



NSW GOVERNMENT
Department of Planning

AUBURN HOSPITAL
Modification MP06_0129 Mod 2

Modification of Minister's Approval
Section 75W of the
Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979

July 2008



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1. INTRODUCTION

On 15 April 2008, Brookfield Multiplex, on behalf of NSW Health (the proponent) lodged an application to modify approved project MP06_0129 – Auburn Hospital redevelopment (**Tag B**) pursuant to Section 75W of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* ("the Act"). The proponent is seeking approval to install a 21.8 metre high communications tower on the roof of the new hospital, to facilitate the relocation of the existing communications equipment from the old hospital building.

The communications tower is to support essential radio communications equipment for the Sydney West Area Health Service for effective radio transmission coverage and 'point to point' data services between Auburn Hospital, other hospitals including Westmead, and neighbouring health facilities.

Other telecommunications carriers may seek to relocate or install communications equipment on the tower, in which case, compliance with the *Telecommunications Act 1997* and related legislation, or approval from Auburn Council would be required.

2. ORIGINAL APPLICATION

On 26 January 2007, the Minister for Planning approved a project application MP 06_0129 for the redevelopment of Auburn Hospital. The approval provided for the staged demolition of all buildings over the entire site and construction of a new 184-bed, five (5) storey hospital with a GFA of 23,000m² and on site car parking for 273 vehicles.

On 13 April 2007, the Minister approved a concept plan for the redevelopment of the entire site (including the Arthur Stone Annex site opposite). The Concept Plan granted approval for a new private hospital and residential development on surplus land.

On 22 November 2007, the Minister approved a modification application under 75W of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (the Act) seeking approval to modify the design of the approved project, including changes to the external materials and finishes, and landscaping.

A copy of the original approval is at **Tag C** and a copy of the original assessment report is at **Tag D**.

The original project cost for the development was \$170 million.

3. THE SITE

The Auburn Hospital site is bounded by Hevington Road, Water Street, Hargrave Road and Norval Street, Auburn. The Hospital is approximately one kilometre south of Auburn town centre and in close proximity to the Parramatta CBD (5km). The area surrounding the site is dominated by residential development comprising 1-2 storey single dwellings and 2-3 storey residential flat buildings. The main hospital site has an area of 1.765 ha and slopes down from west to east.

