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The Royal Women's Hospital Submission on Amendment C407melb, Arden Structure Plan

October 2021

Summary

As an activating presence within the Arden Precinct, The Royal Women's Hospital has a key interest in the structure of the precinct and aspects of the public realm. The organisation's key feedback/recommendations on the Arden Structure Plan are:

- The Women's are supportive of the innovation and open spaces surrounding the potential hospital site
- Further development of the Arden Structure plan should consider public safety through a gendered lens to promote the safety and wellbeing of women and families
- Adequate and appropriate carparking will need to be provided for pregnant women and labouring women who are visiting the hospital
- The no-through road at Langford Street should be considered regarding traffic and congestion, and the implications of congestion on access to the hospital by emergency vehicles
- The Women's support a Key Worker Accommodation strategy in the Arden Precinct to ensure available and affordable housing for hospital staff

Introduction & Background

The Royal Women's Hospital (the Women's) is Australia's first and largest specialist hospital dedicated to improving the health of all women and newborns. In late 2020, the Victorian government announced funding to commence planning for a new hospital campus alongside the Royal Melbourne Hospital within the Arden Renewal Precinct. The project will deliver the planning, feasibility testing, and business case for the Arden hospital site as part of a broader health science and innovation precinct.

As an activating presence in the Arden precinct, the Women's has a key interest in the broader structure and planning of the public realm throughout the Arden Renewal Precinct. This document provides the organisation's feedback and response to the current Arden Structure Plan, with a focus on both the access and design of areas adjacent to the proposed hospital site and the safety and amenity for the Women's staff and patients in the broader precinct.



Feedback on Arden Structure Plan

The feedback provided in this submission covers aspects of the Arden Structure Plan that relate both directly and indirectly to the proposed hospital site, including *Land-use*, *Gendered lens towards safety*, *Carparking*, *Langford St traffic*, and *Key worker accommodation*. Detailed feedback and recommendations are included below.

Land-use

The Women's is pleased to see open spaces and a strong innovation presence surrounding the proposed hospital site (indicated in **Fig. 1** below). It is anticipated that the provision of and access to open/green spaces adjacent to the hospital site will be helpful in promoting better physical and mental wellbeing among our people and patients. Additionally, the density of land reserved for innovation aligns well with the vision for the proposed hospital, particularly with regards to the focus on education, research, and novel models of care. The creation of an innovation precinct/hub within the broader Arden Precinct will provide opportunities for collaboration and synergies between innovation industry and health services that could provide benefit beyond the Arden community through medical advancement and improved health outcomes.



Figure 1. A map of the Arden future urban structure



Gendered lens toward safety

The Women's recommend that as the Arden Structure plans are further developed and refined, a gendered lens with regards to public physical and psychological safety is adopted. As an organisation, we pride ourselves on our consideration of the unique experiences of women that influence their perceived and actual safety and wellness. For the area's adjacent to the potential hospital site and the broader Arden Precinct, it is important that the built environment maximises passive surveillance and provides safe and well-lit travel routes for women and families. The Women's previously had the opportunity to advocate for the inclusion of a 'Women's Walk' between the Arden train station Western Box and the potential hospital site, and many of the principles guiding this recommendation can be used for gender-informed planning more broadly within the Arden Precinct including:

- Convenient parking and transportation, including adjacent public transport terminals with well-lit walkways
- Clearly identified and well-used routes to essential buildings and services
- Clear sightlines and good lighting in public spaces
- Clear signage
- Ensure adjacent services/functional areas within the precinct are appropriate to be co-located to minimise risk of psychological harm to women and families

In line with the Victorian Government's Gender Equality Act 2020, The Women's recommends that VPA conduct a gender impact assessment of the Arden Structure Plan to ensure that the precinct is designed to benefit all Victorians.

(<https://www.genderequalitycommission.vic.gov.au/gender-impact-assessments>)

Carparking

Though there is emphasis placed on the use of public transportation within the Arden Precinct highlighted through the development of the new Metro Tunnel, it is important to note that a considerable cohort of patients at the Women's will require appropriate access to carparking services. In particular, maternity patients will be required to attend the hospital for antenatal appointments and to give birth. Due to the constraints of public transportation, it is anticipated that pregnant women and women in labour will largely travel to the hospital by car. Carparking planning surrounding the potential hospital site should take into consideration spatial aspects such as walking distance from the hospital, and capacity to meet demand.

We understand that this recommendation contradicts 'Objective 18' in the Arden Structure Plan, however the provision of appropriate carparking for these Women's patients and their families is operationally critical and will impact the care delivery and health outcomes of our patients.



Langford St traffic

The Women's understands that Langford Street (adjacent to the potential hospital site) is currently planned as a no-through road, and we therefore have some concerns regarding traffic and congestion along this road. As this road runs immediately alongside the hospital building, the safety of our people and patients should be considered regarding the diversion of traffic and prevention of congestion in this area. Additionally, traffic control considerations should ensure that critical access to the hospital site for emergency vehicles will not be prohibited at any time.

Safe pedestrian access between the potential hospital site and the adjacent open space should also be integrated into the traffic and access plans to promote access to open/green space among our people and patients.

Key worker accommodation

The establishment of a new hospital campus for both the Women's and The Royal Melbourne Hospital will require considerable expansion of the health service workforce. To attract and secure the high-quality, diverse workforce that will help shape the broader health and life sciences precinct at Arden, the Women's is supportive of a Key Worker Accommodation strategy that will ensure the provision of appropriate and affordable housing within the Arden Precinct for hospital staff. Under such a strategy, an allocation of available housing within the precinct would be reserved for key workers (including hospital staff) to eliminate considerable travel time and expenses. The housing should be subsidised to ensure affordability. The Women's would be open to further engagement on the planning and development of Key Worker Accommodation in the Arden Precinct.

Sandy Bell

[REDACTED]

for

Sue Matthews

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