

COUNCILLOR ABRAHAMS: Thank you Acting Chair. I rise to speak on 25,000 additional residents for West End. We all heard today in the Council Chamber for the first time figures for the predicted population for West End—not West End and South Brisbane, but only West End. For the Councillors in the Chamber, this is a quadrupling of the current population of West End. This announcement, made by the LORD MAYOR, made deliberately by the LORD MAYOR, from which I infer he shall be telling the Council officers to deliver 25,000 additional people, and the planning instrument to achieve that, was made today when the community of West End is in the process of a Neighbourhood Plan, where they have contributed their vision, but as yet have not been asked what is a desirable population in any of the precincts of this Neighbourhood Plan.

I would like to reflect back: the LORD MAYOR's election promise for a Neighbourhood Plan is where the residents of a street have a say that—oh, the LORD MAYOR is not here. I believe that is an hour in which the LORD MAYOR has not been in the Chamber. He just makes an announcement and then, when it becomes hot, when people understand exactly the impact of his announcement, he is AWOL, he is gone.

As I was saying, the community is in the situation of waiting until the Council officers assess a survey, a discussion line, and feedback from markets and fairs what people have said. I have been watching the feedback, and at no time has there been any support for high rise, apart from a minority of one or two. In the main, when people comment, they are saying: keep the seven storeys. That is what the community knows they are saying to Council officers. It is the community that has said for four years. They have been giving that message to Council, yet today, before they have had a formal process to see what is proposed and commenting, the LORD MAYOR has given a directive. He will be directing officers, and maybe some of those officers might think twice about staying in the position. Certainly we might think about the loss of one officer already.

I am appalled, because the 25,000 additional people, quadrupling the population, means that four times more parkland, four times more schools, four times more community facilities are necessary—and believe me, there is no land, it is not possible to deliver this community infrastructure, so what we are doing is destroying an inner-city community. This is so distressing, because every other capital city has understood from the Sydney green bands that the inner-city areas have a vibrancy, a dynamism to them that attracts people to the city, and that is exactly what happens in West End. The 6,000 current residents of West End, have people come to visit them and to enjoy this inner-city suburb.

I am absolutely appalled by this announcement. Let it be quite clear: I do not support any dictatorial announcement of a population before the community has a say. Let us also be very clear: 25,000 additional people for West End means skyscrapers. This is skyscrapers along the river. They will be a barrier for the community within a peninsula, from the one thing that identifies them – the Brisbane River. I do not support this.

Finally, the LORD MAYOR has always tried to believe that, if he says it long enough, because Labor supported a motion saying we will have a neighbourhood plan for West End to look at the density that means I am standing beside him with his announcement of 25,000 additional residents. Nothing could be further from the truth. There are areas in West End that Labor Councillors have shown by trying to exclude them from the study area that should keep to the proposed density. I have said there is an area at Kurilpa where there could be some increased density. I believe the density that should be in the area of Kurilpa would have been able to be serviced by one of the water mains that we approved today, not two. That is an appropriate extent of density for an inner-city area, and the rest of West End needs to wait and see what the community says in terms of their height.

The community, I know, will be astounded that any LORD MAYOR, and his cabinet, who gets up often, often, often, telling us how well they consult, today just made an announcement out of the blue for 25,000 additional people. Never has this happened before in the history of planning in this city. What a disgrace it is. I will certainly make sure that the residents have a say to me on what they believe is the appropriate density for West End.