1.4 St Leonards and Crows Nest: Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow

The traditional owners of the North Sydney area are the Cammeraygal people. Their lands extended from present day Cremorne Point in the east and potentially as far as the Ku-ring-gai area in the north.

**Aboriginal Heritage**

Population in the inner north shore increased significantly from the 1860's with the introduction of ferry services across the Harbour. St Leonards Station was opened in 1860 and serviced the nearby northern boundary of the North Sydney area up to Hornsby.

With the opening of Sydney Harbour Bridge in 1932, St Leonards emerged as a transport centre focused around the former Lane Cove Road (Pacific Highway).

**St Leonards Yesterday**

In 1948, the County of Cumberland Planning Scheme identified St Leonards as a sensible area for industrial growth. As a result, commercial and light industrial buildings began emerging in the area.

Around 1975-76 apartments and townhouses began to dominate the residential market, which increased the demand for new commercial space.

By the mid 1980's, St Leonards was gradually transforming into a leading employment centre, supported by key health institutions including the Royal North Shore Hospital.

In line with development pressures, a few local heritage items remain within the centre including 1 Chandos Street and the 1927 Power Station at 23 Albany Street.

There are a number of residential buildings dating from the 20th century remaining within the centre, mainly located on Chandos, Albany and Atchison Streets.

There are a number of conservation areas around the centre, reflecting the historic subdivision, architecture and planning for the area. These include Naremburn Conservation Area and Holtermann Estate Conservation Area.

**St Leonards Today**

Over recent years the traditional commercial function of the area has changed with the emergence of high density residential. This has been facilitated by excellent public transport and accessibility to jobs. The area largely consists of B and C grade commercial stock, with many businesses opting for higher-end office stock located in North Sydney or Macquarie Park over the last 30 years.

St Leonards and Crows Nest remains one of Sydney’s health and education precincts, benefiting from state of the art hospital facilities, hospital-based teaching and TAFE.

Currently, there is a diversification and transformation of commercial centres across Sydney into mixed use precincts, seeking to provide residential development in close proximity to public transport, employment, public open space and retail. This process is transforming commercial centres into vibrant and dynamic places to live, work and relax.

In November 2015 the NSW Government announced Crows Nest Sydney Metro station. The proposed metro line will extend underground from the north west and to the city, through a second harbour crossing into Sydney CBD.

With the announcement of the metro, Crows Nest and St Leonards will also mutually benefit from having new opportunities for office and health based commercial uses with an increased population available to the area.
1.5 Understanding the Existing Character

The following identifies our understanding of the existing character of the area.

**Commercial areas around the St Leonards Train Station and on the southern side of the Pacific Highway**
These areas have the most dense built form, however tend to lack street activity and amenity with C and B grade commercial stock. These areas are more overshadowed and feature less human-scale architecture.

**Crows Nest retail and residential precinct with Willoughby Road eat street**
This area is very pedestrian friendly with a safe, active and inviting public domain, predominantly two-storey retail and food and beverage offerings.

**Residential precincts with leafy streets and low density housing**
These areas have wide sleepy streets, with little activity, and predominantly free standing single storey dwellings, many of which are original bungalows and workers cottages and fall within heritage conservation areas.

**Large institutions of Northern Sydney Institute (TAFE), Bradfield College and Royal North Shore Hospital campuses**
The large, modern and institutional style architecture of these campuses allows them to read as an area unto itself. The public domain differentiates from the surrounding context further contributing to the distinctive character of the area.

**Artarmon Employment Area**
This area is characterised by industrial uses including specialised urban services such as concrete batching plants. It also supports low-rise bulky goods and large item retail warehouses. The streets are wide and street trees provide amenity to some areas.

**The Pacific Highway Corridor**
The building typology along the corridor ranges from large footprint, low rise warehouses to 6-8 storey institution buildings through the overshadowed stretch along St Leonards. The scale of built form transitions down to two storeys through Crows Nest towards the junction at Falcon Street. Views are often cut short due to the undulating topography and winding road. The street life along the corridor is unpleasant as a result of heavy vehicular traffic experienced on a daily basis.
2 Strategic Drivers

2.1 Catalyst for Change - Sydney Metro

Sydney Metro (Northwest and City & Southwest)
Sydney Metro is Australia’s largest transport project – a new standalone railway delivering 31 metro stations and 66 kilometres of new metro rail, revolutionising the way Australia’s biggest city travels. It will have the ultimate capacity to operate 30 trains an hour through the CBD in each direction – a train every two minutes each way.

In November 2015, Crows Nest was announced as a metro station, with entrances at the corner of Clarke Street and Hume Street, and the corner of the Pacific Highway and O’way Street.

The addition of a station at Crows Nest will reinforce the role of the area between the two stations as the commercial and mixed-use core. The new station will also change the way that people use and move through the public realm.

A pedestrian and cycle-friendly catchment will be centred around the new transport node, which will include upgrades to pedestrian crossings, cycle links and way-finding. The walk to a major station will be significantly reduced for patrons within the area on the south-western side of the Pacific Highway, as well as those to the east of O’way Street. A small section of the study area also falls within the 800m catchment area for the Victoria Cross Metro station at North Sydney.

The travel experience for commuters to and from the centre will also be improved with travel times estimated at 11 minutes to Central station and 7 minutes to Martin Place Metro Station from 2024.

