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Visual Impact Assessment

Installation of a new Digital Advertising Sign Help Street, Chatswood



Prepared for JCDecaux on behalf of Sydney Trains
Submitted to the Department of Planning, Industry and
Environment

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1 Introduction

This Visual Impact Assessment (VIA) has been prepared by *Keylan Consulting Pty Ltd* (Keylan) on behalf of *JCDecaux* to accompany a development application (DA) for the erection of a new monopole digital advertising sign at the site at Help Street, Chatswood.

The proposed development comprises:

- The erection of a 14.96m² one sided monopole digital advertising sign
- a visual screen area of 14.16m²
- the continued display of illuminated advertisements
- a 25 second dwell time for message changes
- a maximum night time luminance of 300cd/m²

The VIA describes, analyses and assesses the potential visual impacts associated with the proposal. The relevant legislation and planning instruments are addressed in detail within the *Statement of Environmental Effects* (SEE) prepared to accompany the development application and have been informed by the findings of this VIA.

1.1 Report Structure

The VIA has been prepared in accordance with the following document structure:

Section	Overview
Executive Summary	An overarching summary of the findings and conclusions of the assessment contained within this VIA.
1 Introduction	Introduction to the VIA and the proposed development.
2 Site and Locality	A description of the site, the context and an assessment of the opportunities and constraints presented by the site.
3 The Proposal	A detailed description of the proposed development application
4 Methodology	A description of the methodology undertaken including any limitations encountered during the assessment.
5 Assessment	An in-depth visual impact assessment of the existing environment, proposal and potential impacts on the surrounding area.
6 Conclusion	A concluding statement taking into account the assessment of the proposal.

Table 1: Report Structure

2 The site and locality

2.1 Site description

Help Street is a classified road that travels in a general east-west alignment. Help Street extends through the Chatswood CBD from Pacific Highway to the west to Anderson Street to the east.

The site is located below the rail corridor, on the corner at the intersection of Help Street and Orchard Road. The corner contains landscape planting within a planter bed, together with two sets of traffic signals.

The subject site in context to the surrounding area is shown in Figure 1.

The signage location, as viewed from the intersection of Help Street and Orchard Road is shown in Figure 2. There are no existing advertising signs at the subject site.



Figure 1: Site context (Base source: Nearmap)



Figure 2: Help Street indicative signage location – looking south-west

2.2 Surrounding locality

The advertising sign will be located within an established Sydney Trains corridor and visible from local streets. Development surrounding the site and in proximity to the road corridor includes:

- High rise commercial and residential towers
- Bus interchange located off Orchard Street, directly south of the subject site
- Chatswood Train Station located 240m south of the proposed signage location
- Westfield Chatswood located 190m to the southeast

2.3 Existing Signage Environment

There are no existing advertising signs within the vicinity of the proposed sign.

3 The Proposal

The proposal involves the installation of a monopole digital advertising sign adjacent to the railway corridor on Help Street in Chatswood. The development is summarised in Table 2 below.

Development Aspect	Description
Development summary	Installation of a new digital advertising sign
Signage location	Sign is proposed facing northeast on the corner of Help Street and Orchard Road, Chatswood (visible to westbound traffic)
Advertising display area	14.93m ² (4.708m x 3.172m)
Visual display area	14.16m ² (4.608m x 3.072m)
Road clearance from ground level to the sign	3.3 metres clearance from ground to bottom of sign
Dwell time	25 seconds
Signage exposure	Visibility and readability is from a distance of 50 metres
Illumination	The digital signage is illuminated using LEDs installed within the front face
Consent time period	15 years
Existing signage	None

Table 2: Development summary

Architectural drawings for the sign are shown in Figure 3 and Figure 4 and provided within the Architectural package at Appendix 2.

Indicative image of the sign, as viewed from the intersection of Help Street and Orchard Road, is provided at Figure 5.