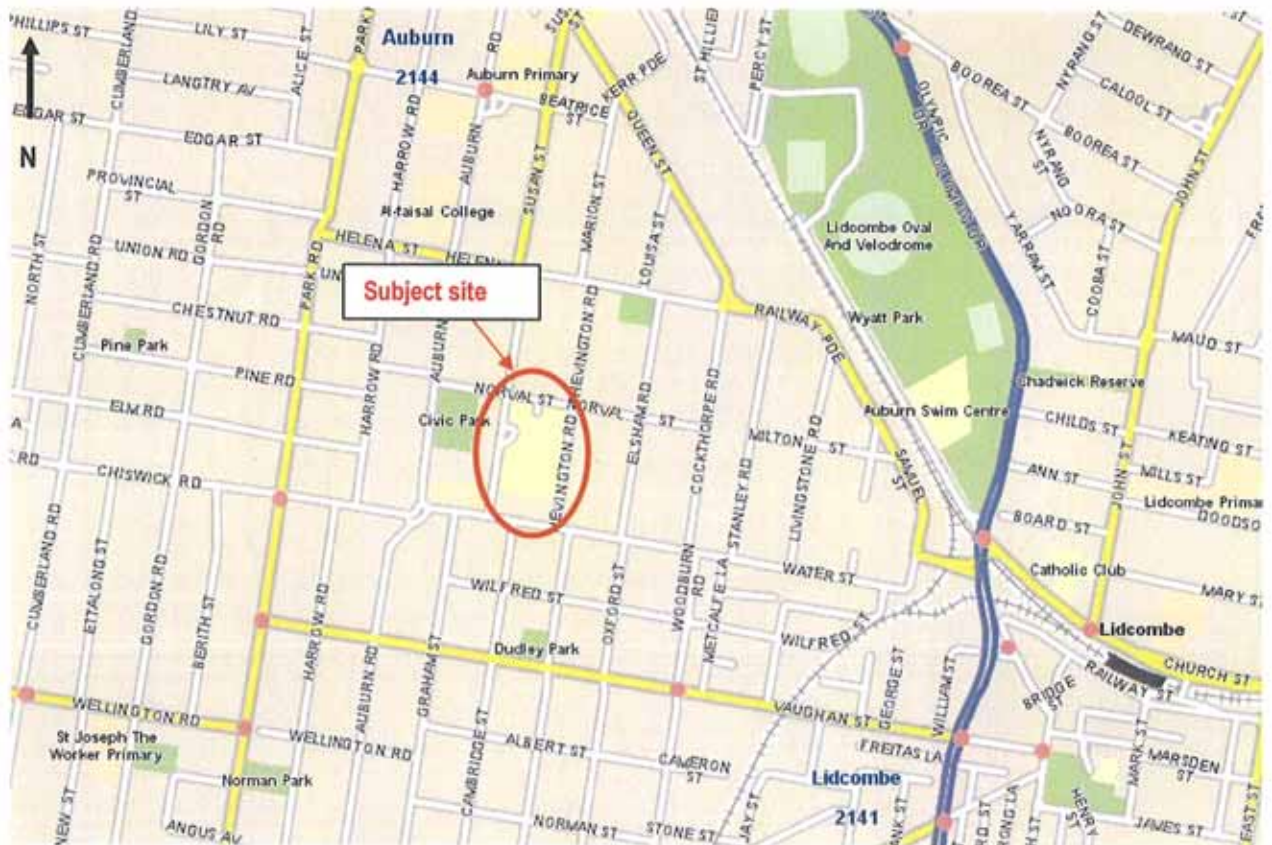


Figure 1. Location of Auburn Hospital

3 DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED MODIFICATION

The application seeks approval to modify the approved Auburn Hospital development, for the installation of a communications tower on the new hospital roof. The tower will provide a new location for the hospital's communications equipment currently located on the roof of the existing 9 storey hospital building.

The new hospital building will be up to 5 storeys in height, with the tower proposed to be located on the roof above the plant room. The tower will be approximately 21.8m in height, with a single lightning pole to extend a further 3m in height. Table 1 details the overall heights of the structures related to this proposal.

Table 1: Height of structures

Structure	Height above ground level (m)
Approved Hospital roof	24.5
Tower	46.3
Lightning Pole	49.3

A copy of the report from Urban Planning Outcomes P/L is attached at **Tag B**.

