

I firmly object to the Pemulwuy Concept's approval (SSD application 8135). As a lifelong Sydney resident, I'm disgusted by the proposal for the iconic location of 'The Block' in Redfern to be developed into high-density student housing. Not only will this proposal greater marginalize to the traditional Aboriginal owners of the land – by not providing the affordable Aboriginal housing that was promised at several stages during the planning of the project – but it will also be a blight on the cultural and physical landscape of Redfern. This development stands at utter odds with the most urgent needs of the community of Sydney: the provision of affordable housing to its more vulnerable residents (in the last two decades Sydney house prices have risen disproportionately to wage growth); to construct buildings that respect the architectural, environmental and Aboriginal heritage of Sydney; and to prevent the social segmentation of suburbs by economic and social class (that has caught the medias attention in recent years with the ghettoization of suburbs such as Mount Druitt).

As a former Alumni of the University of Sydney, I recall fondly walking from Redfern Station, through Redfern, to the University. The walk from Central Station to USYD, although comparable in distance, I rarely took. The 'corridor' from Central Station to USYD is largely built-up, consisting of high rises which constrict the entrance of light along the way, as well as a lack of visible green space. The only relief to this is when you reach Victoria Park and the grand architecture of the Sydney University campus (which is rightfully a magnet for tourists and international visitors who come to see the historical architecture and landscaping that become an iconic international symbol of Sydney). To me the walk from Redfern Station presents a better build-up to this magnificent view. On the walk, as well as encountering ample green space, one also encounters many older 'townhouses' – medium density housing – that are often home to students (local and international) living together in share houses. Municipal authorities such as those in Paris and London are now promoting medium density housing as a more sustainable model of development, that allow cities to grow without the endless sprawl of suburbanization (which presents problems for transportation and infrastructure), as well as the social and environmental problems created by high density living (the above-mentioned lack of greenspace, lack of light, overcrowding and stress on community resources). Furthermore it will contribute to the degradation of these historic medium density, terraced suburbs that are a part of the appeal and charm of Sydney.

To clarify, I am not at all an opponent of the integration of more modern architecture to the Sydney landscape. There have been many very successful unique medium to medium-high density housing projects, well positioned in relation to historically significant land and public recourses. Besides this all-important positioning, the architectural merit and innovation (social and design) of a structure is key in the success of such structures. As far as I can see the Pemulwuy Concept displays very little in the way of innovation. The cookie-cutter design displayed in the artist's impressions available on the Aboriginal Housing Program's Website is difficult to distinguish from a many cheap, quick developments that are rising-up all over Sydney at the moment. Most worrying about the

design is the obvious break that it makes from its quaint historical surroundings and the effect the massive structure will have on access to sunlight for surrounding terraces as well as the historic Redfern station.

The one consistent message that the developers of this proposal seem to send is that students – most likely of the University of Sydney – will benefit from the creation of these houses, proximate to the University itself. Yet the majority of these units will likely be well above the price bracket of the average local student. This has led many of the projects critics to say that the housing will prioritize international students. Having many friends who are international students I would like to add that what this would actually specifically prioritize is very wealthy international students, who are likely funded by their parents to study in Australia. This is backed up by the decision by the developers to reject the government's \$5 million grant to ensure affordable indigenous housing would be available from the outset, instead allowing student accommodation provider Atira to develop a new funding model: wealthy international families who will pay anything for their children to be sent to Australia to acquire a degree. Cast in this light the project seems to be looking more at the short-term goal of quickly securing profits for those with in a stake in the project from wealthy international students. All this comes at the expense of the greater Redfern community. The community will be priced out of their own land and have their shared recourses placed under pressure in a move that will ultimately devalue the current shared capital of the land: its cultural heritage to the community, turning it into a transitory space for students where the capital becomes housing, a resource that is no longer equally shared.

Personally, I do not see any greater value for the community of Redfern or the city of Sydney being created through this project. It seems to be an easy way to create short-term profit for the developer that will ultimately affect the rest of the community negatively. Although I am not an expert in Indigenous Australian culture, from my basic knowledge it seems to stand against the mentality of equality and fairness to all that I have learnt is an integral part of their culture. In this context, to hear that Deicorp, the developer of the project, requested to have its developer fees waived due to the project's "public benefit", is frankly laughable. As far as I am concerned those responsible for the Pemulwuy Concept have proved to be incapable of developing a fair and competent model for development that in anyway benefits the community.