

Director – Social and Infrastructure Assessments  
Planning and Assessment  
Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure  
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**I object most strongly to the new amended SSDA 14394209 for the following reasons.**

I find the amended DA confusing and difficult to understand. There was no simple presentation of facts or intentions. What was provided was a set of amendments to a previous amendment that meant little to anyone who did not have a copy of the preceding document. Also, I have been advised that the current amendment was relevant only to half of the proposed development, and that the other half would be provided at a later date. Having failed to gain the necessary community in previous attempts, it seems that DoE is trying to circumvent the appropriate process by “nibbling away” at it or tiring concerned individuals until they can no longer protest. In either case, siting the school on Bungendore Park will still serve only the purpose of wasting over \$70,000,000.00 of taxpayer’s money and destroying a precious piece of Australian heritage. This seems to me to be disgraceful behavior for a government or a government department.

Many of these comments are based on the obvious need to increase the capacity of the planned high school which is already hopelessly inadequate (see below). and therefore the need to take what remains of Bungendore Park which includes what has been incorrectly identified as the Mick Sherd oval and the swimming pool.

Apparently, responses to the threat of closing the swimming pool in an earlier plan caused this item to be removed from subsequent amendments, but there is no guarantee that it will not be reimposed in the future, especially as the school expands. The original plan to close the swimming pool in a country where 12 children have already drowned in the first half of the year and this pool provides the only venue for swimming instruction in the local region is insane. The proposal by DoE for the cash strapped QPRC to provide half of the \$10m required to build another, better pool is fanciful, but if it were possible the location of such a pool would also be an issue. One of them suggested for it could be near the sports centre, but this would be too far away to be practical.

Site

Foremost of the issues bearing on the proposed high school are the absolute unsuitability of the site and the legitimacy of the selection process that resulted in its compulsory acquisition. This

site was chosen by the now discredited Mr. John Barilaro despite having been dismissed by the authorised site selection experts as a possible location and despite negotiations for a more suitable location already being conducted with another property owner. The obvious unsuitability of the selection and the ferocity of its defence by DoE make one question the integrity of the project. Doubtless it was purely coincidental that the promised opening of the new high school was to take place a short time before the 2023 election.

There are many indications that no site assessment had been carried out. These have already been presented to DoE and associated Government departments in previous correspondence, but have been almost entirely ignored or justified. At information 'Hubs' presented by DoE, representatives showed that they were not aware of the low level crossing that would restrict access to the school in periods of rain or the Canberra – Sydney RAILWAY LINE that ran 15 METRES from several of the new buildings. Even the briefest cursory glance at a map of the area or Google Maps would have brought these OBVIOUS features to their attention. At a subsequent information session DoE representatives showed that they, or DoE itself were unaware of the extensive development programmes actually taking place or being planned that will increase local housing stock by up to 1400 houses. When occupancy of these houses and the effect of this on children's education requirements are taken into consideration, it will become even more obvious that DoE planning and the land available, as well as transport and other infrastructure are totally inadequate.

It should be noted here that two other areas of land, each of 14 ha were assessed as meeting the requirements and negotiations were being conducted with an owner but were broken off a short time before the Park location was announced.

The Agriculture plot is shown as unencumbered by surrounding domestic housing, whereas it has housing and buildings on three of its four sides. almost surrounded by housing to

Size

According to DoE figures, there are 342 Year 6 students currently living in the BHS catchment area and currently attending NSW public schools. Those children along with their brothers, sisters and neighbours are all zoned to BHS. According to DoE figures, right now, there are 342 Year 6 students living in the BHS catchment area and currently attending NSW public schools. Those kids, along with their brothers, sisters and neighbours, are all zoned to BHS.

The overwhelming majority of those students (209) live more than 1.2km away from the planned BHS site, while 169 live further than 3.6km away.

This information has major implications.

How can a school with a total capacity of 450 students accommodate a Year 6 cohort of 342? Apply those numbers across Year 7 to 12, and even if only half those kids come to Bungendore, we're looking at 1000+ kids attending BHS within just a few years, not including children from large new subdivisions in Bungendore and the region are complete. Some of the implications of this are discussed below..

Second, most of those 1000+ kids will be travelling every day from outside Bungendore. They will be living too far away to walk or ride. They will be coming by bus or car. Many will be driving themselves, on residential streets and looking for non-existent parking. How on earth is that supposed to work? And of course it won't make one bit of difference to the vast majority of kids whether the school is "central" on Bungendore Park, or on a properly-sized greenfield site on the edge of Bungendore village.

Apparently DoE tried to conceal this catchment data when it was requested by the Department of Planning back in 2022. No wonder the original data provided to the transport consultant had "major limitations". We're starting to think that wasn't laziness or incompetence. It's looking more and more like they actively sought to conceal that information.

This is actual data now lodged with the Department of Planning. And it proves, once and for all, that the planned site is simply not feasible."

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When the new data is taken into account, the school population would be in the order of 1000. That's a large school by anyone's standards. It's far bigger than the DoE has ever admitted. It massively exceeds even the wildest projections of what might be possible on the cramped Bungendore Park site.

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The size of the school has been quoted to be 450 students with 41 staff. These numbers must have been developed in ignorance of the opening of Elm Grove, a large development to the north of and adjoining Elmslea, the forthcoming announcement of another development to the east and later, another to the west. At the second information 'hub', DoE staff exhibited no knowledge of any forthcoming developments but dismissed any thought of concern, stating to me, {paraphrasing} 'If there is not sufficient space to satisfy the rules, we will change the rules.', also, with regard to inadequacies brought to light by increases in population resulting from building developments, 'It doesn't matter because we intend to build a new high school here in 2035 anyway'. The prospect of spending \$70+ million on a school that DoE knows will have a limited lifespan is unbelievable.