Given the increased accessibility in this area, further investigations into commercial and residential density have formed a large component of this study. The new station will facilitate the sustainable growth of the area through improved connectivity and a focus on active and public transport modes. A decrease in car reliance will also be facilitated by an improved public domain, pedestrian experience and improved active transport links.

The station will improve access to the Crows Nest residential area, as well as the St Leonards southern gateway to commercial and mixed-use activities. This will not only bring jobs closer to residents but will also open up new opportunities for office and retail based commercial uses, with an increased population available to the area.
Strategic Drivers

Sydney Metro Impact on Residential and Commercial Uplift

Sydney Metro Northwest, City and Southwest projects will facilitate the delivery of approximately 28,880 dwellings in the north west and approximately 85,000 dwellings in the south west.

Work undertaken by SGS Economics and Planning has identified the spatial impacts of Sydney Metro across Metropolitan Sydney for employment and dwellings.

Figure 1.1.17 identifies areas in green are likely to gain significant volumes of dwellings and employment in preference of other locations (orange and red).

The proposed metro will likely result in additional residential demand along the Pacific Highway corridor including the centres of North Sydney, St Leonards and Chatswood, while reducing uplift demand in neighbouring suburbs.

Residential Uplift Forecast within the study area (SGS Economics and Planning 2017)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Dwellings</th>
<th>Current Supply</th>
<th>2026 Growth</th>
<th>2026 Stock</th>
<th>2066 Growth</th>
<th>2066 Stock</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Private</td>
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<td>6,500</td>
<td>14,500</td>
<td>15,000</td>
<td>24,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Dwelling Impact from Metro Project (SGS Economics and Planning 2017)

Legend

- Strategic Centres
- Rail Line
- < 2,129 - 150 (Dwelling Loss)
- 150 - 100 (Dwelling Loss)
- 100 - 10 (Dwelling Loss)
- 10 - 10 (Dwelling Uplift)
- 10 - 500 (Dwelling Uplift)
- 500 - 2,543 (Dwelling Uplift)
2.2 Greater Sydney Region Plan

St Leonards as a Collaboration Area - Greater Sydney Region Plan (GSC)

“The responsibility for creating great places does not rest with any one organisation. As a non-statutory initiative, Collaboration Areas offer a new way of working to deliver improved planning outcomes that support growth and change. Collaboration Areas are a place-based process led by the Greater Sydney Commission to address complex issues that require cross-stakeholder solutions.”

(GSC North District Plan, p.20)

The final Greater Sydney Region Plan, ‘Metropolis of Three Cities’, was released in March 2018 by the Greater Sydney Commission and outlines a vision to meet the needs of a changing population and transforming Greater Sydney into a metropolis of three cities.

St Leonards is a Collaboration Area within ‘Global Sydney’ and more specifically, within the Harbour CBD and Eastern Economic Corridor.

This area is situated within the highly-connected Eastern Economic Corridor from Macquarie Park to Sydney Airport. It is noted as being one of Sydney’s key office markets alongside Harbour CBD, Macquarie Park and Norwest.

The Eastern Economic Corridor is of national significance and currently contains approximately 775,000 jobs.
Strategic Drivers

A ‘Collaboration Precinct’ - North District Plan (GSC)

St Leonards is a mixed-use centre with high rise offices, a major health and education precinct, high density residential development and good public transport. It is an attractive centre, defensible by the restaurant village along Willoughby Road in Crones Nest and productive industrial employment area within Artarmon.

In addition to leveraging the potential of the Royal North Shore Public, North Shore Private Hospitals and the Mater Hospital to grow jobs in complementary health services and existing education facilities, a new Sydney Metro station at Crones Nest will further strengthen the centre’s economic and employment functions. The North District Plan identifies the following:

- Sets baseline target of 54,000 jobs by 2036.
- Sets high level target of 63,500 jobs by 2036.
- Sets five year housing targets for the LGAs.
- 1,000 dwellings in Lane Cove, 3,000 dwellings in North Sydney and 1,250 dwellings in Willoughby.
- Facilitates place making and job diversification opportunities in St Leonards.
- Leverage off the new Sydney Metro station at Crones Nest to deliver additional employment and residential capacity.
- Protect and enhance Willoughby Road’s village character and retail/restaurant strip, while recognising the need for increased growth opportunities.
- Promote synergies between the Royal North Shore Hospital and other health and education related activities in partnership with NSW Health.
- Define the northern perimeter of St Leonards to protect the adjoining industrial zoned land for urban services.

St Leonards

Key actions identified by the North District Plan
- Leverage the new Sydney Metro Station at Crones Nest to deliver additional employment capacity.
- Grow jobs in the centre.
- Reduce the impact of vehicle movements on pedestrian and cyclist accessibility.
- Protect and enhance Willoughby Road’s village character and retail/restaurant strip.
- Deliver new high quality open space, upgrade public areas, and establish collaborative place making initiatives.
- Promote synergies between the Royal North Shore Hospital and other health and education related activities in partnership with NSW Health.
- Retain and manage the adjoining industrial zoned land for a range of urban services.

Figure 1.1.18 Actions for St Leonards. Source GSC North District Plan

SJB
St Leonards & Crones Nest 2006
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