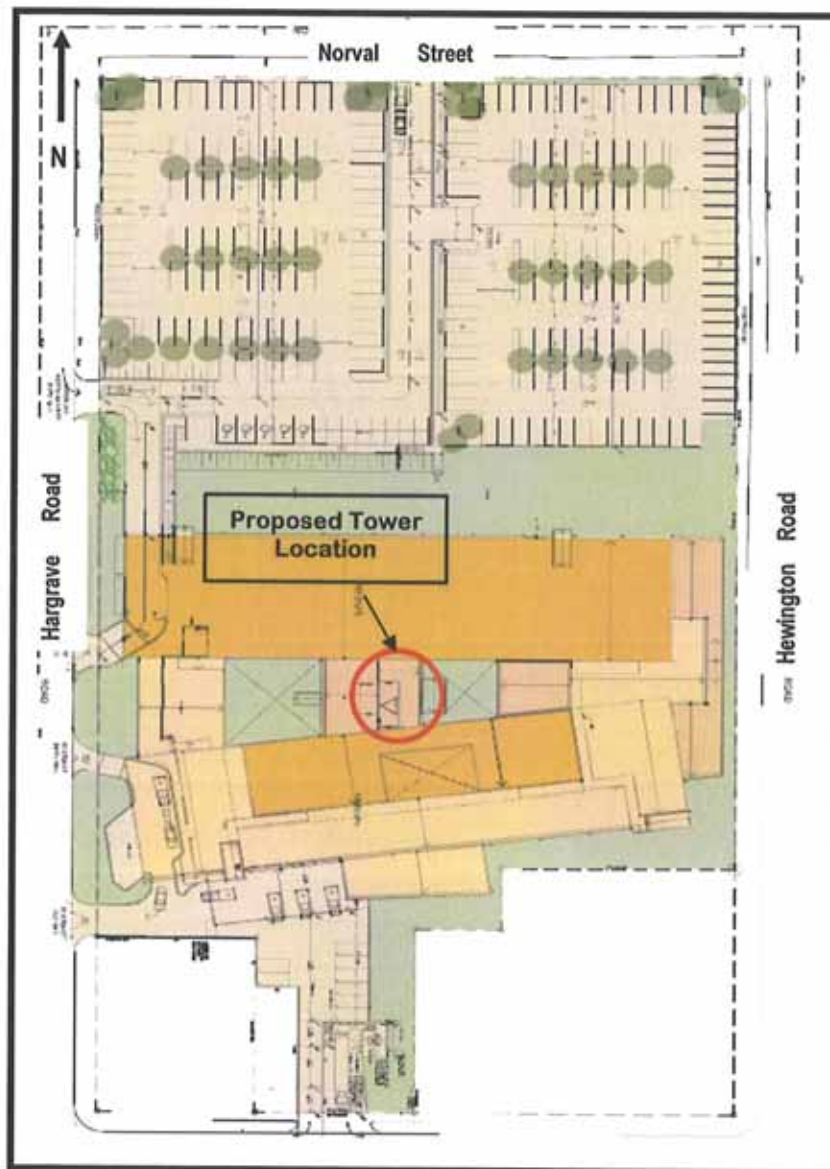


Figure 2 Proposed location of communications tower



Figure 3. Photomontage of the western side of the new hospital building, viewed from Hargrave Road



Figure 4. Photomontage of the north-western side of the new hospital building, viewed from Hargrave Road

