further.

Yours Sincerely,

Trina Jones

CEO, Homelessness NSW

Homelessness NSW – Submission regarding Central State Significant Precinct rezoning proposal

Homelessness NSW is a not-for-profit organisation that operates as a peak agency for its member organisations to end homelessness across NSW. We exist to build the capability of people and the capacity of systems to end homelessness. We have a vision for a future where there is enough quality and safe housing and support services to ensure no one is homeless in NSW. Our 150 members include specialist homelessness services, allied organisations and services working to end homelessness. We work with our members, people with lived experience and broad network of partners to understand drivers of homelessness, advocate for solutions, build skills and knowledge, and scale innovation.

We thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback into the Central State Significant Precinct re-zoning proposal. We note the aim of the proposal to deliver a technology and innovation precinct by enabling development over and adjacent to the railway lines at Central Station, providing new jobs, homes and open space. Our submission focuses on the unique opportunity to invest in social and affordable housing within this precinct to support both Aboriginal and Youth homelessness.

Homelessness in NSW is increasing – with a particular impact on Aboriginal and Young people

In 2020/21, Specialist Homelessness Services supported over 70,000 people experiencing homelessness.¹ Of this, 30% (21,000)² were Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander clients and just under 20% (13,500)³ were young people.

There is a critical shortage of housing for these clients. As of June 2021, there were 49,928 people on the social housing waiting list in NSW including 5,801 on the priority list.⁴ Wait times for social housing is now up to ten years or up to two years for those deemed priority. With the current rate of growth of social housing in NSW (averaging 700 new social housing dwellings per year⁵), it would take 70 years to provide housing to everyone on the waiting list.

At a time of increasing rates of homelessness, it's never been harder to find or sustain a rental. Access to housing that people can afford to live in has significantly reduced across the state with regional areas reporting extreme shortages and research showing less than 1% of rentals available for people on low income⁶. For those who are renting their tenure is precarious and uncertain.

NSW currently has approximately 154,000 social housing properties, representing 4.7% of all residential dwellings. Setting a social housing target of 10% of all residential dwellings by 2050 across NSW is needed to provide a significant increase in social housing levels in NSW to both prevent further crisis and eliminate the current backlog on the social housing waiting list.

The central precinct proposal presents a unique opportunity to provide housing for these highly impacted cohorts

There are over 1600 people on the general social housing waiting list, and over 600 on the priority list, in and around the proposed development area.⁷ These people currently have a stated wait time of 5 to 10 years for access to a house, but as noted above this is likely to be significantly longer.

Housing for Aboriginal Communities

The development site includes part of Redfern. According to The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) “Redfern became home for many Indigenous Australians in the [19]70s, and many people remain connected to this important place... It was the epicentre for Aboriginal activism, where mob came together seeking recognition and equality in health, education and justice.”⁸ However, Redfern also experiences considerable socio-economic disadvantage including high levels of unemployment, poor health levels, low educational attainment and lack of access to mainstream services⁹. The central redevelopment allows for the opportunity to increase the social and affordable housing stock within this area.

Recommendation 1: Commit to 30% of dwellings within the Central State Significant precinct being social and affordable housing (15% social and 15% affordable). The social houses should be available for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members in of the unique cultural significance of Redfern and surrounds.

The development of housing for Aboriginal communities should seek to follow culturally sensitive design practices. The Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI) found that “Government funded social housing providers typically consider the appropriateness of their social housing in terms of what is required and preferred for a non-Indigenous nuclear family”¹⁰. Given the large representation of Aboriginal community members in the development area, culturally sensitive housing principles should be adopted. Housing should be resilient, sustainable and provide flexible and adaptable spaces for extended families and community activities¹¹. Development of dwellings should be developed and implemented in close consultation with Aboriginal people, recognising the community’s unique cultures, needs and priorities.

Recommendation 2: The development of the social housing should follow culturally sensitive housing design principles implemented in close consultation with the local Aboriginal community

Housing for Young People

In a state like New South Wales, every young person should have what they need to thrive and to make good transitions into adulthood and independence. For some young people, at a critical time of lifechanging growth and development, they face extraordinary challenges such as experiences of homelessness. When homeless, young people are navigating complex transitions without the intense and varied support typically provided by family. For young people to pursue lives of value to them, to avoid chronic homelessness and exclusion, the government has a role to play in providing support, stability, and opportunity.

The Central State Significant Precinct, with the stated aim to become a ‘technology and innovation precinct’ presents an opportunity to match innovation homelessness solutions for young people with the education and employment pathways of the growing technology industry. This can be made possible by utilising the ‘Youth Foyer’ model.

Youth Foyers are integrated learning and accommodation settings for young people, typically aged 16 – 24 years, who are at risk of or experiencing homelessness. The Foyer model was developed in the United Kingdom more than 20 years ago and upholds that the only long-term avenue out of homelessness for young people is through education and training, with a focus on nurturing an ‘aspirational community’ and securing sustainable employment and independent housing.

Through this approach, Foyers are able to drive long term positive outcomes and impacts. The Foyer concept is considered international best practice in helping disadvantaged young people, aged 16-25 years who are homeless or in housing need, to achieve the transition to adult independence. Foyers have proven so successful that there are now more than 1,000 projects worldwide; including Australia, Ireland, the United States, Romania, Netherlands and Germany.

The Central State Significant Precinct would be the perfect place to include a new Youth Foyer to support youth homelessness.

Recommendation 3: Commit to the development and ongoing operational funding of a Youth Foyer in the Central State Significant Precinct

References

- ¹ Australian Institute for Health and Welfare, *Specialist Homelessness Services Annual Report*, <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/homelessness-services/specialist-homelessness-services-annual-report/contents/clients-services-and-outcomes>
- ² Australian Institute for Health and Welfare, *Specialist Homelessness Services Annual Report*, <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/homelessness-services/specialist-homelessness-services-annual-report/contents/indigenous-clients>
- ³ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 'Specialist Homelessness Services Annual Report 2020–21' (Canberra: AIHW, Australian Government, 2021), <https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/95657e24-6730-4249-93cf->
- ⁴ Department of Communities & Justice, *Expected Waiting Times Dashboard*, <https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/housing/help/applying-assistance/expected-waiting-times>
- ⁵ Centre for Social Impact, *Social housing in NSW: Contemporary Analysis*, https://www.csi.edu.au/media/uploads/social_housing_in_nsw_contemporary_analysis.pdf
- ⁶ Anglicare, *Sydney Rental Affordability Snapshot*, <https://www.anglicare.org.au/about-us/media-releases/still-less-than-1-affordable-for-people-on-low-incomes-despite-increase-in-rental-properties/>
- ⁷ Department of Communities & Justice, *Expected Waiting Times Dashboard*, <https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/housing/help/applying-assistance/expected-waiting-times>
- ⁸ The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies, *Redfern: The untold Story of the 1970s*, <https://aiatsis.gov.au/whats-new/news/redfern-untold-story-1970s-aboriginal-activism-and-resurgence#>
- ⁹ Wilkinson, Jacqui --- "Urban Indigenous Housing Issues in Redfern" [2005] IndigLawB 45; (2005) 6(13) Indigenous Law Bulletin 14 - <http://classic.austlii.edu.au/au/journals/IndigLawB/2005/45.html>
- ¹⁰ Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute, *Creating culturally sensitive housing for remote Indigenous communities*, <https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/brief/creating-culturally-sensitive-housing-remote-indigenous-communities>
- ¹¹ University of Technology Sydney, *Aboriginal housing policies must be based on community needs*, <https://www.uts.edu.au/news/tech-design/aboriginal-housing-policies-must-be-based-community-needs>