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20 August 2024

Mr Greg Doyle
Chief Executive Officer
Wollongong City Council

Via email: engagement@wollongong.nsw.gov.au

Dear Mr Doyle,

The Property Council of Australia welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the *Draft Wollongong City Centre Movement and Place Plan (Plan)*. We acknowledge the efforts made by Wollongong City Council (Council) to develop this strategy to ensure the Wollongong CBD continues to evolve and adapt to the changing needs of the community.

About the Property Council

Property Council is Australia's leading peak advocacy body with over 2,300 member companies. We are the voice of the Australian property industry, championing a strong, thriving sector that leaves a positive legacy for all Australians.

Property Council Members in the Illawarra Shoalhaven operate across the property industry in fields such as design, planning, engineering, and legal professions, also encompassing owners and operators of key industrial, commercial, retail and residential companies. Through our work, we are the voice for the property industry and are acutely aware of the challenges facing local councils on the need to balance growth for a changing and diverse population, as well as providing services and lifestyle benefits offered within a regional area.

Our feedback

Overall, we are supportive of Council developing a strategy to focus on accessibility in and around the Wollongong CBD and to encourage the uptake of public transport, however, we raise a number of concerns and provide recommendations below that we believe are crucial for the Plan's overall success and implementation.

We are concerned that this Plan does not take into consideration the future direction of the city with regards to land use, density and demographic changes that are occurring in the Wollongong CBD. We believe that this Plan can only be successful with the proper consideration of land use planning and that this Plan should 'talk to' the City Centre Planning Strategy. Without a clear vision for the city centre, it is difficult to implement changes suggested in the Plan to ensure they are meeting the needs of an evolving CBD.

We acknowledge the data provided in the Plan identifies that the Community is looking for change when it comes to public transport, safety and more options to access the CBD. This clearly reflects the changing nature of the CBD and that more people are living in the city centre, which means that we need to think more strategically about how people move around.

To make the changes to movement in and around the CBD as identified in the Plan, we believe there needs to be further consultation and more detail around the proposed changes. There is a lack of detail included, no action plan associated with how the changes would be implemented and which stakeholders need to be consulted to ensure that they would work.

For example, the proposed changes suggested to Keira Street need further consultation with owners of Wollongong Central, the local business owners on that street and also local residents who live around this area. We believe that there needs to be more clarity around how these proposed changes would work and ensure that those impacted are consulted.

It should also be acknowledged that the shift from cars to public transport and other measures identified by this Plan will take time to implement and will require a change of community mindset. This often takes time and note that there are no clear timeframes or actions around how this will be achieved – this is as much an education campaign as it is a change of mindset by the community to choose other methods of transport besides cars.

Following on from this, Council will also need buy-in from Transport NSW to support the transport initiatives outlined in this Plan and it is not clearly articulated how Council will look to achieve this. Though many of the suggestions like light rail would be beneficial for the city centre, we are concerned there hasn't been enough consideration about the 'how' and 'when'.

We would like to see Council provide further details about the proposed changes following the public exhibition of this Plan and report back to industry/community about how they will be implemented. We also encourage Council to do further targeted consultation with key stakeholders who are going to be impacted by the proposed changes as this is necessary to the overall success of the Plan and acceptance by the wider community.

Conclusion

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on this Plan and encourage Council to continue engaging with industry on the next steps for this important piece of work.

If you have any questions related to the matters raised in this letter, please feel free to contact me at mguido@propertycouncil.com.au or on 0437 315 198.

Yours sincerely,



Michelle Guido

Regional Director - Illawarra
Property Council of Australia