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20 May 2022

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CANADA BAY - OUR FUTURE 2036

WalkSydney is a community group advocating for walkability in Greater Sydney (Wollongong to Newcastle, and the Coast to the Blue Mountains). We are a non-profit organisation, governed by a Committee. WalkSydney is calling for:

- *An urban environment in Sydney designed to encourage and support active transport – access to parks, playing fields and other recreational and cultural facilities*
- *Safer, slower streets, where the speed of motor vehicles is drastically reduced by legal, environmental, and physical measures to reduce the likelihood and consequences of collisions, including:*
 - *Safe streets to public transport stops and stations so people can reach longer distance destinations without needing a car.*

A fuller statement appears at Appendix 1.

WalkSydney supports the five broad strategic directions set out in *Our Future 2036*. However, we have misgivings, detailed below, about the level of ambition and strategic vision expressed and the key means to make the qualitative changes needed to adapt to the future form and substance of Canada Bay.

The methodology for developing the Plan appears to have had limited strategic analysis of the operating environment for the period ahead. Researching the views and expectations of key stakeholders is certainly valuable and an essential input. In addition, canvassing the strategic directions of other local government organisations would help identify emerging trends and approaches to managing key issues.

The draft plan identifies citizens' concerns with traffic congestion and for improved pedestrian safety. These concerns do not appear to be adequately addressed by the Plan, the Delivery Program and the Operating Plan, which cater for increasing car use and storage (parking). Motor vehicle trips can be expected to increase to an unsustainable level under

the current approach - with profound, detrimental effects on our communities and our quality of life. Does the Plan assess these qualitative impacts on liveability and amenity of our neighbourhoods for people of all ages and the safety of using our streets and accessing our public places?

The Plan's implicit direction is satisfying the anticipated increased demand for motor vehicle travel, within and through the municipality, without identifying the effects on liveability and walkability. For example, increasing car parking in Five Dock (4.2.1.1) will obviously increase the number of car trips into and around that centre; it should not proceed.

Travel by motor vehicle will inevitably continue to be in strong demand and for some people the only choice for some trips. Nonetheless, constraints on unfettered private motor vehicle travel, through alternatives such as active transport modes, need to be developed.

Clearly, new thinking is required. Given the overarching parameters of increasing population and greatly increased density in centres such as Five Dock, a multi-pronged strategy is needed to constrain the negative effects of motor vehicles and to foster alternative travel modes: public transport, walking and cycling.

The strategies and actions in the draft Plan do not appear to match the level of change required on the journey toward 2036.

Values and strategic directions

The municipality's road and traffic infrastructure is fundamental to every aspect of our lives and to achieving almost every aspiration all elements of the strategy. However, opportunities to leverage this infrastructure have not been grasped in this draft plan, as follows.

Connected community. Our streets and footpaths are the single most important community asset connecting our community and for supporting active lifestyles. Yet this extensive network is taken for granted, and insufficient attention is given to improving the walkability and rideability of Canada Bay.

In coming years we can expect greater use of e-scooters, e-bikes and similar micromobility devices. These offer more efficient transport, in road space required and for storage/parking. Will our roads promote their safe use?

A '*Canada Bay Active Transport Strategy*' is suggested. This would focus on the walkability and bicycle-friendliness of Canada Bay and how the functionality of the network could be improved for these modes. It would, for example, address walking and cycling networks, especially to our key community access, such as foreshores, parks, playing fields, shopping strips, and libraries.

Sustainable and Thriving Environment. The deleterious effects of increasing motor vehicle travel on liveability and amenity is not raised. Population and traffic projections underline the importance to sustainability of better managing our roads and traffic.

The effect of car emissions on air quality is not mentioned, nor the potential for significantly greater use of active transport modes to provide alternatives for some trips.