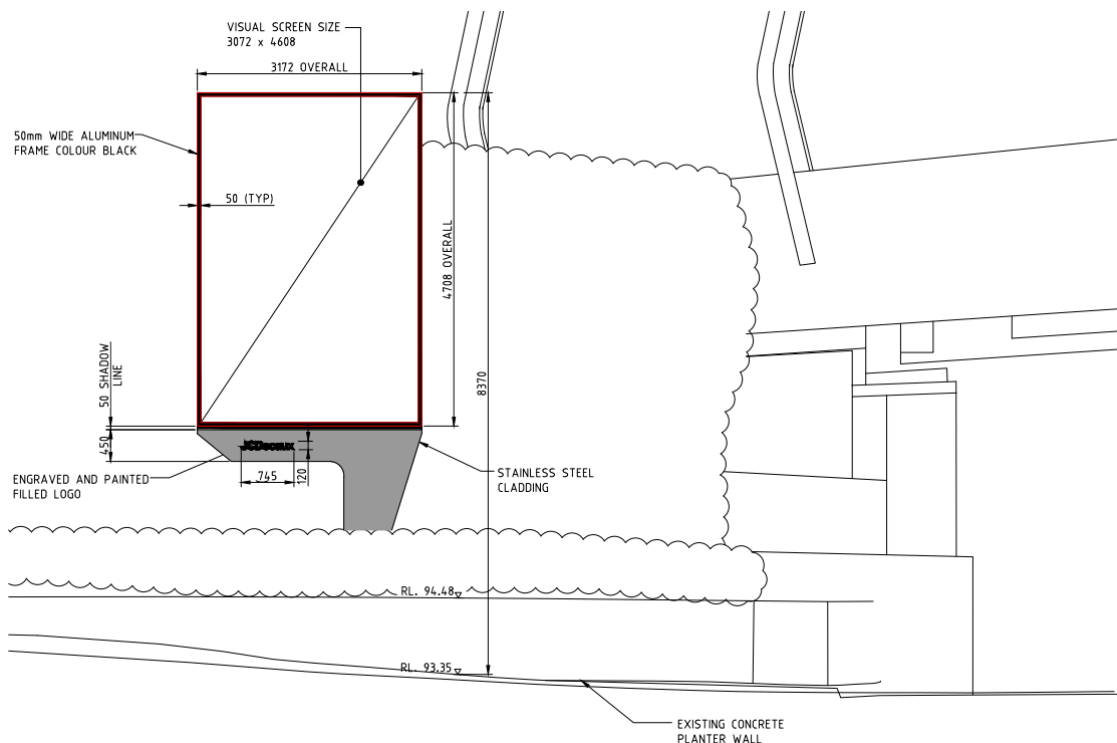


Figure 3: Digital signage plan (Source: Dennis Bunt Consulting Engineers)

