

Thursday 9 November 2023

Mayor slams Macquarie Park build-to-rent apartment plan

City of Ryde Mayor Clr Sarkis Yedelian OAM said today that a State Government decision to rezone a 68-hectare precinct in the City's Macquarie Park Innovation District for new residential housing will destroy vital employment lands that may never be reclaimed and put at risk its status as a truly global innovation district.

The Mayor was speaking after a report in the Sydney Morning Herald revealed a plan by the government to convert 'excess' commercial land into new residential housing to meet housing targets agreed to by national cabinet.

Clr Yedelian said the plan – which would see as many as 3000 new homes in build-to-rent apartment towers situated near Macquarie University and the two Sydney Metro stations contained in the precinct – was an unnecessary addition to existing housing plans and would further burden already strained local infrastructure.

As defined by the NSW Planning Department, build-to-rent housing is large-scale, purpose-built rental housing that is held in single ownership and professionally managed. It was introduced into the NSW planning system in February 2021.

"While it is important that the State Government investigates ways to solve the short-term housing crisis, it shouldn't take its eyes off the equally important commercial sector," said Clr Yedelian.

"The City of Ryde is already providing and approving enough housing in the Macquarie Park Innovation District that is way above our State mandated quotas – we have 23 state-significant sites alone in Macquarie Park that are with State Government planning that will supply at least 20,000 apartments. We're talking about at least 50,000 extra people calling Macquarie Park home."

"The current population in and around the Macquarie Park Innovation District is 30,000 and it will be well over 100,000 by the time those new developments are all approved."

Clr Yedelian urged the State Government to prioritise Macquarie Park Innovation District's status as a vital local employment hub central to the state's burgeoning tech and biotech sectors.

"It should be noted that once commercial space is gone, it's gone for good," he said.

"Premier Minns and Minister Scully need to understand that the Macquarie Park Innovation District – which already houses the headquarters of 10 of the world's top 100 companies – is an important and vital cog in the state's economy and they are planning for it to just disappear."

“Council is proactively engaging with local and international agencies seeking to attract innovative businesses, both established and startups, to this strategically important precinct.”

City of Ryde CEO Wayne Rylands said the State Government should prioritise the completion of the ‘missing link’ of the Western Sydney Metro between Tallawong and St Marys, to enhance Macquarie Park Innovation District’s employment opportunities and to provide affordable transport choice for the significant number of Macquarie Park employees who live in the Blacktown and Penrith LGAs.

The proposed 20km of tracks, which will include up to seven potential stations, will link the Ryde local government area and other important strategic urban centres with greater Western Sydney, including the new Aerotropolis.

“More than 35 per cent of the people who work in Macquarie Park Innovation District come from the Blacktown and Penrith areas,” Mr Rylands said.

“For most of those people, getting to work means an hour and a half trip on three different public transport services, or travelling by car on expensive tollways.”

“What this State Government has to do is make sure the continuation of the Metro connects people between the Western Sydney Airport and the rest of Sydney. They also need to do more to protect Macquarie Park’s employment lands to ensure it continues to be one of Australia’s key economic powerhouses and remains as our country’s pre-eminent Innovation District. This ill-thought-out build-to-rent scheme is nothing more than a short-term solution that suits the development industry. This is going to do nothing but create a long-term jobs crisis for our state because there will be nowhere left to work.”

“The City of Ryde significantly contributes much needed dwellings towards a housing solution, we punch well above our weight in that regard, substantially surpassing the targets set for us, but we must get the balance right between the provision of residential dwellings, employment, and industrial lands, commercial and innovation, and the provision of jobs close to where people live.

“I encourage the State Government to consult closely with Council, key stakeholders and the community on this important journey.”

**Media Contact: Brett Thomas, City of Ryde Communications m • 0466 479 556
e • media@ryde.nsw.gov.au**