

Lourdes Retirement Village, 95-97 Stanhope Rd, Killara.

Objections to State Significant Development SSD-88004956

Category A: Bushfire & Emergency Evacuation

1. The Single Access Restrictions: The facility is situated at the end of Stanhope Road which is a narrow, dead-end road with single access and egress, bordering the south-western corner of Garigal National Park.

I am concerned that this development will house a higher density of elderly, frail and non-ambulatory residents in a geographic cul-de-sac directly bordering high-risk bushland. This is a violation of fundamental safety principles of the NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS) Planning for Bush Fire Protection guidelines.

2. Evacuation Logistics vs. Emergency Services Traffic:

In the event of an emergency, a single narrow and badly surfaced road with tree root intrusion will not be able to support a mass southbound evacuation of elderly residents while simultaneously allowing large RFS fire appliances to head northbound into the area. Fire services require adequate perimeter access and turning circles for heavy appliances. This is a narrow dead-end road and there will be difficulties with transport vehicles turning around to travel back along the road. There will be bottlenecks along the road.

3. High-Dependency Mobility Realities:

I work in an aged care facility and from my knowledge, training and experience many occupants in the expanded aged care facility will be vulnerable and will have severe mobility restrictions, dementia, or require ambulance transport.

Evacuating hundreds of frail and non-ambulatory elderly people via one dead-end road during an active fire or other emergency will place residents and staff at high risk and would not be logistically possible. Patients with dementia will be confused and may refuse to co-operate with an evacuation.

Vertical evacuation from high rise buildings (moving frail or bedridden residents down stairwells when lifts shut down) is structurally unsafe during a fire event.

4. Precedent of Prior Expert Rejections:

The NSW Department of Planning and The Sydney North Planning Panel (SNPP) previously rejected Levande's proposals for high rise development specifically because of the extreme bushfire risks and evacuation constraints posed by its location.

The department's official finalisation report concluded that the proposal failed to logically demonstrate how an increased, vulnerable population could be safely protected or evacuated next to Garigal National Park during an extreme weather event. Local safety experts and independent peer reviews also found the design relied too heavily on building materials rather than ensuring physical, defensible space and safe egress routes

The bushfire evacuation risks were unresolvable.

In attempting to bypass Council via the SSDA pathway the physical danger of the site does not change.

5. The "Flame Zone" Prohibited Baseline/Asset Protection Zone (APZ) Encroachment:

If the proposed site directly interfaces with Garigal National Park it falls into the highest risk category (Flame Zone / BAL-FZ), then this development of an aged care facility is entirely prohibited.

To avoid the Flame Zone, the building must be pushed far back into the site using massive Asset Protection Zones (APZs), limiting the buildable footprint. To achieve a lawful Bushfire Attack Level (BAL) rating for vulnerable elderly people, the developer must clear significant native vegetation for APZs, causing permanent environmental degradation on the Garigal National Park boundary.

6. Radiant Heat and Convective Currents; Embers Attack Vulnerability:

The architectural design features extensive multi-story roofs and balconies which would be directly exposed to uphill ember attacks from the adjacent Garigal National Park valley. Taller buildings near high-threat vegetation increase the external surface area exposed to convective and radiant heat.

7. The "Shelter-in-Place" protocol:

Relying on a "shelter-in-place" emergency protocol for an expanded, high-density aged care facility in a catastrophic bushfire zone places an unacceptable liability on staff and puts vulnerable lives at risk.

8. Smoke Inhalation Hazards:

Residents and staff will be exposed to the massive increase in smoke density during a fire. This poses an immediate, life-threatening respiratory risk to hundreds elderly residents living in a high-density environment potentially trapped by a single exit road.

Many of these residents will have underlying respiratory disease, may be reliant on oxygen and would not survive smoke inhalation.

9. Gridlock at the Stanhope/Fiddens Roads Wharf Intersection at Pacific Highway:

During an emergency, the narrow escape route bottlenecks completely at the intersection of Stanhope Road, Pacific Highway and Fiddens Wharf Road, trapping the entire neighbourhood. This is a very busy intersection and is already blocked during peak hour traffic.

10. Lack of Alternative Emergency Access and Egress:

The developer has failed to secure a secondary, viable emergency-only egress route through surrounding properties to alleviate the Stanhope Road choke point.

11. RFS Staging Area Deficiencies:

The site layout does not provide adequate, safe turning circles or dedicated staging areas for multiple heavy fire trucks without completely blocking civilian escape routes. This will also be problematic for other residents living along the road.

12. Climate Change Escalation:

Fire weather in the Ku-ring-gai area is statistically worsening. Increasing density on the urban-bushland interface ignores current NSW climate risk and adaptation planning policies.

13. Visitor and Staff Surge During Emergencies:

In a bushfire threat, concerned family members may rush towards the facility, completely gridlocking Stanhope Road before official evacuations can even begin. Off-site staff may attempt to go to the site as well to assist.

14. Overreliance on Local Volunteer Resources:

The scale of evacuation required for this expanded footprint will entirely exhaust local emergency services and reduce fire protection resources away from the wider Ku-ring-gai community.

