

Channel 9 – It's Back! by Peter Wilton

The new owner of the Channel 9 site has applied to the NSW Department of Planning and Environment to change the site's approved concept plan.

The Channel 9 site was sold in 2015 by the Nine Network to LEPC9 Pty Ltd, a partnership of Australian and Hong Kong property funds. The Nine Network will continue to occupy the site for the next few years. During this period the new owners will seek to modify and then finalise the site's redevelopment plans.

In April 2016 the new owners lodged a request for a Secretary's Environment Assessment Requirements (SEARs) certificate that is needed for an Environmental Assessment they will submit to justify their planned Concept Plan modification.

The documents lodged recently by the new owners outline the key modifications sought.

Many of these are likely to have a positive impact on the overall development and the community. These include increased levels of green space, improved visual design and building layout.

Other modifications however are not positive. The new owners will seek a 50% increase in overall building height from 8 storeys to 12 storeys. They are also seeking a 28% increase in apartment numbers from 400 to 510 dwellings.

The existing concept plan was approved after a lengthy assessment and review process conducted by the NSW Department of Planning, followed by determination by the Planning Assessment Commission (PAC). PAC's decision was subsequently confirmed by agreement reached by the Land & Environment Court after the original owners, Channel 9, appealed.



Protesters outside Channel 9 in 2015 / Photo P Wilton

The site's new owners have so far provided no justification for their proposed increase in building height and apartment density. Neither have they identified why the Planning Assessment Commission's determination and the Land & Environment Court agreement need to be overturned.

The new owner's Concept Plan modification proposal will be reviewed, assessed and determined following a process similar to the original proposal. The key steps involve the submission of an Environmental Assessment for review by the Department of Planning, community comment and call for submissions. The application will then be submitted to PAC for their determination.

The site developers have already engaged with local community groups, including Artarmon Progress Association and Willoughby Area Action Group, regarding their plans. They will also conduct community consultation sessions open to the public to explain their modified site plans.

Their proactive community consultation is welcomed. However it does not overcome the community impact from the massive increase in building height and apartment density. The community's response to the initial Channel 9 plans resulted in the approval of an appropriately sized development for the site. The community needs to again act in the same way to ensure the development of the Channel 9 site is not too big or too dense.

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