



1 March 2022

To whom it may concern,

On behalf of our current, future and local families, thank you for considering this State Significant Development Application from Pymble Ladies' College.

As with every key decision we make at the College, our team has sought and received feedback from our immediate and broader community in relation to our plans, and this submission reflects a great deal of that feedback. While our aim is to improve facilities on our campus to offer a world-class learning environment for students, we also strive to be a respectful and collaborative neighbour and generous citizen of the North Shore. We believe this submission achieves both outcomes.

Our proposed Grey House Precinct is slated for development in an underutilised area within our campus and offers numerous benefits for *Pymble* students across multiple year groups, visiting students from other local schools, members of our local community and staff employed at the College.

Our vision for the Grey House Precinct includes the following facilities:

- **New Early Learning Centre**, catering for infants from three months to six years, including two Pre-kindergarten rooms. The ability to offer local parents and staff onsite childcare is a dream come true. As a working mother, I know one of the most impactful benefits the College can give to staff is access to safe, convenient and quality childcare so they can focus on looking after our students secure in the knowledge that we are looking after their little ones. Our market research has revealed this type of care is in demand in the local area. Should this development be approved, we would be proud to offer this high-quality service to our community.
- **Junior School STEM centre** for the College, providing ample room to host Robotics competitions with students from other schools and support STEM-based curriculum lessons.

There is a genuine need for this facility for our students. Girls are chronically under-represented in the technology sector. The recently released *Women in STEM Decadal Plan* revealed that girls in Australia were the least likely of all Asia-Pacific students to undertake STEM subjects in school (27 per cent, compared with 76 per cent in China and 69 per cent in India).

Pymble is proud to take an intentional approach to addressing the significant challenges of under-representation of girls and women in STEM-related fields, particularly in the technology sector. Our Strategic Plan, with its focus on Digital Intelligence, creates life-changing opportunities for students to engage meaningfully with STEM and be inspired to use their learnings and acquired skills to make the world a better place.

The College has more than 230 girls from K-12 competing in co-curricular Robotics competitions, which typically are hosted by local or international universities. Our vision is to provide a world-class local facility for our young emerging roboticists to learn, grow and thrive in this important space and to host competitions with other local, national and international schools.

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- **Six new dance studios**, including a bespoke performance area.

Participation in co-curricular activities is an important component of wellbeing with a strong protective factor. While we are pleased to have high participation rates in co-curricular dance (1100 registrations from K-12 in 2021), our dancers do not have dedicated facilities for rehearsal, which amplifies the risk of injury and forces us to place caps on the number of students who can engage in the program. The proposed studios will provide a safe, well-equipped centre for elective and co-curricular dance students at *Pymble*, as well as the opportunity to host dance camps, concerts and programs involving external collaborators and participants of all ages and abilities.

- Dedicated centre for our highly-popular **Out of School Hours Care** and **Holiday Programs**, which are available to current and future *Pymble* students and their siblings. Our OSHC centre has outgrown its makeshift home in the Junior School and our Holiday Programs are fully booked within hours of programs being made available. This creates issues for working families and prevents some students from accessing high-quality care while their parents are at work. Our local families have been asking for increased capacity to cater for demand and will be grateful to have this facility available to them.
- Our **Year 5 and 6 classrooms** are aging assets that no longer meet the educational needs of learning in the 21st Century. Our proposed new teaching and learning areas are collaborative, encourage STEM through creative design and provide a hub for our Year 5 and 6 students as they prepare for the transition into Secondary School.
- Finally, and perhaps most importantly, Grey House Precinct will include a purpose-built **Health Centre**, combining nursing staff and psychological services teams to support both our Boarding and Day students, as well as children and families utilising our before and after school care, Holiday Programs and Early Learning Centre. The Health Centre will also provide on-site care for thousands of students from all over NSW who access our facilities during weekends to participate in sporting fixtures.

Supporting mental health in our community is a key priority. Tragically in 2019 and 2020 the College lost three of its students to suicide. Currently our Health Centre is housed in an aging demountable and is not appropriate for the needs of our community. Key factors for consideration in the design of our new centre was discretion for students accessing counselling and mental health support, along with convenience for families, especially those with younger children and infants attending our Out of School Hours Care services and Early Learning Centre. As you can imagine, I am incredibly passionate about the Health Centre being included in the first significant capital works project under my leadership.

Much thought, time, care and resources have been invested to ensure our plans are respectful, sustainable and inclusive of the people and environment around us, as you will see from this proposal. The integrity of the existing Blue Gum forest has been retained and we continue to honour the original inhabitants of the Shared Land our College stands on, the Guringai and Cammeraigal peoples. The landscape design has been developed in consultation with Uncle Laurie, a Guringai elder, with one of the features being a yarnning circle which we know our students will enjoy using. We look forward to the special opportunities this site will provide for our staff and students to learn more from our First Nations people, especially given our College-

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wide focus on 'Diversity as the path to unity' and our strong First Nations program, which includes 22 First Nations students on scholarship at the College.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this application and the many benefits we believe it will bring to our *Pymble* family and the wider community. Should you have any questions, please contact our Project Director – Master Planning, Kate Bimson on 02 9855 7628 or kbimson@pymblelc.nsw.edu.au.

Sincerely



Dr Kate Hadwen
Principal

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