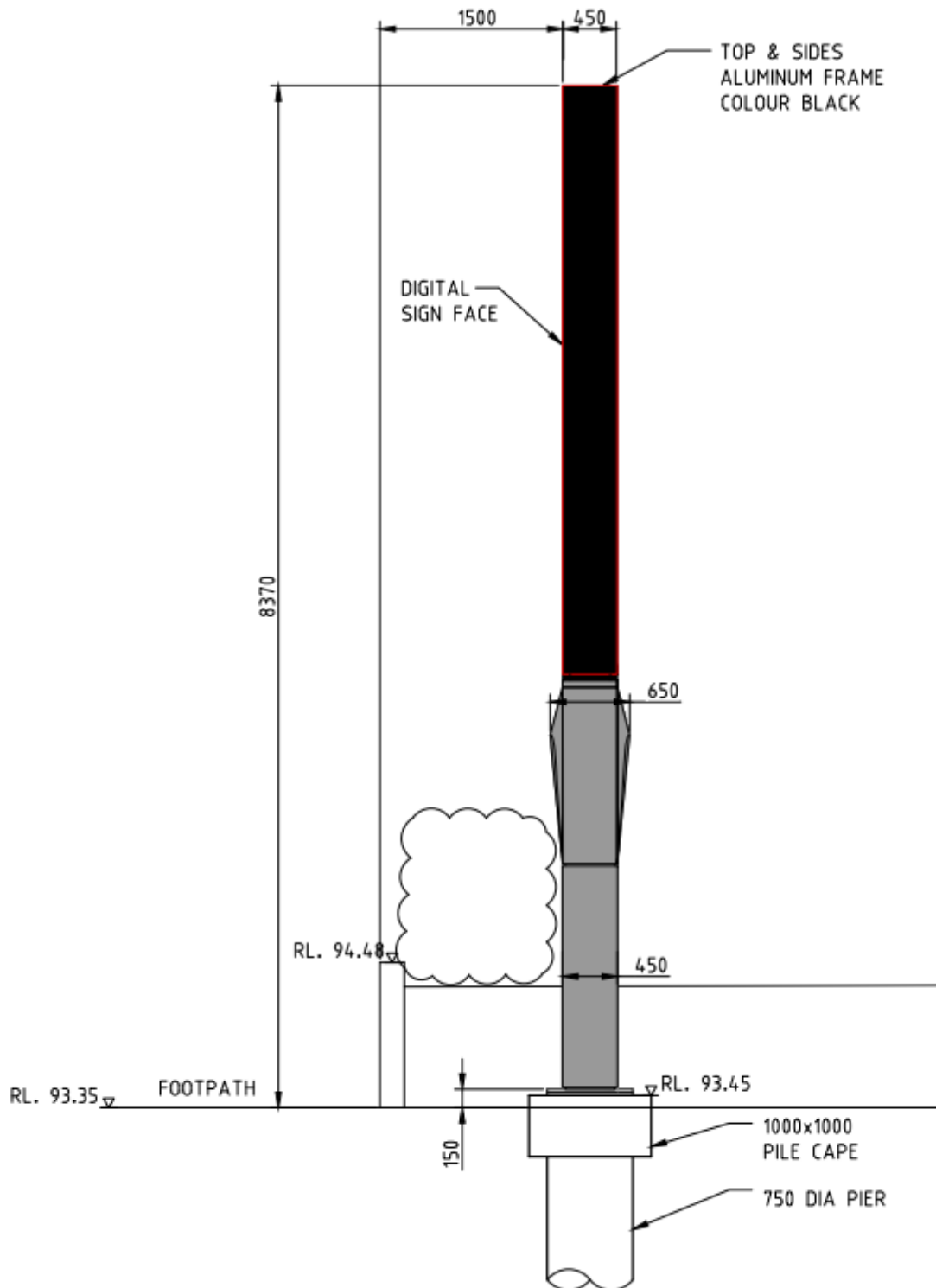


Figure 4: Side elevation of proposed sign (Source: Dennis Bunt Consulting Engineers)



Figure 5: Indicative view from the corner of Help Street and Orchard Road (Source: JCDecaux)

4 Methodology

This VIA has been informed by a site visit undertaken on 26 October 2021 and utilises photographs taken on this date. This VIA has been informed by the relevant Land & Environment Court Planning Principles relating to visual impacts.

The VIA identifies the visual catchment of the proposed sign and identifies the existing, emerging, and desired future character of the area to understand any sensitive receivers and likely visual impacts.

Several viewpoints have then been selected for detailed analysis based on their visibility to the proposal, the identification of key existing viewpoints and the sensitivity of each viewpoint. Each viewpoint has been assessed in accordance with the following points which are summarised in Section 5.4.

1. Existing visual character and likely extent of change to locality and surrounds.
2. Visual sensitivity, based on existing visual character, key views and other significant visual features.
3. Visual exposure of site under current situation and following development of the site.
4. Likely visibility of proposed development – including location, type and number of viewers and duration of impact.
5. Level of visual impact (low, medium or high).

The following limitations have been encountered while preparing this VIA:

- the photographs taken cannot replicate the experience of viewing the proposal with the human eye
- photographs have only been able to be taken from public areas and therefore viewpoints cannot provide an exact analysis of impacts to private property

Additionally, as the DA is accompanied by a specialist Lighting Impact Assessment, visual impacts associated with the illumination of the proposed sign has not been considered as part of this VIA.

5 Assessment

The assessment within this Section has been undertaken in accordance with the methodology outlined at Section 4.

5.1 State Environmental Planning Policy (Industry and Employment) 2021

Chapter 3 – State Environmental Planning Policy (Industry and Employment) 2021 (SEPP Industry and Employment) aims to ensure that advertising and signage is well located, compatible with the desired amenity of an area and of high quality. Schedule 5 of SEPP Industry and Employment provides assessment criteria which guides the assessment of visual impacts arising from signage.