## Traffic

Under Clause 128 of the EP&A Regulation, an application for developments that results in 50 or more new students at a school must be accompanied by a certificate issued by Transport for NSW certifying that any impacts on the road network are acceptable or will be acceptable if specified requirements are met. I have not seen any documentation that indicates that this requirement will be satisfied.

With Majara Street closed, traffic from Elmslea – a major housing area – to the primary school, the centre of Bungendore and the light industrial areas of Bungendore passes down McCusker Street (St.) across the low level crossing, Turallo Crescent, Butmaroo and Gibraltar Sts. This traffic includes a large number of 'Dual Cab' utilities and other heavier vehicles, particularly

during work related hours when children will be crossing Turallo Cres. to walk to and from Elmslea for school or carers taking very small children to and from the child minding centre. This traffic will increase significantly when Elm Grove nears completion, as an extension of McCusker St. will be the main road providing access for both Elmslea and Elm Grove to those areas. This traffic will increase even further as McCusker St will also be taking students to the proposed high school if it were to be opened as planned. .

The effect of increased traffic on the quiet domestic areas of Turallo Cres and Butmaroo and Gibraltar Sts has been given no consideration whatsoever . This is shown by keeping Majara St locked although there is no reason to do so, as all work on it has been halted for over six months and will not recommence until important issues, possibly including court action are satisfied, . As stated previously. Majara St is an important road that provides access to the primary school, the Kings Highway, the centre of Bungendore and the light industrial areas. Closing it diverts traffic through those domestic areas with consequential noise and disruption. DoE appears to think that the effects of this increased traffic on quiet residential streets is not worth considering.

#### Parking

The railway parking lot is being used extensively for high school staff and students now that the temporary high school is open, but there has been no evidence of an agreement with the Department of Transport that this will continue to be available. Staff parking for the new school is assessed to be 41 places. When the numbers of students from outlying areas of the school's catchment attend the high school, and many of these will be of an age when they will be able to drive themselves to school, it can be seen that parking requirements will be far greater than what has been planned for or can be provided

If parking were to be provided along both sides of Turallo Cres. from the Mejara St. entrance to Butmaroo St. this would both obscure the view of oncoming traffic for residents leaving their own driveways and pose a threat to carers crossing the street to take their very young children to the child minding centre. Given the unpredictability of small children and the size and 'no nonsense' nature of the traffic that now cannot use Majara St. turning the end of Turallo Tce into a car park is a recipe for disaster.

Preparation for such a parking lot would also involve the removal of trees that are very significant in maintaining the historic atmosphere of stand on the north side of Turallo Tce. But it has become evident that history and heritage have become an encumbrance to DoE, so I imagine that this would easily disposed of . See below.

## Heritage

Bungendore Park has a significant historical background and is generally accepted to be of heritage significance. Incorporated into the town plan by 1840 and elevated to be dedicated crown land in the 1880s, Bungendore Park may not be on the National Trust register, but has been, and continues to be a focal point of the town and the home of many sporting events. It is a centre for outdoor activities for Bungendore primary school children now that primary school playground has been almost completely taken over by disgraceful high school buildings, and for the few high school students temporarily accommodated there. It provides a backdrop for many significant town events such as ANZAC Day as well as a place for quiet contemplation. At present it is the centre of a divisive division in the town community.

## Conclusion

There is little more I wish to add to the detail of my opinion of proposed amendments. This project represents the worst aspects of a hastily conceived plan developed to satisfy political convenience. The need for a high school in Bungendore had been obvious for a very long time but nothing had been done until the 2019 election approached, and it became politically expedient to promise one and to do so in such a catastrophically short time - ready for the 2023 election - that virtually every aspect of good planning and management was ignored. Locating the school in a place that would immediately become the centre of almost violent disputation between factions in the community – I am aware of shopkeepers who were afraid to show their opposition to the site for the school for fear of losing their clientele and parents who were afraid to show their support for a different location for the school because their children had been subjected to threats at school.

Answers to the following questions could be embarrassing for DoE:

In the most basic preparation and planning has there been:

- **Consultation with those most affected by the both the high school and its location?**

**Not done** - Timeframe too short to bother with this - causing a major division in the community - but this would not be a problem for anyone who lived in Sydney and not Bungendore.

- **Finding out who owns the land and what can be done with it? Not done** - leading to the use of the blunt instrument of compulsory acquisition of the land. Even then the process of compulsory acquisition was disastrously bungled

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- **What will be required of the local transport system, availability of parking and who will be affected by it?** **Not done**, leading to last minute attempted modification of vehicle access and parking processes.
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- **What developments are taking place now or in the future that will affect the transport system?** - **Not done**, exacerbating already inadequate transport system particularly following closure of an important street and diverting traffic.
- **What health aspects need to be considered?** **Not done** – no need to research possible contaminants in the local area. Reports of possible lead or asbestos contamination can be ignored despite survey by Dept Transport that says otherwise
- **Impact of higher levels of vehicle movements and related noise on residents in domestic environment? ?** **Not done** – not necessary it was their own fault for choosing to live here.
- **Were there other sites as good or better that could have been chosen?**  
**Yes**, but **Mr Barilaro** chose this one, It was in an obvious location that would readily be associated with his name. Also, it could easily be made ready before the 2023 elections if a few short cuts were taken in the planning and building processes and the local residents intimidated by the Government or desperate to get a high school regardless of where it was or how inadequate it was in meeting students' needs.

**The impact of this proposed high school has not been addressed but** would be obvious and saddening for any caring member of the community.

Stop wasting what remains of the \$70 million on a doomed project and use it to create a proper school in a decent location.



**R Gregory**

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**6 July 20**