

# Submission to NSW Planning: Waverley College Major Upgrade

A Perspective from the Local Community

## Background.

I attended Waverley College as a student in the 1970's and have fond memories of my time there. I am familiar with the culture of the school, and personally know several staff members (some senior). I continue to attend many college functions including various school presentations, reunions, events and meetings. I'm also active in the local community. I'm very familiar with the views/attitudes of local residents and those of the school.

I have resided near Waverley College for most of my life.

I'm a parent with teenage children, and so I have experience with the complexities of raising teenage boys and the challenges of transporting kids to and from various schools.

Waverley College obtains substantial public funding assistance, including huge grants, and receives significant donations, bequests and private school fee revenue.

## Introduction.

While we understand the importance of educational institutions and support their growth, it is crucial that the proposed major upgrade for Waverley College, a once in a generation event, addresses the current impact the school has on the local community, and makes appropriate provisions to reasonably anticipate and address the likely future projected impacts.

This is a 'once in a generation' opportunity to improve the balance between the needs of the college to grow, and to mitigate the colleges impact on people that live and work in the local community.

## Concerns Considerations and Suggested Solutions:

We object to this major upgrade proposal as presented.

The following issues that impact the local community need to be included in any amended major upgrade proposal. Further we have included some suggestions that might help the College lift its standards and standing, both in the local community and amongst other schools.

### Student Behaviour at school arrival and dismissal times

**Problem:** At the end of each school day, approximately a thousand teenaged boys exit the school, causing disruption in the streets for about 20 minutes until they disperse. They run across trafficked roads and drop litter.

**Problem:** Carrington Rd and Birrell St are two of the busiest roads in Waverley, with very heavily trafficked roads and busy intersections. Thousands of cars pass by every hour. Further school transitions occur during peak traffic times. This is a significant safety issue for all. I've personally witnessed several school kids skirt

across the roads and sadly are hit by cars (see recent Carrington Rd photo below), many more are very near misses.



### **Suggested Solutions:**

The school should provide staff in high visibility vests at major traffic junctions, such as the 3 street crossings on Birrell Street and 3 on Carrington Rd, to address safety issues, which is common practice for most schools.

(I should add here, from time to time I've noticed a retired teacher, Br Murphy, who voluntarily sits on Birrell St and greets the boys as they arrive in the mornings. It's amazing to see the positive impact his *presence* has on the boys behaviour entering the school. It really is impressive. It is an example of the dept of resources the college has at their disposal and can utilize to inspire the boys to behave at a higher level and with a greater regard to the local community when entering and exiting the college).

The boys dump a large amount of litter in the immediate vicinity of the school. Drink containers, food wrappers, etc. Strategies should be implemented to not only mitigate this, but also to actually clean it up. Resources should be devoted to regularly clean up the mess in the streets in the immediate vicinity of the college, such as after school on Fridays and at start of school holidays. It's unfair to expect local residents to be eternally picking up the boy's rubbish (see further below).

Additionally, staff should be allocated to better manage the kids being picked up and dropped off by car at Waverley College (and Waterford – see further below). Ideally the plans should incorporate a underground drive-thru pick up and drop off zone so that street traffic is not continually congested by this.

### **Garden & Cleaning Staff Practices**

**Problem:** Garden and cleaning staff at Waverley College use air blowers to clean up litter and leaves inside the school. Instead of collecting this rubbish and disposing of it appropriately, the staff simply blow it out onto the streets. This rubbish is then blown by the wind all through the local area, street gutters, footpaths, into residents' homes, and even fills stormwater inlets that flow into Centennial Park wetlands. The photos below were taken in Spring. This is a problem all through each year, and it becomes acute in the autumn months.



### **Suggested Solutions:**

The schools rubbish should be disposed of appropriately and not blown into the local community.

Allocating resources for staff to regularly check the immediate vicinity around the school and clean up all the litter and rubbish dumped, including at storm water inlets.

### **Maintenance of external streetscape of the school.**

**Problem:** Waverley College does a good job maintaining its internal school premises (eg note the perfectly manicured hedges in the photos below), but it does not maintain the external streetscape that lie on the street boundaries of the schools' properties (eg see nature strip and weeds next to manicured hedge in photos below). This not only impacts the local community, as it gives the local area a grubby look, but it also reflects poorly on the college's external presentation. Thousands of cars pass by Waverley College gates each hour, and thousands of people walk past each day, and they are presented with weeds, long dishevelled lawns and the boys litter. Local residents should not have to constantly clean up the colleges mess dumped in the street.





