

Senate Inquiry Submission

Firstly, I would like to thank the Committee for the opportunity to express my concerns through my submission.

Terms of Reference:-

a. Probity planning and management, risk assessment frameworks and management

COMMUNICATION & TRANSPERANCY has been a major failure with regard to obtaining information or any kind of surety or clarification from the DPIE & Planning Partnership (PP). This has been extremely frustrating through stage 1 LUIIP release, Stage 2 WSAP release and the now currently exhibited Proposed Precinct Plan release. At all stages we are asked to write a “submission” to the DPIE. In our submissions we seek to obtain answers & raise concerns. Over 600 submission were lodged by the Community at Stage 1 and close to 700 submission lodged for stage 2, (stage 3 proposed precinct plans are currently on exhibition)for a Rural Community that is a lot of submissions that appear to be falling on deaf ears, as very little has changed from the submission process.

We are required to complete individual submissions, but do not get individual specific answers! We get a shiny brochure with a paragraph or two with “what we have heard” briefly covering some issues raised, if you are lucky!

We have community representatives that attend a monthly Community Liaison Group (CLG) organised through Planning Partnership (PP), where the Community can discuss concerns, but again nothing is ever achieved as we get answers like “we are still working through that” or last meeting started with “I don’t really have anything to add from the last meeting” another example is that certain Representatives involved in precinct planning would be attending the CLG meetings to update the Group, but never show up: to give you an example:-

Representative from the Water Board – waiting from at least 4 months ago & still waiting!

Waiting to hear back from Minister Stokes’s Office if Minister Stokes would meet with the CLG group – waiting at least 12 months, each month we are advised – “to date, no answer yet from Minister Stokes’s Office”!

Waiting for Ms Hull from the DPIE to update the Group – waiting at least 2 months & still waiting.

this is frustrating and I feel purely a tick box exercise.

The DPIE/PP also had a webinar on the 19th November, 2020 which also left residents angry, confused & frustrated as we could not get many answers to questions raised by the Community. For example on many occasions the question was raised “why has Thompson’s Creek only been identified for acquisition out of all the green space”? “why does Thompson’s Creek have certainty and no one else”?.....unfortunately, we are still waiting on answers/clarification.

b. Land acquisition and related leases, including transaction related to the Leppington Triangle

I was sickened to the pit of my stomach when I heard through the media that the Leppington Triangle property was acquired (and I believe not through a forced acquisition process) but a “deal” arrangement, when it is not required for another 25 years. When 100’s if not 1000’s of land owners are being burdened by some kind of green space within the Aerotropolis precinct plan and are looking at being land locked on their properties for 10,20,30,40 or even 50 years, (as we are constantly told that the Government does not have the money to acquire all the green space now, yet had the money to pay for the Leppington Triangle, that is not needed for another 25 years).

No one seems to know or can tell you how long land owners burdened with green space will have to wait for freedom to get on with their lives or transition into a nursing home, or relocate due to health reasons, if you will be acquired at all, and if you will be acquired then when & by whom! THIS IS A DISGRACE! Surely we deserve better planning!

All we get is snippets of information from the Media. Minister Stokes’s acknowledgement through a spokes person, from his Office, in a recent news paper article that Environmental & Recreational land and certain parks is not required to be acquired by the Government under an Environmental Assessment Act?...

We are not developers, or corporations we are simply mums & dads that chose a rural lifestyle to raise our families and work hard to achieve the “Australian Dream” to find out years later the government wants to steal our homes from underneath us or leave us to rot on our land for an unknown period of time, so they can achieve their “vision” and at the same time, limiting anything we can do to our land while we are forced to wait, for example a granny flat to take in & care for an elderly parent, or help a child with the NSW housing shortage and affordability or build a garage or put a pool in...anything!

How can this be? When the DPIE comes in and changes your land use from RU4 to Environmental & Recreation, or linear Park, Ridge line Park, Riparian corridors, or an open field, how is this not green space for public purpose? What are land owners suppose to do when 40% of the 11,200 ha initial release is being proposed for green space? When is green space not a park & when is a park not for public purpose? This have been extremely stressful for me and my family.

I would like to see the DPIE & PP made accountable and fully cost the 40% green space in current market values from 11,200ha release as I believe it is unachievable and that an independent committee is required to scrutinise the findings and address the anticipated time frame to achieve it, as anything over 5-10 years I think is absolutely unfair and a disgrace to impose on land owners, so the DPIE & PP can achieve their “vision” .