Schedule 5 of SEPP Industry and Employment is addressed in detail within the SEE. Key points from the Schedule 5 assessment relevant to the VIA include:

- the proposal is compatible with the character of the area, which is highly urbanised in nature given its location within the Chatswood CBD
- the proposal will not obscure or compromise any important views
- the proposal does not dominate the skyline
- the location of the proposal is appropriate as it will contribute to the visual interest of the surrounding streetscape as the sign represents an innovative form of advertising
- the proposal is compatible with the scale, proportion and characteristics of the site

5.2 Visual Catchment

The proposed sign faces east and is visible from commercial uses at street level and high rise residential towers. Residential occupiers of 1 Cambridge Lane and 2 Help Street will have direct sightlines to the proposed sign.

The character of the visual catchment can be described as:

- mixed-use high-rise towers
- transport corridor including railway overpass and adjacent bus interchange

The proposal is considered to be appropriate and consistent with the character of the area which is mixed use in nature. With consideration to the mix of uses within the vicinity of the proposed signage location, the proposed sign is considered to have negligible impacts to surrounding receivers.

The viewpoints identified below within the visual catchment have been identified to assess visual impacts (Figure 6).

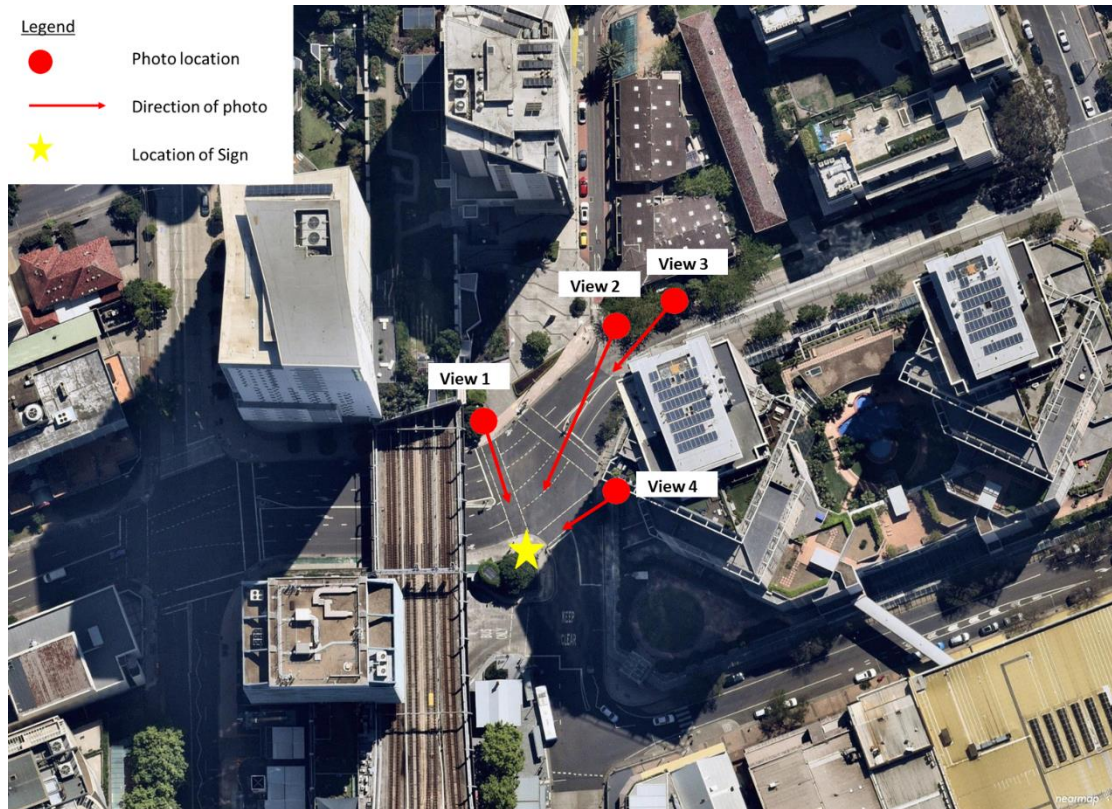


Figure 6: Viewpoints (Base source: Nearmap)

5.3 Assessment of Viewpoints

View 1: Pedestrian crossing from north side of Help Street

View 1 was selected as it is located at a frequently utilised crossing from the north side of Help Street to the south, providing access to Chatswood Train Station. This highly trafficked pedestrian crossing will provide a significant amount of exposure to pedestrians given it provides this access point to both train and bus transport services.