### **Suggested Solutions:**

The school is a part of the local community, and it should do the right thing, as other schools and most residents do. A management plan should be conditioned as a part of the planning approval, requiring proper maintenance of the external street scape that bounds all of the schools properties, such as nature strips in front of the schools' properties should be mowed regularly and maintained properly, weed control measures implemented and routine collection of rubbish on the areas that front the schools' properties is performed on an ongoing basis.

## **Ample Parking Provisions**

**Problem.** There are an inadequate number of street parking spots available in the area for local residents and workers. The college operations put enormous strain on these limited parking spots. Not just from staff working there, but students that study there, and parents etc that visit the school regularly to attend regular sporting and other school functions. This is an ongoing known fact, it severely impacts the local community and it should be addressed properly and adequately provisioned for future needs in this once in a generation major upgrade.

Many senior school kids drive to school. For example, one Waverley College student, who is a P plater in a navy blue BMW, dumps his car in the no standing zone on Birrell St near Waverley Oval because he's often unable to find a legitimate park and desperately parks anywhere to avoid being late for school. He is not concerned about the fines. This type of behaviour is not uncommon, and prevents some possible (albeit illegal) school drop/off pick up areas, and all day inhibits traffic flow on Birrell St.

Weekend sports and other events outside school hours cause severe parking havoc as parents and kids attending nearly always drive. This is a known fact and is easily evidenced at every single sporting event. These are large numbers of vehicles desperately looking for limited street parking spots to meet kick-off deadlines.

### **Suggested Solutions:**

Require the major upgrade to include generous parking provisions. There should be an excess capacity to anticipate the ongoing growth of demand for parking well into this century. Build a surplus of spots, so as to ensure the college does not impact the limited street spots available to the local community. This is a once in a generation upgrade, so it should provision for the future as well.

Further, all parking spots provided onsite by Waverley College should be located underground so as to mitigate their impact on useable on site space, and to avoid any visible 'ugly' parking stations. Further appropriate pedestrian and vehicular access points should be incorporated in the design and be located on the main roads to mitigate the impact on; normal main road flow, back street gridlock, and current street parking availability.

I suggest that the “surplus” to need spots be ‘paid’ parking spots, so students/ parents (both of Waverley and most importantly ‘other schools’ attending college events) etc attending the school have an option to park legally. I feel it’s reasonable that the college be permitted to charge for these spots (which will help cover the cost of construction) and place time restrictions, and allow by arrangement, Waverley Council parking inspectors to monitor and fine abusers. I also think it should be at a price point to *‘heavily discourage regular users’*, thereby to ensure spots are generally available for the plethora of ‘one-off’ special events.

Surplus parking spots (including after normal school hours) should be opened to parents/students/staff etc attending sporting or other events associated with the school, to relieve the pressure on the streets. Many schools do this, for example St Catherines, Waverley (which is a smaller school) in their recent major works upgrade installed a *multilevel underground parking station* under their new pool/function centre. See photo below taken on a Saturday, during a normal sporting event. There were a surplus of 62 *free spots* (as per green sign) available at that moment. [One further suggestion I noticed here, have separated entry and exits points, located so that traffic doesn’t have to cross over itself (ie have vehicle entry to the left, exit on the right, avoids an unnecessary traffic bottleneck crossing over itself at a singular entry/exit point. Simple and clever planning and design can avoid unnecessary problems)



These underground parking stations should also be designed to act as safe one-way flowing pick-up/drop off zone, to reduce the endless number of parents double/ illegally parked on the streets impeding traffic flow. See below for further.

### **Traffic bottle necks – underground one way flowing pick up and drop off zone.**

**Background.** Salisbury St and Henrietta St surround the eastern and southern boundaries of the main campus at Waverley College and connect to the other Waverley College campus called Waterford. These streets are two of the entry points to a dozen blocks of local resident’s homes that are bounded by Birrell St, Carrington Rd and Bronte Rd.

*There are only 2 vehicle exit points for this whole local area.* The main exit point is at the 6 way intersection of Victoria, Carrington and Bronte Rd, a very busy intersection.

