

**Submission
No 62**

**INQUIRY INTO DEVELOPMENT OF THE TRANSPORT
ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM**

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Portfolio Committee 7
Parliament House
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Dear Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the Inquiry into the development of the Transit Oriented Development program in NSW.

I am an academic from the University of Sydney School of Architecture, Design and Planning. My research expertise is at the intersections of planning, transport and human health. I am widely considered an expert on barriers to the transition away from private car use in car-dependent cities. I have developed internationally published and respected research in this portfolio. That research has, by and large, focussed on the Sydney region and the state of NSW. I use this research to inform my submission and 3 simple recommendations, against the key Terms of References that reflect my international expertise.

Australia's relative car dependency is widely recognised as problematic: for human health through injury, respiratory illness, declining rates of physical activity and the erosion of the social ties that allow us to flourish [1], environmentally through CO2 emissions and reliance on a finite resource [2]; and economically through the costs of traffic congestion [3]. While some of these problems can be remedied with future technologies like autonomous and electric vehicles, all can be mitigated with less use of the private car in the first place.

While cars create problems, they remain key to Australian life. We are culturally and structurally attached to cars, which provide the autonomy, privacy and freedom we have come to expect [4]. Australia and Australians will not give up the car entirely, but the urgency of issues such as climate change and congestion demand that we 'tame' the way cars are used in cities, and seek to encourage less car-use where we can.

Densification is inevitable if Sydney is to transition away from its over-reliance on the private car for day-to-day transport [5]. Higher densities bring key destinations closer together and reduce the distances people need to travel to access the opportunities and day-to-day needs of life in cities. Higher densities justify investment in sustainable transport infrastructure, including transit infrastructure, provisions for car-sharing and networks for walking and cycling.

Importantly, this is not just about providing people with access to a train station and assuming less car-dependency will ensue. More needs to be done if the current approach to densification through the promotion of TOD is to have the intended consequences of building a city that is affordable, liveable, healthy and sustainable. It is these details, and their omission from the TOD process to date, that inform this submission. I concentrate primarily on TOR point k) *the impact on localised environment and amenity values caused by the Transport Oriented Development Program*, with emphasis on the importance of getting this environment right from the very moment the first residents start to call these precincts home. Other relevant matters, as requested in TOR point r), are also addressed.

Recommendation One: Ensure each dwelling is provided with one car parking space onsite.

While the implementation of maximum parking requirements is generally recognised as a viable strategy to reduce car-ownership internationally, there is little evidence to suggest that this will immediately be the case in cities such as Sydney that are structurally and culturally defined by private car access and use. This is particularly so in precincts outside of the immediate Sydney CBD. As such, if the number of parking spaces is less than the number of dwelling units in the nominated precincts, there will be impact on surrounding streets and localities, with research and recent experiences in densified areas indicating Sydney-siders are generally happy to enrol themselves in the daily task of finding a parking space for the sake of having access to a car.

The precincts nominated for uplift are in close proximity to rail infrastructure, but they are also too isolated for most to live entirely car-free. Yes, the train may get residents to and from work. But we cannot make the mistake of assuming that if journeys to work can be accommodated by public transport, the car will be obsolete. People keep cars not because of regular trips such as the journey to work, but because of the messy trips - the carting of children to Saturday sport, the grocery shopping, the visits to family and friends with dogs and kids in tow [6]. And in these precincts, accommodating these trips without a car is at best inconvenient and at worst impossible. People will need to have access to cars, and as such, there must be adequate provision for car-parking. We must plan aggressively to accommodate reduced car use, but concede car-ownership will remain common in Sydney for some time into the future.

Recommendation Two: Design surrounding streets for active transport by reducing speed limits.

For the households soon to call these apartments home to reduce car use, streets must be designed for people, not for cars. Street speeds should be slowed to at least 30km [7], not only within the precinct itself but in the surrounding area containing key destinations, particularly schools, public open spaces, infrastructure, shops and services.

Recommendation Three: Plan and design to accommodate a diversity of household types.

Families are this city's most car-dependent cohort [8]. Yet the idea of raising a family in density from birth to early adulthood remains unusual, culturally unacceptable, and structurally difficult [9]. To get Sydney's families out of cars we need to ensure they are welcome in density – not only with young children, but also with pre-teens, teens and young adults. This means providing ample opportunities for families to access three and four bedroom apartments, some of which should be positioned on the ground floor. It means providing spaces for children to play in and around apartment complexes. These apartments must be designed with ample indoor and outdoor storage space, bathrooms that are big enough to accommodate families, and acoustic treatments to reassure families that making noise is ok in higher density environments – in this respect, acoustic privacy is as important as visual privacy. The surrounding area must also welcome families through ample provision of play spaces, childcare, schools, medical facilities and supermarkets. Importantly, these families need to feel as though they belong in density.

Sincerely,

Dr Jennifer L. Kent

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