The anticipated impact at this viewpoint is generally considered to be low as viewers would only be exposed to signage for the period in which it takes the pedestrian crossing to change from red to green. With consideration to the proposed dwell time for the sign, pedestrians would only be anticipated to view approximately one to two different advertisements in the time it takes for the traffic signals to change.

This low impact is considered acceptable given the sites location within a highly urbanised area, being Chatswood CBD.



Figure 7: Existing view as seen from Viewpoint 1



Figure 8: Proposed view as seen from Viewpoint 1

View 2: Corner of Cambridge Lane and 3-5 Help Street

View 2 was selected as it is the closest intersection to the east, past the intersection at which the proposed sign is located. This intersection of Help Street with Cambridge Lane is one way northbound as shown by the directional signage in Figure 11.

Given the one-way nature of Cambridge Lane, it reduces potential driver viewers and consequently minimises risks associated with traffic safety and the proposed sign.

Located adjacent to the viewpoint is a 2 storey residential building at 3-5 Help Street. Given the orientation of the building, it is anticipated that only few of the apartments within the building will be exposed to sightlines to the proposed sign. This is limited to two apartments which have their private open space orientated to the western side of the building. These two apartments directly face Cambridge Lane and due to their orientation will minimise direct sightlines towards the sign and mitigate potential light spill. Apartments with windows along the southern aspect of this building are effectively screened by existing street trees.

A Planning Proposal (PP) for 3-5 Help Street received Gateway determination on the 5 March 2021 and was exhibited between March and April 2021 seeking the following amendments to the Willoughby Local Environmental Plan 2012:

- Increase the maximum building height from part 20 and part 25 metres to 90 metres; and
- Increase the mapped maximum floor space ratio from 2.7:1 to 6:1 (including a minimum 1:1 commercial floor space).

The PP is currently in the 'Post-exhibition' phase. With consideration to the intended outcome of the PP, the future development at 3-5 Help Street will be consistent with the existing character of the area. Its use and built form will not be dissimilar to the existing buildings at 2A Help Street, providing commercial uses at ground floor with residential floors in the levels above.

Noting this consistency with the local character, the anticipated impacts of the proposed sign to any future development at 3-5 Help Street will be similar to those experienced at other surrounding mixed use towers.

A review of the concept floor plans submitted with the PP for 3-5 Help Street has been undertaken (refer to Figures 9 and 10). It is noted that these plans are indicative and may be subject to change at DA stage. The plans show that the principal areas of private open space will be orientated to the east and west and would therefore not provide direct sightlines towards the sign.

It is noted that a south-west facing window is shown on the plans which would be orientated towards the sign. However, the plans do not detail what room this window relates to. Notwithstanding, given the separation distance of the proposed sign together with the fact that the view lines will be angled rather than from eye level, a low to moderate impact is anticipated.

As shown in Figure 12 which is taken at the street level, the size of the proposed sign does not dominate the streetscape and will therefore be viewed as smaller by the residential building behind.



Figure 9: Extract of floor plans Levels 2 to 5 – PP-2021-2420 – 3-5 Help Street



Figure 10: Extract of floor plans Levels 6 to 23 – PP-2021-2420 – 3-5 Help Street



Figure 11: Existing view as sighted from Viewpoint 2



Figure 12: Proposed view as sighted from Viewpoint 2

View 3: 3-5 Help Street Residential Flats

View 3 was selected as it is the furthest distance from the proposed signage location with partial views after the traffic lights. It is also located adjacent to the 2 storey residential building at 3-5 Help Street.

As discussed for View 2 above, a Planning Proposal is in the post-exhibition phase which applies to the adjacent lot at this viewpoint. Given the intended outcome of the PP, the future development at 3-5 Help Street will be consistent with the existing character of the area. Its use and built form will not be dissimilar to the existing buildings at 2A Help Street, providing commercial uses at ground floor with residential floors in the levels above.