Vibrant Urban Living. The amenity and liveability of our neighbourhoods is poorly addressed, despite mentions of the Movement and Place framework. The quality of life in Canada Bay would be enhanced by slower streets. Many cities around the world are recognising this and implementing change to their urban transport systems. Auckland, London, Paris and New York are just a few making this transition.

Infrastructure and Transport. Goal (3), *Encourage active and accessible transport opportunities*, needs to be strengthened.

Community calls for improved pedestrian safety, as identified through consultation for the Plan, depend on qualitative changes to our streets and public places, to improve their safety, attractiveness and convenience. Apprehended road danger is widely recognised overseas – for example in the UK; see ‘20s Plenty’ – as a very real constraint on greater use and enjoyment by citizens of streets and public places.

The approach that is needed to managing our streets and neighbourhoods will include a fundamental re-think of the main current traffic management principles, including lower motor vehicle speeds on local roads and streets designed to make walking and cycling more attractive. Such streets will have thresholds, wombat and zebra crossings, street closures and pedestrian priority zones, connected walking and cycling routes

These measures will help moderate traffic congestion, improve pedestrian and cyclist safety and protect local neighbourhoods from the deleterious effects of cars.

The funding allocations for pedestrian crossings are noted but should however be in the context of neighbourhood traffic plans and an overarching plan for improving walkability. These plans are now sought by residents of the Mortlake and Cabarita peninsulas, Drummoynes, around Five Dock Park and central Five Dock.

The Movement and Place framework gives the conceptual framework for the change. Can this be applied in Canada Bay in a more robust and comprehensive way than has been the case to date?

There is a lack of real commitment in the Plan to improving the network of cycling facilities in the municipality beyond the East-West Regional Cycleway (4.3.1.1).

With regard to KPIs, while pedestrian mode share is noted as a KPI, it is clear we cannot expect significant increase without stronger strategies and actions.

The Plan identifies the importance of Council advocating for improved public transport. In addition, Council should also be advocating state government agencies, especially Transport for NSW, for changes

- to their management of classified roads to improve access and safety for active transport modes
- technical specifications and administrative arrangements that unnecessarily constrain Council's ability to manage local roads.

The redeveloped Concord Oval and its facilities receive detailed lists in the strategy but there is no mention of how surrounding streets, especially Loftus and Burton Sts, will be made pedestrian friendly, perhaps through 10 km/h shared zones, in the context of the Metro West station. Similar observations may be made about the precincts around Five Dock and North Strathfield Metro West stations. While detailed planning of station precincts and surrounding areas may yet to take place, Canada Bay Council should take a strong leadership role here. State and federal funding is expected to be available.

While elements of the above critique may be addressed in specific plans and strategies cited in the overall strategy, there remains a call for a clearer strategic vision in 'Our Vision 2036'.

The draft strategy 'Our Future 2036' presents an underlying concept of only incremental change to the liveability and amenity of our centres and neighbourhoods.

David Martin

WalkSydney (Canada Bay)

About WalkSydney

WalkSydney seeks:

- *An urban environment designed to encourage and support active transport – access to parks, playing fields and other recreational and cultural facilities*
- *Street designs that provide for the needs of people who walk, cycle and use public transport*
- *Safer, slower streets, where the speed of motor vehicles is drastically reduced by legal, environmental, and physical measures to reduce the likelihood and consequences of collisions*
 - *Safe streets to schools so that children can walk or cycle to school*
 - *Safe streets to shops so that residents can meet their daily needs*
 - *Safe streets to parks so that everyone can participate in active recreation*
 - *Safe streets to public transport stops and stations so people can reach longer distance destinations without needing a car*
- *Residential areas and streets developed for communities and not fragmented by traffic*
- *Streets that are safe and easy to cross*
- *Pedestrian priority over cars on existing and planned transport networks*
- *Connected networks of urban pedestrian and cycling facilities*
- *Shopping strips ('high streets') which are pleasant places to spend time*
- *Streets that provide shade, quiet, and clean air*
- *A city where residents feel less need to travel by car.*