

New South Wales Nurses and Midwives' Association

Submission

City of Parramatta's
Affordable Housing Discussion Paper

June 2017

The New South Wales Nurses and Midwives' Association (NSWNMA) is the registered union for all nurses and midwives in New South Wales. The membership of the NSWNMA comprises all those who perform nursing and midwifery work. This includes registered nurses, midwives, enrolled nurses and assistants in nursing and midwifery (who are unregulated) who are employed in NSW in the public, private, aged care and disability sectors.

The NSWNMA has approximately 62 500 members and is affiliated to Unions NSW and the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU). Eligible members of the NSWNMA are also deemed to be members of the New South Wales Branch of the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation.

Our role is to protect and advance the interests of nurses and midwives and the nursing and midwifery professions. We are also committed to improving standards of patient care and the quality of services in health and age care services. We wish to acknowledge the contributions made by our members in preparing our comments.

We welcome the opportunity to provide a brief response to the City of Parramatta's Affordable Housing Discussion Paper. This response is authorised by the elected members of the New South Wales Nurses and Midwives' Association.

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Background

The City of Parramatta is currently exhibiting Affordable Housing Discussion Paper (May 2017). The Paper sets out the Council's affordable housing targets and nine options that have the potential to impact on the provision of affordable housing in the City of Parramatta. The NSWNMA attended the launch of the Paper on 25 May 2017 and understands that feedback received in response to the discussion paper will inform the Council's Affordable Housing Policy. The Policy is expected to be ready to be implemented in July 2017. We wish to acknowledge the significant work the City of Parramatta has undertaken to develop the Affordable Housing Discussion Paper. We have provided a brief submission in response to the Paper with particular reference for the need for affordable rental housing for workers who are employed in key service areas within Parramatta City Council.

Introduction

The NSWNMA considers that it is in the best interest of society to ensure nurses and midwives are available to provide nursing and midwifery care for future health service delivery. There 171 establishments in the City of Parramatta where 5 255 of our members are employed. These facilities include aged care, medical centres, day clinics, public and private hospitals. Over 2 000 of our members are employed at Westmead Hospital alone. Limited affordable housing does and will cause nurses and midwives to move further away from hospitals and the services where they work causing barriers in the recruitment and retention of staff.

Housing affordability and the difficulty securing, safe affordable housing within reasonable proximity to their workplaces is a significant concern for many of our members. Endorsed at the NSWNMA Annual Conference in 2016, the NSWNMA has adopted the position that public policy and planning must address the need for affordable housing for all essential workers. Workers that are employed in key service areas, such as nurses and midwives, should be able to rent or purchase

housing that is suitable for their needs, secure and is priced so that they can meet other living expenses¹.

The NSWNMA is supportive of a range of affordable housing options, including affordable rental housing that would enable nurses and midwives (and other workers who are employed in key service areas) to obtain safe, appropriate and affordable housing within reasonable proximity to their workplaces.

Focus Questions

Do you agree with the City of Parramatta's approach to measuring the need for affordable housing?

Do you agree with the proposed target of 9 500 affordable rental housing dwellings by 2036?

The Association would like to congratulate the City for the work they have done in preparing the Paper and providing the evidence used to make decisions regarding the proposed affordable housing target. The proposed target of 9 500 affordable rental housing dwellings (ARH) would provide ARH for households that are projected to be suffering from housing stress in 2036 but would not provide enough ARH for the number of key workers the City will need by 2031.

We encourage you to be bold and set a target based on option three. While adopting the first option would address the needs of the households residing in the City of Parramatta, it would not provide enough ARH for all the key workers identified (nurses, midwives, defence force, fire fighters, police and teachers) who are essential for staffing key service areas in the City. The Greater Sydney Commission has identified that the population of the West Central District will increase by 550 000 people by 2036, this includes an increase of 183% of persons aged over 85 years². It is essential that the City of Parramatta has sufficient key workers to provide the care this population will require. It must also be recognised that the Westmead Health and

¹ NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association 2016, Position Statement on Affordable Housing, Waterloo, NSW.

² Greater Sydney Commission 2016, Draft West Central District Plan.

Education Super Precinct will require key workers to fulfil the vision outlined in the West Central District Plan.

The high cost of housing results in the City of Parramatta's key workers, particularly the younger workforce, being unable to afford to live close to their workplaces³. There is a very real concern that limited affordable housing will impact on the recruitment and retention of staff in key service areas. In March 2017, we surveyed our members on a number of issues related to housing and over 1 000 members responded. The responses indicated that a significant number of members are experiencing difficulty securing appropriate, safe and affordable housing close to their workplace. 87.8% reported that housing affordability is an important or very important consideration when considering job opportunities. 36% stated that they have changed jobs and relocated as a result of housing affordability and almost 50% indicated that they would be prepared to change jobs to live in a more affordable area.

Members were asked if they have changed jobs and or relocated as a result of housing affordability. The following comments from nurses and midwives illustrate the impact unaffordable housing is having.

“On the whole, nearly half my pay goes for rent”

“I’m looking for jobs in Queensland because I can’t afford a house in Sydney”

“Some of my colleagues travel over an hour to work”

“I accepted a position in Sydney which I had to turn down as I could not afford the rent there”

³ City of Parramatta 2017, Draft Economic Development Plan 2017 – 2021.

We are pleased to note that you have included affordable housing for very low to moderate income households when defining affordable housing⁴. We would also encourage you to include shift workers in addition to key workers in the eligibility criteria for allocation of ARH. Nurses, midwives and the other identified key workers are often moderate income earners who work shifts. If these workers are unable to afford to live in reasonable proximity to their workplaces they will be required to travel considerable distances to and from work. Our members have reported that due to the nature of shift work (late finishes followed by early starts), significant travel time and distance has an impact on their safety when travelling. This also negatively affects their quality of life, ability to build communities and potentially impacts on the care they can provide due to fatigue.

In addition, the NSWNMA requests that consideration be given to other low to moderate income workers employed in key service areas. For example the cleaners, porters, and administrative staff that work in hospitals.

Do you agree with the requirement for 10% yield on private development and 30% on government be allocated to ARH?

The NSWNMA signed the Sydney Alliance's submission to the Greater Sydney Commission Draft District Plans⁵. The organisations of the Sydney Alliance called for the District Plans to lift the target to at least 15% on private land and at least 30% on government land for all new developments. As discussed at the launch of the Discussion Paper, 10% would barely keep pace with the requirements needed. The NSWNMA agree that affordable housing target need to apply to total floor area of the development after up zoning⁶.

Are there other innovative models to provide more affordable rental housing that you think Council should consider?

⁴ City of Parramatta 2017, *Affordable Housing Discussion Paper*

⁵ Sydney Alliance 2017, *Submission to the Greater Sydney Commission Draft District Plans*
<http://www.sydneyalliance.org.au/gsc-plan-submission>

⁶ City of Parramatta 2017, *Affordable Housing Discussion Paper*

Which option do you think Council should pursue to deliver affordable rental housing?

The issues surrounding increasing affordable housing are complex. We recommend that the City of Parramatta pursue a combination of the nine options outlined in the Discussion Paper.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the City of Parramatta's Affordable Housing Discussion Paper. The Council is in a good position to preserve and increase the supply of affordable housing for the residents of City of Parramatta. We look forward to the release of your Affordable Housing Policy in July 2017.