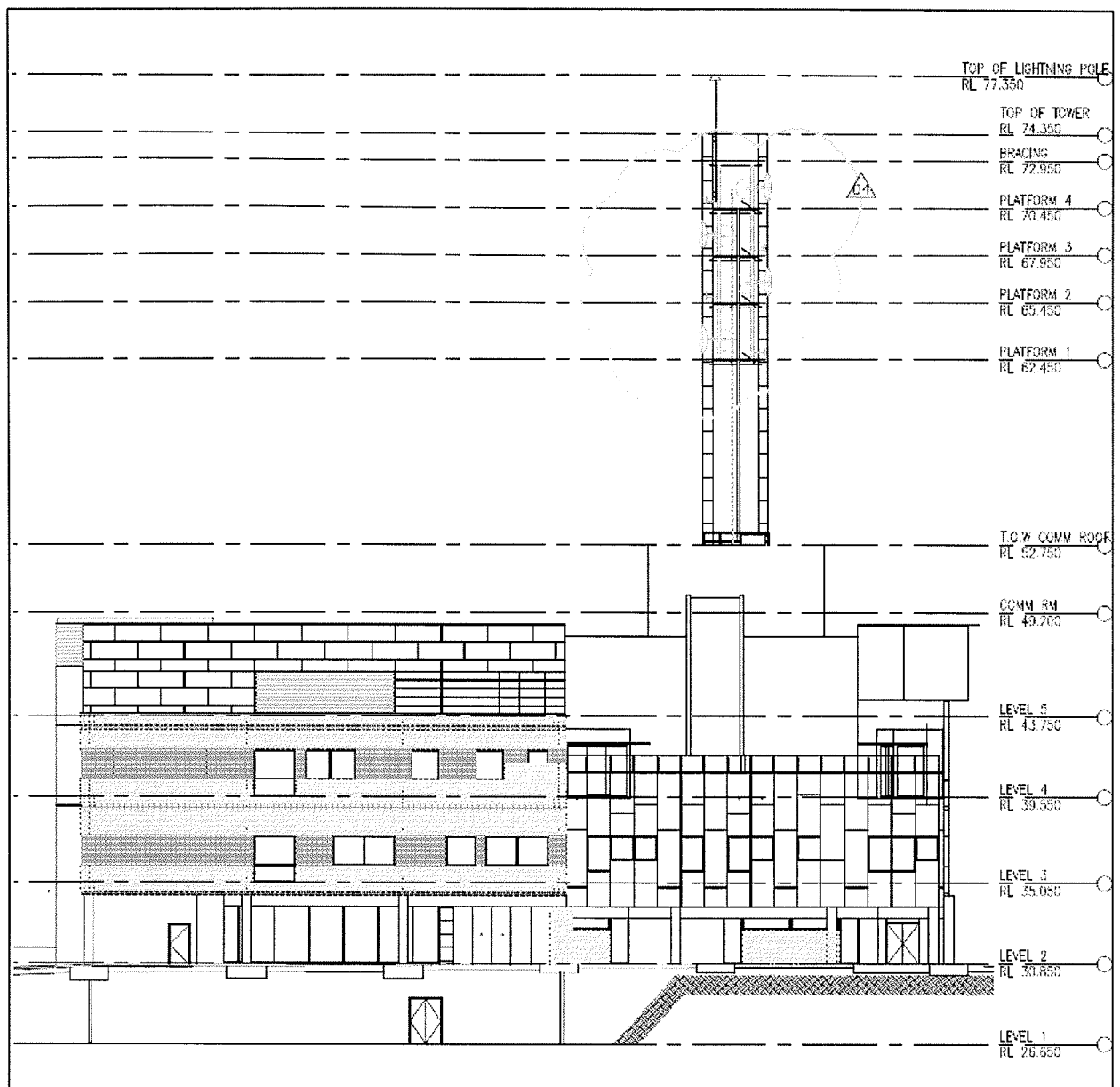


Figure 5. Western (Hargrave Road) elevation of the approved hospital building and proposed tower (Level 2 is ground level at the southern side and Level 1 is ground level at northern side of the site).

4 STATUTORY CONTEXT

Modification of a Minister's approval

The modification application has been lodged with the Director-General pursuant to Section 75W of the *Act*. Section 75W provides for the modification of a Minister's approval including *revoking or varying a condition of the approval or imposing an additional condition of the approval*.

The Minister's approval for a modification is not required if the project as modified will be consistent with the existing approval under this Part. In this instance, the proposed modification is consistent with the existing approval granted under Part 3A; however, the modification requires changes to a condition of the Minister's approval.

Environmental Assessment Requirements

It is not considered necessary to notify the proponent of environmental assessment requirements, pursuant to Section 75W (3) with respect to the proposed modification as sufficient information was provided to the Department to consider the application.

5 CONSULTATION AND EXHIBITION

Under Section 75X(2)(f) of the *Act*, the Director-General is to make publicly available requests for modifications of approvals given by the Minister. In accordance with Clause 8G of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2000*, the request for the modification, and accompanying reports were placed on the Department's website.

It was considered that the proposal might attract community interest, therefore the modification was notified to Auburn Council and surrounding residents for a period of 15 days from 11 June 2008 to 25 June 2008. The application was also advertised in the *Sydney Morning Herald* and *Auburn Review*, and placed on the Department of Planning website.

6 SUBMISSIONS

The Department received 2 public submissions from the public, including a petition with 14 signatories and a submission from the Council.

6.1 Public submissions

The issues raised in the public submissions are summarised as follows:

- The tower was not part of the original application;
- The facilities are not proposed to be underground;
- Potential health effects from radiation emissions, especially on the elderly and young should be considered; and
- Emissions should meet safe limits for human health, for residents, public places and the hospital.

On 2 July 2008, a summary of the public submissions was forwarded to the proponent. On 8 July 2008, the proponent provided a response to the issues raised in the public submissions. A Preferred Project Report was not submitted.

The issues raised in the public submissions are discussed in section 7 of this report. In summary, as the tower is necessary for the operation of the hospital, and emissions will meet relevant health and safety standards, no changes to the proposal are warranted.

6.2 Agency submissions

Council provided a submission requesting that due to the high number of residents with a non-English speaking background, the residents originally notified of the modification application be sent a letter from the Department in various languages informing them of the conclusion of the Radio Communications Site Management Book that the proposed modification complies with the ARPANSA levels.