Carrington Rd is the only direct North-South flowing route east of Anzac Pde, and the major SE distribution connection to Eastern Distributor. It’s also the principal ‘emergency ambulance’ connection between POW and St Vincents hospitals. Bronte Rd is the major *public (nearly all buses use this)* and private road link SE and SW of Bondi Junction, which is the major transport, retail and commercial centre in the Eastern Suburbs.

Note at that intersection, pedestrians further retard exiting traffic, as they have precedence on any cars turning left and right, which is permitted from both exiting lanes on Victoria St. During peak school entry exit times, it effectively shuts down left and right turning lanes out of Victoria St for some 20-30 minutes.

The other exit is Langlee St which can only be partially utilised as an exit by Salisbury and a small northern section of Henrietta St traffic. It pours into Birrell St, which is generally impeded by illegal drop off/pickups closer to Waverley college.

**Problem.** Parents use these back streets as school drop-off and pick-up points. They generally occur at school start and finish times, but can also occur whenever there is a change in the school timetable, such as special events, orientation days, excursion days etc.

Enormous numbers of school vehicles enter Henrietta and Salisbury, but because the exit point is so heavily restricted it creates a gridlock that can take 40 minutes for a car to get out. It is impossible for traffic to flow, and worse still, it is difficult for local residents to anticipate as school timetables/events change. Once one is trapped in this gridlock, residents can't even reverse back home to get out of it, as it backs up behind you and these local streets are very narrow.

Basically, these exit points are heavily restricted and do not have the capacity to release the large quantities of traffic generated by the school, *because drivers do not have any other feasible drop off/pick up option for their kids.*



3 Photos above. Note the large number of cars entering and dropping off at Henrietta St. The gridlock backs up all this way. Note in the second photo a frustrated driver (for privacy reasons we have redacted their number plate with red ink) drives on the wrong side of Victoria St, overtaking the stalled queue to get out quicker. This is not unusual and is very dangerous, as they are driving into the crest of a hill on the wrong side of the road and can not see incoming traffic. Further pedestrians would not naturally expect cars to the right on the wrong side of the road, and can't use peripheral vision if a van obscures their line of sight.

2 Photos below. The Eastern Victoria St exit at the 6 way intersection with Carrington St and Bronte Rd. In the first photo the lights have just turned green. In the second they are just about to turn yellow. Only one car, the silver Camry in the right manages to get through this change of lights (which is restricted to favour the two main roads) as it is turning right and must give way. While 3 cars in the left land got through, but during the peak times when large numbers of kids are walking to school and crowd the left turn intersections, cars must also give way to pedestrians, and this ceases up the left lane as well. Few cars go straight as the principal distribution roads are left or right turns, and this is not local traffic.

Note in all photos, no cars enter Victoria St. Nearly all the cars are from Henrietta and Salisbury doing Waverley College school drop offs, or the odd local resident inadvertently caught out in this twice daily gridlock.





### **Suggested Solutions:**

A comprehensive traffic study by a reputable independent 3<sup>rd</sup> party is required. It should study and identify normal traffic flows on at multiple times on multiple days, including days with inclement weather, and in the later half of the calendar year when increasing numbers of the boys qualify for their P plates.

Waverley college's proposed major upgrade needs to be substantially amended, to incorporate effective solutions to this daily drop-off/pick-up traffic catastrophe, and end the ongoing problem of school traffic shutting down dozens of local resident streets, and causing unnecessary impediments to traffic flow on Birrell St and Carrington Rd.

Some suggestions I can make would as a minimum include: Incorporating in the new major upgrade proposal a predominantly underground one way flowing drop off/pick up zone for boys of both Waverley, and particularly Waterford campus (these Waterford students would then walk the rest of the way, ideally supervised). It should; link indirectly to a large multi-story underground car park without compromising its flow, have no exits into the local back streets, help alleviate the flow of the main roads, and not cause a loss of the existing limited street parking spots that bound the college.

***This is a once in a generation opportunity to resolve this ongoing and worsening gridlock problem. Fortunately, it's a problem that can be fixed with proper and sound planning, substantially altering and amending the proposed major upgrade design, and ongoing management.***

***The current major upgrade proposal should not be approved. New plans that incorporate a comprehensive school traffic and parking solution is required, as the back streets are not designed, nor can be altered, to cope with strains placed on it by the schools operations.***

### **Shared E-Bikes Storage sites**

**Problem.** Large numbers of shared E bikes are used by the school kids. They are dumped on streets adjacent the school, cluttering footpaths, that then causes further havoc at peak dismissal times.

