

As a long-standing resident and former racegoer with an in-depth knowledge of the racing industry and the management of race courses, particularly Randwick Racecourse, I intended to lodge my total objection to the D A proposing a hotel be built and operated on racecourse land.

At the same time extending reasonable sympathy to those responsible people working in the industry who go about their business with little to no impact on me. I was looking at stating my reasons with a level of acceptance provided my issues of concern were addressed and eliminated.

Elimination is a critical point for me.

My mind has been changed by the recent announcements and speculation concerning the further plans of the New South Wales government for various radical changes to the area and wider Sydney.

I now view the proposal to erect a hotel and conduct associated activities through different eyes, as well I should. My primary concern is the human cost of the long established anti-social conduct of patrons attending the races, the example they set to young resident university students and others living around the area and visitors to our community.

After eight years of misery associated with the light rail construction, the currently uncompleted cycle way plus the in-progress and proposed student and residential accommodation coupled with this proposal for a hotel the future for this locality is grim.

Additionally, the recent “reconfiguration” of Doncaster Avenue turning it into what I consider to be a basket case of extraordinary complication and dangerous to traverse reinforces my absolute certainty that this D A if approved is not only bound to create untold problems for responsible residents but also label the area a party precinct.

The uncontrolled darting and running on to the road when moving from racecourse exits in Doncaster Avenue is highly dangerous for both patrons of the racecourse and the drivers trying to avoid them.

Doncaster Avenue is exceeding capacity. It is already experiencing an increased level of overload and simply will not take any further pressure or burden.

Racecourse patrons and other non-residents would not be in a position to identify or notice the issues I can which have altered in character since the days of street brawls and chaos I have witnessed to a largely “internalised” issue of young renters replicating the disturbance of race day patrons who create an “energy” as they migrate from the race course to the Doncaster hotel post race meeting that by example permits them to cause havoc for their neighbor’s on race days.

Walking or driving down Doncaster Avenue you are met with the raucous shouting of people congregated on an open verandah or in the beer garden of the Doncaster Hotel who have begun their day at the races and are finishing at the hotel.

It is not conducive to a pleasant atmosphere. I no longer go for walks or leave my home on race days. Where it was once predictable that someone or a group could be a problem people are now so unexpectedly volatile that they can erupt without warning and traffic at certain times is so dangerous that crossing a road becomes a life threatening event.

The proposal outlines a self-determined intent to act as a benefactor to the area whilst avoiding any antisocial impacts ignoring the point that they have never succeeded in achieving this successfully before on a sustained basis. To the contrary the dramas and issues associated with Randwick Racecourse on race days and its impacts on residents have been long advised to successive management but continue to this day.

A case in point was when the owner who won a feature race of the day shouted the bar resulting in hundreds of drunken race goers rampaging along Doncaster Avenue and rioting down at the Doncaster Hotel.

That was a long time ago but as recently as a few weeks back despite responsible alcohol regulations this same intention was announced to the dread of the people who experienced the consequences all those years ago.

It is understood that the behaviors of larger numbers of race day patrons cannot be fully controlled only quelled.

That was the opinion of race course management along with police when they responded to complaints of serious anti-social behavior by bringing in buses and taxis to transport patrons from within the racecourse boundary away from the area disallowing any migration on to the streets of Kensington.

That response was not requested nor was it expected. The respite from the bedlam was wonderful.

That along with other measures was their response to a serious incursion on residents. They set their own precedent. I can say with some authority that the details of the activities complained of at that time were horrendous.

The major problems I can identify as a resident now are as follows;

The former AJC now Turf Club are victims of a cycle of their own construction whereby they move in and out of financial crisis, cull staff and tighten budgets then rely on attracting the interest of the most profitable market the younger impressionable generation. Residents pay the price for this. Every time there is a change of management there is a breakdown in the standard of behavior that has to be curtailed by police.

Management are very good at promoting their own interests but selectively poor when it comes to anyone affected by the running of the Turf Club. On a personal level damage to property issues that occurred years ago remain unaddressed. Other residents have experienced the same

with yet others having prompt responses. Inconsistency is all too common in a wide range of matters relating to the racecourse.

The police and Randwick council have been very agreeable and cooperative in responding to complaints and managing the behavior as far as I am concerned but they can't be every where at once nor can they access the multiple homes that create shocking all night noise disturbance on race days on a regular basis which is in many cases not audible from the street but affects neighboring properties.

Addressing these issues involves complaints, follow up complaints and high levels of stress waiting for a resolution. It is no way to live a life. Police are running at reduced numbers making it much harder for them to be available.

The disruptive behavior then carries over and becomes normal for those creating the disturbance leading to the dread of end of lease periods when the prospect of the cycle of partying tenants, calling police and outrageous behavior starts again.

The intricacies of the application regarding the location are more appropriately left to those most directly affected however it should be noted that if it was the case that hotel patrons were to remain within the confines of the racecourse and about the area nearby it would be a good thing for Doncaster Avenue residents and the occupants of the side streets leading onto Anzac Parade.

This however would lead to a situation whereby groups of residents living in different locations bordering the racecourse would be pitted against one another as has been the previous experience of some time ago.

Kensington was up to a given point a character filled, vibrant and extremely pleasant place to live. That atmosphere was eroded when the heavy drinking culture took over. Gambling has been an eternal issue but never as now.

Race day losses are chased at licensed premises overwhelmingly ending in greater losses. The excitement and atmosphere of race day that I have experienced has been taken over by often unhappy, morose youths leaving the course without enough money to catch a bus home.

This is not what a day out should be about.

Oddly despite my criticisms I am not anti racing. It can be can be exhilarating and a delightful experience. I don't subscribe to bans or getting rid of the race course I am however highly critical of the direction the sport has taken.

The Future Music Festival held annually over a period of some years was a yearly display of the most degrading behavior I have ever seen. Management hung on to that against ferocious community objection, intense police involvement and general condemnation because of the money it represented. After it was discontinued the residual bad behavior of young people took several years to die out.

The consequences of various management styles are still obvious if you have points of comparison. The overriding common denominator boils down to over reliance on alcohol profits, targeting the youth market and disregarding residents.

Hard-won measures introduced to counter and address the anti-social conduct were obliterated during the light rail construction and never replaced. Safety issues were top of mind at that earlier stage. Not so now.

My comments referencing past events should not be viewed as then and now. They led to the redirection of a very acceptable neighborhood and the circumstances we live with today.

I have no confidence that management can maintain the necessary standard of control over the racecourse as it stands without oversight and direction let alone the additional responsibility of another licensed premises.

This is a very far-reaching proposal requiring intense scrutiny and contemplating