Noting this consistency with the local character, the anticipated impacts of the proposed sign to any future development at 3-5 Help Street will be similar to those experienced at other surrounding mixed use towers.

Figure 14 demonstrates that at the street level, the sign is partially screened by existing street trees. This means that with consideration to the setback of the 2 storey residential buildings adjacent to this viewpoint, the existing street trees along both the northern and southern sides of Help Street would effectively screen the sign from these receivers.

Consequently, the visual impacts at this viewpoint are considered low.



Figure 13: Existing view as sighted from Viewpoint 3



Figure 14: Proposed view as sighted from Viewpoint 3

View 4: High Rise Mixed Use at the corner of Orchard Road

View 4 was selected as it provides a street level view from the closest high rise mixed use tower on the corner of Help Street and Orchard Road, known as 2A Help Street, Chatswood. The building uses at ground and first floor level, within the podium as they front Help Street, are entirely commercial based.

The visual impact associated with the sign on the lower levels of the development which are commercial/retail uses will have low impact given there will be minimal loss of amenity on these frontages.

Above podium level, residential apartments are orientated west and will have view lines towards the sign. Notwithstanding impacts to these properties are minimised as:

- the sign is orientated towards the north-east and will not directly face 2A Help Street
- the separation distance of the proposed sign together with the fact that the view lines will be angled rather than from eye level will minimise view lines, particularly from upper floor levels

Based on the above, a low to moderate impact is anticipated to 2A Help Street as a result of the proposed sign.

It is noted, the Lighting Impact Assessment prepared by Electrolight Australia which accompanies this application details how the brightness of the LEDs automatically adjust to ambient lighting conditions via a local light sensor. This will ensure brightness levels are relative to time of day and therefore reduced during evening hours reducing impacts of light spill to adjoining receivers.



Figure 15: Existing view as sighted from Viewpoint 4



Figure 16: Proposed view as sighted from Viewpoint 4

5.4 Assessment Matrix

Viewpoint / Location	Distance of View	Visual Sensitivity	Level of Impact
1 - Pedestrian crossing from north side of Help Street	30m	Publicly accessible open space located adjacent to crossing creates buffer between residential development and train line.	Low
2 – Corner of Cambridge Lane and 3-5 Help Street	55m	One way street northbound, two storey flat building located on corner which is screened by trees.	Low (corner of Cambridge Lane) Low to Medium (3-5 Help Street)
3 – 3-5 Help Street Residential Flat building	65m	Residential receivers with partial views of sign, mostly obscured by existing trees.	Low to Medium
4 – High Rise Mixed Use at the corner of Orchard Road	25m	Commercial/retail and residential receivers. .	Low to Medium

Table 3: Assessment Matrix

Rating	Visual Sensitivity	Level of Impact
Low	Not a sensitive receiver	Little change to existing views
Medium	Moderately sensitive receiver (e.g. a park)	Somewhat impacted
High	Highly sensitive receivers (e.g. residential uses, childcare, or heritage item)	Highly impacted

Table 4: Rating definitions

6 Conclusion

The erection of a digital advertising sign at the corner of Help Street and Orchard Road will not result in any additional visual impacts to the surrounding locality, including sensitive receivers residing in high-rise mixed-use buildings along Help Street.

Following a detailed analysis of the proposal and the surrounding locality, this VIA has found the following:

- the surrounding area has medium to high visual sensitivity due to the varying uses, large number of residential dwellings and nature of the visual catchment
- the sign is consistent with the character of the surrounding area which is highly urbanised in nature given its location in the Chatswood CBD
- the surrounding area does not display any evidence of visual clutter
- the proposed sign will be visible to a high number of pedestrians and motorists reflective of its location along a thoroughfare through the Chatswood CBD and proximity to the Pacific Highway
- views to the proposed sign from many sensitive receivers will be obstructed by existing street trees along Help Street
- the proposal does not impact upon any heritage values, scenic views or protrude above the dominant skyline

Following consideration of the above, the proposal is considered to result in acceptable visual impacts and will improve the visual appearance of the Help Street streetscape.