**Suggested Solution:** Incorporate shared E-bike storage and parking spots in the upgrade near entry and exit points of the school.

### **Attracting High-Quality Staff : Affordable Housing for Staff.**

**Background:** Mr. P. Frost, who has been a very senior staff member of the school for many decades, reported at a Waverley College Old Boys school meeting, that one of the major ongoing challenges the College faces in lifting the school's performance is their capacity to attract high-quality teaching staff, especially younger teachers.

**Issue.** Typically, school staff sit in the median income bands, while housing in the East, (ie reasonably close to the college), is almost devoid of affordable housing (both as rentals and acquisitions). Thereby there is a very limited pool of essential workers that can afford to live reasonably close to the school. So, invariably the College must seek to attract staff that live a long distance from the school, competing against other schools that can offer excellent positions in areas with affordable housing options nearby.

**Problem:** It's likely that local affordable housing supply will continue to deteriorate, and travel times will increase, so the school will further struggle overtime to attract high quality essential workers.

### **Suggested Solutions:**

A solution to the problem would be the provision of local housing options for staff, which could be packaged into their remuneration.

The Waverley college grounds currently include a number of houses. Obviously some need to be demolished to enable the construction of significant and critical infrastructure for the school to grow. But, from the feedback we've been given, some of the other residential sites are being demolished so the major refurbishment can 'technically' meet FSR, site coverage, and other development conditions. This is not Pareto optimal.

These on-site homes could be better utilised to provide affordable housing options packaged to help attract high-quality teaching staff who generally sit in median income bands and cannot afford to live reasonably near the College. It's win-win outcome.

Note this is a practice the College has used in the past, ie providing housing for staff. In fact, several of my teachers and some of their families resided in on-site housing provided by Waverley College, so the College has plenty of experience with the provision of staff housing.

### **Sports/playgrounds noise adjacent to homes: Restrictions on time of use.**

**Problem:** The upgrade proposes placing sports and playground areas that are adjacent and abut existing apartments and residential homes. This will cause significant hardship to the residents of those existing sites.

### **Suggested solutions:**

Finding a better use that is considerate of the longstanding residential nature of that corner.

Implementing sound containment measures around any playgrounds located adjacent to existing residential buildings should be required to mitigate noise pollution from kids playing. These soundproofing devices should be tastefully designed and integrated.

These playgrounds/sport areas should have restrictions on use and time of use. The area should be gated so that it is locked when not in use. They should not be accessible for use before 9am or after 4pm on any day, or on any public holiday, weekend or school holidays. Installation of strong overhead flood lights should not be permitted, only minimal normal lighting at ground level so as to not disturb adjacent residents. No noisy devices like loud speakers or school bells should be permitted there.

### **Noise pollution: School bells & Public address system:**



**Problem:** The college uses school bells and a public address system to communicate with the students and staff. It runs all day, is very loud and can be heard 2-3 blocks away from the school, disturbing thousands of local residents.

**Suggested solution.**

An alternate system be found that does not project noise beyond the college. For example, instead of having very loud bells and speakers projecting over large areas, have a larger quantity of bells and speakers, better dispersed and at a lower volumes and projections so it doesn't project into the local community all day. This new system should be tested to ensure that it doesn't unreasonably cause noise pollution outside the school envelope.

## **Conclusion**

While we recognize the importance of upgrading Waverley College, it is imperative that the planning process takes into account its impact on the local community. This major upgrade presents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to address longstanding issues and provision for future impacts.

The concerns raised by the local community, such as student behaviour, maintenance of the external streetscape, vehicle parking, share E bike storage, local traffic gridlock, attracting high-quality staff, and noise reduction, must be addressed comprehensively in any major upgrade proposal.

Implementing the suggested solutions will not only mitigate the current impact but also foster a harmonious relationship between the school and the local community, and bode well for the Colleges reputation and presentation.

We respectfully request the NSW Planning Department to **NOT approve** this proposed major upgrade. A new proposal is required that comprehensively addresses the problems identified in this submission.

With good planning, a small amount of effort and a considerate attitude, we can all enjoy a harmonious and thriving environments for all to co-exist and grow.

Thank you for your consideration.