

Attachment A

**Correspondence - Sydney University to City
of Sydney - Rezoning of University Forest
Lodge Properties under Sydney LEP 2012 -
10 May 2023**



Greg Robinson

Chief University Infrastructure Officer

10 May 2023

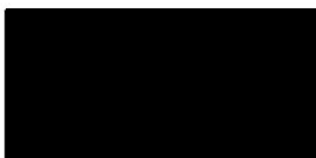
Graham Jahn,
Director
City Planning, Development & Transport.
City of Sydney Council

Dear Mr Jahn

Rezoning proposal– Rezoning of University Forest Lodge properties under the Sydney LEP 2012

Further to our attendance at the City of Sydney Council's Transport, Heritage, Environment and Planning Committee to address and hear the City's determination on the University's spot rezoning proposal for its Forest Lodge properties (2-12 Arundel Street and Mackie building) we note the concerns raised by Council members that supporting a rezoning of the Arundel properties could see the removal of a form of affordable housing at a time when NSW is suffering a crisis in housing affordability and respond as follows.

1. The properties are not currently used or classified as affordable housing, were vacated in 2021 having previously been used as Covid isolation rooms since 2020 and require substantial investment. Renovating or refurbishing the properties would be prohibitively expensive while providing a very limited amount of high maintenance accommodation not in line with our wider strategy of developing affordable, large, safe, compliant and 24/7 staffed accommodation with a range of cooking, break out, study and entertainment spaces.
2. Under this strategy, the University has designed, constructed and operated 1622 new student accommodation beds (Queen Mary - 802 beds in 2015, Abercrombie - 200 beds in 2015 and Regiment, 620 beds in 2019) in and around its main Darlington / Camperdown campus at a cost of circa **\$225m** while also obtaining State Significant Development Application approval for the renovation and redevelopment of a row of 38 Victorian Terraces on Darlington Rd to deliver a further 336 new affordable beds at an expected cost of circa **\$90m**.
3. Under a Private Binding Ruling agreed with the Australian Tax Office, we annually engage an external consultant, Urbis to review the rents of comparable accommodation in the Private Purpose-Built Student Accommodation Market and set our rents at a minimum of 25% below these benchmarks to ensure affordability. Currently we charge **\$326** or **\$333** per week (depending on term length) for a dedicated room in Queen Mary which is inclusive of all bills.
4. The University is committed to providing the highest quality accommodation at an affordable cost which is reflected in awards which include the Asia Pacific Student Accommodation Association Housing Operations of the year (Queen Mary Building in 2015) and Excellence in Facility Development (Regiment building in 2019).





5. The University is acutely aware of the current housing crisis and is providing a range of support to students to assist in finding accommodation including reserving and underwriting rooms in private student accommodation, offering emergency accommodation and financial assistance to those who need it while investigating opportunities to develop more affordable accommodation.

While we appreciate the sentiment of the Councillors, we believe we are already contributing significantly to addressing accommodation shortages and do not believe restrictions on the sale of our properties to be warranted.

If you have any questions, please contact Chris Watts, UI Director Property & Development, on [REDACTED] or by email [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely,

PP

Greg Robinson
Chief University Infrastructure Officer