I don’t understand how a better management of land release was not adopted by the DPIE & PP to stagger the release of stage 1 release of initial precinct first and waited until 75% of up take, then release stage 2 and so on, leaving land zoned RU4 until released. This would not of land lock any land owners for an indefinite period of time and inflicted uncertainty and subjecting them to mental anguish and depression, and would have allowed them to get on with life, for various reasons outlined above, and not held land owners prisoner on their land and in breach of The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) Article 17 being (1)“ Everyone has the right to own property alone as well as in association with others. (2) No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his property” .

I think on this basis, and the harm it is causing innocent home/land owners caught up in this debacle, the precinct plans should be put on stop, until all issues have been addressed and the impacts assessed thoroughly.

c. The role and performance of WSA Co Limited

I believe the WSA has a duty of care in its role to thoroughly investigate what is being proposed by the DPIE & PP. An example is the Draft Wildlife Management Assessment Report (may 2020) in this report, I believe, it states that a thorough investigation into wildlife species and migration would take 6 years. From what I can establish this has not been done! The report has been prepared on “what we do know”, how is this the case, when the tax payer is investing soooo much money into such a expensive project that we would not check and double check SAFETY!! Because if we are only preparing a report on what we do know, I am concerned about WHAT WE DON'T KNOW! Like how many bat or flying fox colonies exist in the Blue Mountains and surrounds?, as they are nocturnal and are out in the night in flocks does this pose a problem with radar detection?

I don't pretend to be an ecologist by any means, but I don't think it takes a Rhodes scholar, to figure out when creating vast amounts of greenspace, planting millions of trees, creating water retention bays/wetlands throughout the area (that don't already exist) is creating environments to attract bird/bats & wildlife to remain in the area to breed, feed and rest, and at the same time the DPIE & PP are establishing wildlife exclusion zones??? These concerns have been raised by me through the submission process and by many within the Community with no real answers, who is accountable?.

I hope that the “vision” for a Parkland City and “connection to Country” has not given the DPIE & PP tunnel vision when making important decisions.

d. Site Preparation, including the realignment of the Northern Road

No comment, do not have any issues or heard any issues with regard to this.

e. Environment and heritage management

I think it is vital that environmental & heritage management is upheld on proven and documented locations. For example please refer to the Liverpool City Council – Liverpool Local Environmental Plan 2008 – Environmentally significant land map – sheet ESL-006 and the amount of documented environmental significant land, compared to what is being proposed as Environmental/recreational Land in the currently exhibited precinct plans. Surely if the majority of the land is “recreational” it is for public purpose and the Government should give land owners surety that they will acquire this land within a reasonable time frame 5-10 years maximum. If this cant be achieved within this period, then the scaling back of green space should be carried out to a similar amount like the City of Sydney for example that has 9% green space or even half of the proposed 40% of 11,200 ha down to 20% would still retain an enormous amount of green space, we should not proceed blindly, just because that's the “vision” at any cost attitude.

f. Community Engagement

Covered in detail in section A.

In brief, I think this has been a big failure and disappointment to me and the rest of the community that are not against development and were initially positive when dealing with the DPIE & PP but have been disillusioned by the lack of transparency and just the sheer outrage that any proposal to see the majority of land owners (not all, because as we know from the media and ICAC ongoing investigations) the proposal to be land locked as a prisoner on your land, through no fault of your

own, for possibly decades, if you live that long! Just seems outrageous and I feel has really damaged the relationship of trust in dealing with the DPIE & PP and ultimately Mr Stokes and our Premier Ms Berejiklian.

g. Transport links and supporting infrastructure

In my personal opinion, I feel it's a major oversight not to connect the WSA to Leppington Stn hard rail. This would open up opportunities for the Macarthur region and link the 2 airports to the City in much less time than going to St Marys and having to change with luggage to the City. I think the link to Oran Park, Narellan etc can come later, but this is a BIG mistake to not take advantage of the existing rail link at Leppington.

h. Training and employment

My view is, if we are building a third City to support employment for one of the fastest growing regions within Sydney, and giving residents the opportunity for employment close to home, then after SAFETY, Employment should be the second focus, not "connecting to County" and a landscape led approach when planning for a City within the core area of the City.

By focusing on the two key issues Safety & Employment, I feel this could inevitably solve a lot of the congestion issues we have on our roads today, like the M4, M5 & M8 and overcrowding of our trains to the City & Parramatta, by creating an abundance of employment opportunities for residents to work and study close to home.

By shifting the "vision" to safety and employment, It could also free up a lot of good developable land to help offset the current housing shortage and affordability crisis in NSW.

Thank you.