

91 Eddy Road,
Chatswood 2067
28th April 2020

The Premier,
Ms Gladys Berejiklian,
Member for Willoughby
Parliament House, Macquarie Street, Sydney 2000

Dear Premier,

Re: SSD 9483 Chatswood Public School and Chatswood High Schools

The following submission is made in response to the NSW government proposals for Chatswood Public School (CPS) and Chatswood High School (CHS).

We have had close involvement with both CPS and CHS, as local residents and because our children attended both CPS and CHS. We were actively involved in the P and C Associations at both schools, on the executive committee at both CPS and CHS Parents and Citizens Associations, past Secretary and Life member. We are former members of the successful Save Chatswood High School committee, established to stop the proposed school closure about 20 years ago. For nearly 20 years I convened the Chatswood High School Bushcare site which was established to protect the identified critically endangered Blue Gum High Forest remnants in the grounds of CHS. Therefore we are very familiar with the two sites proposed for development and the needs of the community.

The proposed SSD developments will change streetscapes, building heights, bulk and scale detrimental to the amenity on the western side of Pacific Highway.

The proposals will set a precedent for building heights and pose risk for current zoning regulations, which could result in medium to high density to our residential areas, which are highly valued because of their vegetation, streetscapes, trees and links to bushland.

The Committee for Sydney (July 2017) submission to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Infrastructure, Transport and Cities (Submission No 88,

page 9) confirmed that Chatswood's population Growth Projection for 2017-2030 will increase by around 27 percent more than the 2017 population.

This population growth in Chatswood largely occurs through corresponding growth in high rise residential apartments, in turn reflecting a sustained growth in families with school-aged children.

The growth projected in young families residing in the Chatswood precinct is driving incessant growth in demand for school capacity. It is acknowledged there will be increasing demand by students for future school places.

Fundamental and essential ingredients to good planning are rigorous process, meaningful and effective community consultation and due process.

It is extremely disappointing that the so called community consultation for these state significant developments is being undertaken during the Covid-19 pandemic when people are in 'lockdown' and unable to meet. One questions how these proposals can be subject to rigor, and due diligence when the community is unable to engage, a fundamental ingredient to good planning? Further, many people who live near the schools have not received notice about the proposals from the DET and/or government.

Recommendation: That the DET/government proactively, properly and effectively informs the locally community of the CPS and CHS proposals to allow the genuine community engagement, planning rigor and due diligence reasonably expected by our community.

The SSD proposal fails to explore and/or plan for reasonable alternatives such as more equitably and fairly redistributing student numbers between Chatswood Primary and Mowbray Public Schools.

Traffic reports: these reports as presented are questioned by local residents who have closely observed major traffic problems generated by CPS and CHS and note that the traffic reports fail to comprehend the reality of existing traffic problems (pre Covid-19).

The reports suggest that the average delay driving from Centennial Ave to Albert Ave. at peak AM and PM times is 28 seconds is IMO, totally deceptive. The traffic at these times backs up into Centennial Ave. as far as Dardanelles Rd. I have frequently observed that it can take 15 -20 minutes from Eddy Road to exit at Pacific Highway to Albert Ave., approximately a 450M trip.

The photographs appear to present a situation far from normal. The report fails to recognise the breaches of law, double parking, congestion, safety risks and frustration that take place daily right now, let alone when this road system will need to accommodate more than double current student numbers. The report's analysis of parking is IMO misleading, much of the parking behaviour is problematic, and/or dangerous along Centennial Ave. and Eddy Road.

The document fails to report or provide remedies for, the extreme difficulty that residents of this precinct and adjacent streets experience finding parking near their homes. Indeed, it appears to propose that the very few existing unrestricted parking places will be changed to short-term parking.

Further a significant number of high school students have cars, drive to school and park nearby, compounding an already untenable situation for the community generally.

There have been multiple occasions where residents have found cars parked, locked, and empty in their private driveways for long periods of time. This happens because parents are already unable to find parking to drop off and pick up their children. This is the present situation, before student numbers double.

The report fails to recognise the very large number of buses involved in sporting and other inter-school events that need to park and navigate these narrow roads. Photographs previously sent to your department document 6 buses were parked in Centennial Ave. – three of them illegally double parked, regrettably not an isolated incident.

Many children attending CPS are from out of area, 30% of whom are driven to school. With anticipated student population of 1,600, which represents 480s car movements twice daily in the CPS precinct, which with existing traffic gridlock conditions, will exacerbate an already untenable situation.

The Traffic management must integrate these identified problems and figures for any realistic analysis and management.

Recommendation: That a well researched, realistic, legitimate, traffic management plan be provided to the community regarding the SSD Chatswood proposals that accurately documents the existing parking, traffic safety risk situation, with proper plans to mitigate and control traffic, with realistic and responsible remedies.

Schools as places of learning and education, need to recognise scientific evidence of climate change and incorporate clean renewable energy, such as solar power (non fossil fuel energy) in school facilities to save increasing energy costs and to promote renewable energy to the community.

Recommendation: Any new school development must recognise the scientific evidence regarding climate change, hence ensure that the facilities are run by 100% renewable energy with Photo Voltaic Cells (PV) incorporated in design. Water sensitive urban design should be incorporated in each of the schools sites. It will also serve to educate both the school and wider community in a very practical and tangible way, about clean renewable energy moving to a cleaner de-carbonised future, in line with the international Paris climate agreements.

Concerns regard to the re-development of Chatswood Primary School (CPS) include the following points:

The proposal to develop Chatswood Public School is very ambitious.