It is not the Department's policy to notify residents in writing of project determinations, however notices of determination are placed on the Department's website. The Council will be notified of the determination of the application, and given Council's resources and experience in providing assistance for residents from non-English speaking backgrounds, they are best able to provide the information in various languages to residents if they wish to do so.

7 CONSIDERATION OF PROPOSED MODIFICATION

7.1 Requirement for the Tower

The proponent maintains that the tower is necessary to provide a structure on which to relocate existing hospital radio communications equipment.

The communications equipment is currently located on the roof of the existing hospital building which is to be demolished. The new hospital roof, at 5 storeys in height, is substantially lower than the existing 9 storey building. The proponent maintains that the new hospital building is too low to maintain effective 'lines of sight' for the equipment to function. Therefore a tower, approximately 21.8m in height, will be located on the roof of the new building.

The proponent maintains that the communications equipment is essential for the operation of Auburn Hospital, supporting essential radio transmission coverage for hospital paging and communications between the hospital and neighbouring hospitals and health facilities. Telecommunications carriers that have equipment on the existing hospital building may also want to relocate their communications equipment onto the proposed tower, in which case compliance with the *Telecommunications Act 1997* and related legislation, or approval from Auburn Council would be required. A new condition (Condition A8) is recommended to address this issue.

The proponent states that the tower was not part of the original application because it was not clear whether the new building would be high enough for the equipment to function effectively. A number of studies were carried out by the proponent into options available to provide the required communications services, and it was found that there was no viable alternative to the provision of a tower.

The proponent also states that services vital for the running of the hospital could not be placed underground due to increased risk of disturbance (eg. cables being dug up), and that the cost of undergrounding the services would have been prohibitively expensive.

7.2 Electromagnetic Energy (EME)

The proponent states that as the communications equipment is already on the hospital site, radiofrequency EME (otherwise known as electromagnetic radiation) levels by will be similar to existing levels.

An Electromagnetic Radiation Report was prepared by Mobile Carriers Forum and submitted with the application. The report details the emissions to be produced and resulting safety issues relating to the operation of the communications tower. The report states that low levels of EME will be generated by the radio communications tower, and that these emissions will comply with national and international safety guidelines, including Radio Frequency Human Exposure Limits. A site compliance certificate has been issued to state that the proposed tower will meet the applicable standards for Radio Frequency Emissions.

Information in the report is consistent with that provided by the Federal Government Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency (ARPNSA). The factsheet "What about base stations and telecommunications towers - are there any health effects?" states:

"The weight of national and international scientific opinion is that there is no substantiated evidence that [radiofrequency] emissions associated with living near a mobile phone base station or telecommunications tower poses a health risk".

To ensure the emissions will comply with the relevant standards, which are designed to avoid any known adverse effects, a condition is recommended (Condition D5) for details to be provided to demonstrate compliance with relevant standards prior to operation of the communications tower.

The Department has considered the impact of the above changes on the proposed development and raises no objection to any of the proposed modifications.

7.3 Visual Impact

The tower has been located towards the centre of the site, which will reduce the appearance of height when viewed from the street and surrounding properties. It has been designed as a predominantly open structure, which will assist in reducing the appearance of bulk. Low reflectivity finishes are proposed, and the tower and platforms will be a light grey colour designed to blend in with the sky to reduce the visual impact of the structure.

8. MODIFICATION TO CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL

The Department recommends that conditions of approval apply to the proposed modifications. These are included at **Tag A**.

9. CONCLUSION

It is considered that the proposal, as modified, still achieves the same objectives as the originally approved Major Project 06_0129 and does not alter the overall nature, need or justification of the project. The communications tower is necessary for the operation of the hospital, will emit similar levels of EME as the existing communications equipment, and comply with relevant safety standards.

10. DELEGATION

Under the instrument of delegation dated 7 June 2007, the Minister has delegated his functions under Section 75W of the Act relating to modifying Part 3A approvals to the Executive Director Strategic Sites and Urban Renewals.

11. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Executive Director, Strategic Sites and Urban Renewal, as delegate of the Minister for Planning:

- (A) **consider** the findings and recommendations of this report;
- (B) **approve** the modification, subject to conditions, under Section 75W of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act, 1979*; and
- (C) **sign** the attached Instrument of Modification (**Tag A**).

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