

# PL

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*Pittwater*  
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*2016/17*

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REAL LIFE

# Is bigger better?

Mark Horton, whose family has resided in Mona Vale since 1927, isn't happy about six-storey buildings like this in Whistler Street, Manly crowding Mona Vale.

*Mona Vale's Place Plan, which would allow six-storey developments, is concerning locals, as Joe McDonough discovers.*

There's one question locals can't wrap their heads around when it comes to the Mona Vale Place Plan - why allow for six-storey developments?

No one *Peninsula Living* has spoken with argues with the premise that Mona Vale could use a spruce-up, but the manner in which the Northern Beaches Council plans to do so has sparked outrage.

At present, there's a four-storey height limit on buildings in the northern peninsula suburb but that's set to increase to a maximum of six, as Council believes it will incentivise developers.

But that in itself is the biggest concern, according to Mona Vale resident David Murray. "We've all seen the towns where

*“We’re not talking about 20 storeys, this is a six-storey development which is quite modest in terms of scale.”*

*Northern Beaches Council general manager  
Mark Ferguson*

Image credit: Jason Baker via Flickr.com

There’s currently a four-storey limit in Mona Vale but Council hopes to bring in developers by raising that to six storeys.



Woolies or Coles move in and it’s the end of ‘High Street’ more or less,” he tells *Peninsula Living*.

“All the smaller shops can’t compete and that’s what Mona Vale really enjoys, it is the mismatch of different things that makes it what it is.”

In a meeting with Council and select representatives recently, David says, “Acting deputy general manager Andrew Piggott said there are a lot of landholdings in Mona Vale, a lot of buildings that are different ages, different heights, all mismatches, and a lot of those are owned by different people, and he said by raising the limit to six storeys, that’ll provide the incentive for developers to buy up a lot of it and join all those properties together and put in bigger buildings.

“But they haven’t done sufficient analysis of the adverse outcomes that could occur. We could get one person buy the whole block and put in something like Stocklands at Balgowlah or Westfield at Hornsby. How do you stop this process? You’ve dangled the carrot and the giant rabbit comes and eats your whole arm.”

Mark Horton, whose family has resided in Mona Vale since 1927, agrees with Mr Murray.

“My family owned the general store which later became the newsagency... I’m concerned about some of the larger companies coming in and establishing shopping centres where everything is internal and not on the street, which would take away from the place.”

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*“All of these people that move into these units will have kids, so where are they going to go to school?”*

*Mona Vale resident David Murray*

Image credit: Morgan via Flickr.com

Northern Beaches Council general manager Mark Ferguson says it's an unlikely scenario.

“The first point I'd make is that the six storeys won't apply right across the area, it's only in certain parts - on Pittwater Road and the Bungan Street area, as well as Harkeith Street - but it's because there's a need for the viability of development to create incentive for the development of the area to revitalise it,” he says.

“But the style of development will require them to layer back anything above three storeys - so it's not going to be six storeys just straight up, it'll be three storeys, then wedding cake back from that and that will allow natural light to create that greater pedestrian-friendly scale and it'll fit in with the rest of the buildings in the area.

“This is not a greenfield site, it's an existing site, so you're not going to have the aggregation of every single site in turning it into a Stocklands or whatever through that process, I just don't see that as a likely outcome.”

Overpopulation could be though, according to Mr Horton.

“Mona Vale Public School already has close to 1100 kids this year, projection over the next few years is 1500. We know that Harbord School is exploding, we know that Avalon has over 1000 kids, we know that Newport has probably 800, and Narrabeen Lakes, North Narrabeen and Elanora Heights

can't grow because of their physical restrictions,” he explains.

Mr Murray agrees. “All of these people that move into these units will have kids, so where are they going to go to school? People aren't going to want to travel up the road to Ingleside,” he tells *Peninsula Living*.

“The sports fields are over-subscribed as well - by mid-season they're starting to show damage and because there's such high use, there's a significant part of each season that they're deemed not fit for playing because they'd be stuffed up with the wet weather. This is all symptomatic of not enough facilities for too many people. And then you've got to question water infrastructure and sewer but that's another story in itself.”

Mr Ferguson denies that overpopulation is really an issue, however. “We're not talking 40 or 50 metres in height or 20 storeys, this is a six-storey development which is quite modest in terms of the scale,” he refutes.

“One of the things that's identified in any town centre development is that to get the level of intensity and retail offer we're after, you do need people in the area. And to get people in the area you've really got to get a bit of height. That's why we're going beyond the four-storey limit to six - an addition of two storeys provides a bit more diversity in housing type and secondly, intensity for parts of the town centre.” **P**