1. A six story building with lifts could pose safety risks to children, and result in children being late for classes due to lift delays and/or limits to numbers of students on lift.

2. The proposed multi-storey developments are of bulk, scale and design unsympathetic to the two heritage buildings. The new buildings should be of lower height, recessive in design, bulk and scale compared with the heritage buildings. on site. The proposed building materials should be compatible with and sympathetic to heritage values.

3. CPS has two ‘Opportunity Classes’ which means that a high number of students from ‘out of area’ attend CPS. Many children from out of area attend the school hoping to access the Opportunity Class, and/or enrol on the “OC” if accepted. This means that many children from ‘out of area’ attend the school, which has contributed to over-crowding, and further emphasises that the education programme is discriminatory. Because many students are driven to school, there are serious unresolved issues including traffic generation, parking problems, gridlock and safety risks.

Recommendation: that the school ceases to run “opportunity classes’ and adopts a more egalitarian comprehensive education programme.

4. The CPS built infrastructure and its associated open-space is already “overcrowded” demanding that the State Department of Education remediate the present overcrowding and cope with the forecast expected future growth in student population.

Many local residents with a long interest in, and/or association with our local schools advocated that DET purchased 688 - 692 Pacific Highway for CPS student and school needs. As before, the owner of 699-692 may still be interested in selling these buildings to the DET.

Many have observed the proposed large multi-storey buildings using lifts to classrooms would not be required if the NSW Government acquired 688-692 Pacific Hwy for educational purposes. It has been noted problems occurred where lifts were installed in other schools (e.g. Parramatta) resulting in student delays reaching classes.

Recommendation: That the NSW government acquire 688 & 692 Pacific Highway for educational purposes (SP2) in the community interest.

5. The Department of Education planned expansion of School infrastructure will not increase available open space for children to play. Conversely, contraction of available open space is inevitable.

Recommendation: that useable open space be provided for CPS students.

6. The proposed new primary school plans to accommodate 1600 students, 250 more than the 1350 students attending Chatswood Primary School now. It has been claimed that the State Government intends building a new school. Because this could take years a formal commitment is required.

Future school student needs may need to be re-assessed because the proposed International Chinese School (presently in Chatswood) plans to move to St Leonards with an increased student population potentially reducing demand at CPS.

Recommendation: That the government formally and publically commits that the former Mowbray House school building on the Metro dive site, corner of Mowbray Pacific highway will be re-opened as a future public school site.

7. Mowbray public School, re-developed to accommodate 1,000 students has just 600 students. The student populations of Chatswood Public and Mowbray Public Schools must be more equitably balanced.

Recommendation: That the DET actively fairly balances and equitably distributes the over-capacity Chatswood Public School student population to Mowbray Public School which is under capacity.

SSD 9483 Chatswood High School (CHS) proposed re-development

1. The school buildings on the Chatswood High School (CHS) site should be consolidated to the centre of the CHS site, a) to facilitate student access, and b) to protect the significant, identified critically endangered Blue Gum High Forest (BGHF) remnants at CHS.

2. The Chatswood High School Bushcare site was established over 22 years ago to protect the identified critically endangered Blue Gum High Forest remnants in the grounds of CPS. Regeneration work continues today despite clearing of trees for the expanded oval and further clearing for the new school buildings. Further destruction of the significant trees on site must be abandoned to protect this significant and important forest.

NSW and Australia's environment has experienced extreme stress following prolonged drought, unprecedented bushfires and mismanagement. Hence the students, the local and wider community could perceive that the NSW government holds scant regard for science, nature, green canopy and ecological values.

Critically endangered BGHF and habitat for native species must be protected for intrinsic values, scientific reference, amenity, connectivity & educational purposes. The CHS forest provides habitat for endangered species including the powerful owl, tawny frogmouth, native birds and other species.

Recommendation: Re-design current proposals to consolidate the school buildings to the centre of the CHS site a) to facilitate student access between buildings b) to protect the critically endangered, irreplaceable remnant of precious blue gum high forest on the CHS site; c) that no indigenous vegetation be removed from the CHS site d) that bush regeneration on site be continued to restore vegetation damaged and lost over the last ten years, and that the DET funds the habitat and bush regeneration.

3. The once elegant amenity of Centennial Ave should be enhanced, not trashed by ad hoc, sprawling development or changes to zoning to higher density.

4. The heritage values of the property next door to CHS to the west on Centennial Ave. must be properly protected from any proposals to construct a multi story building adjacent. The heritage amenity should be enhanced by consolidating buildings to the centre of the site, and protecting existing trees..

6. The once well maintained and well used CHS tennis courts should be re-used for sport as planned by CHS parents for many years. The tennis courts should not be used as a carpark. The use of tennis courts as a carpark sends a very poor image of the school to the community and to the students.

Building T

Beyond simplistic outline drawings there is need to properly inform the community of the visual perspective of building T, beyond a statement that it will be brick, concrete and glass. Will building T be constructed of sound absorbing concrete panels specifically designed for these situations? The western wall of building T is approx. 50 metres long, two stories high and with the roofline above that, and broadside on. It sits high on elevated land and presents massive bulk to those properties located on Dardanelles Rd. Trees may break some of the visual impact, however from the drawings it appears that the wall will be a flat, uninterrupted panel devoid of any architectural features or visual relief.

Recommendation: That the external design principals, architectural features, form, any articulation, its context to the site and residential area, should be clearly explained and illustrated to clearly inform the community of what the proposed buildings will look like.

Yours sincerely,

Lynne Saville

Doug Zihrul

April 2020