15. Failure of the SEARs Bushfire Criteria:

The Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) fails to satisfy the rigorous Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements (SEARs) concerning absolute life safety on single-access roads.

In the case of a fire breaking out in this facility, the same access and safety concerns would apply.

Category B: Procedural Unfairness & Deficient Consultation

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16. 14-Day Exhibition Window: A 14-day public exhibition period for a complex, multi-million dollar State Significant Development gives the community an inadequate timeline to review hundreds of pages of technical documents. Lack of notice of this exhibition in the community is also part of a flawed process.

17. Intentional Silence on Time Extensions:

The Department of Planning has failed to respond to or grant formal community requests for a public exhibition extension constitutes a severe breach of procedural fairness.

18. Restricted Notification Radius:

The Department limited direct mail notifications to immediate boundary neighbours which ignores the fact that a massive construction footprint impacts traffic, safety, and infrastructure across a much wider catchment.

19. Misuse of the SSDA Pathway:

Upgrading this development to a State Significant Development via repeated reappraisals appears to be a deliberate strategy to strip Ku-ring-gai Council of its local planning authority and silence community objections.

20. Lack of Accessible Physical Documentation:

By failing to provide accessible physical copies of the master plan in local libraries or community centres during a brief 14-day window, elderly neighbours are excluded from reviewing and providing feedback about this development.

21. Vague and Misleading Project Summaries:

Public notices downplayed the true scale, height, and density modifications of the site, preventing everyday citizens from understanding the full impact without deep technical analysis.

22. Failure to Address Prior Public Submissions:

This application fails to demonstrate how it has meaningfully integrated or resolved the hundreds of public objections lodged during previous Council and SNPP reviews.

23. Inadequate First Nations Consultation:

The rapid acceleration of this SSDA indicates a superficial and deficient consultation process regarding Indigenous cultural heritage on land bordering Garigal National Park.

24. Exclusion of the Broader Killara Catchment:

The traffic, environmental, and emergency risks of this site affect the entire Killara peninsula, yet the broader community was given no proactive notification of the public exhibition and many are still not aware of this SSDA.

25. Violation of Community Participation Plans:

The abbreviated consultation framework directly violates the Department's own stated guidelines under its Community Participation Plan for major infrastructure assessments.

Category C: Environmental & Biodiversity Impacts

26. Edge Effects on Garigal National Park:

The high-density footprint introduces severe environmental issues including weed invasion, domestic runoff, and artificial light pollution. These will directly impact into a pristine national park ecosystem.

27. Loss of Mature Canopy:

The proposal requires clearing dozens of mature, hollow-bearing native trees that provide critical nesting habitats for local fauna. This LGA lost 8% of its canopy from 2019 – 2022 with more lost in the past 4 years.

28. Threat to Vulnerable Local Wildlife:

Construction and ongoing high-density human activity will permanently disrupt the wildlife corridors used by threatened species, including the Powerful Owl and eastern pygmy possum.

29. Urban Heat Island Escalation:

Replacing soft landscaping, soil, and native canopy with massive concrete slabs and multi-storey structures will severely worsen the local microclimate and urban heat island effect. This is already apparent with the high-rise development in our area. It is impossible to walk along the streets in summer due to the radiated heat from high rise apartment blocks.

30. Stormwater Runoff and Valley Erosion:

The massive increase in impervious surfaces will lead to stormwater surges down the steep topography, causing severe soil erosion and silting of National Park waterways.

30. Light Pollution and Nocturnal Disruption:

Intensive 24-hour operational lighting required for a high-density aged care facility will blind and permanently displace nocturnal wildlife along the national park boundary.

31. Acoustic Pollution in a Quiet Valley:

The introduction of large commercial HVAC systems, cooling towers, and daily delivery bays will destroy the natural acoustic sanctuary of the Garigal bushland boundary. This will also impact on Swain Gardens, a local heritage park which is directly opposite proposed development.

32. Soil Instability on Steep Slopes:

Heavy excavation and earthworks on the site's steep terrain risk causing slope instability and landslip hazards that could impact lower-lying national park terrain.

33. Destruction of Local Biodiversity Corridors:

This site acts as a critical stepping- stone corridor for avian and canopy-dwelling species moving through Ku-ring-gai. Slicing this corridor apart isolates wildlife populations.

34. Inadequate Biodiversity Offset Strategy:

The developer's reliance on purchasing distant biodiversity offsets does nothing to remedy the direct, localized ecological destruction occurring by this developer in Killara.

35. Encroachment on Riparian Zones:

Uncontrolled runoff during the long demolition and construction phase threatens local creek lines feeding directly into the Middle Harbour catchment (Shot Machine Creek and Gordon Creek, through the historic Seven Little Australians Park into Middle Harbour).

36. Siltation and Pollution Risks to National Park Flora:

Construction dust and chemical residue from heavy masonry works will settle over the adjacent national park canopy, suffocating rare native flora species. It will also impact on Swain Garden, Wombin Reserve, which are community amenities, as well as home gardens.

Category D: Traffic, Infrastructure & High Density

38. Gross Overdevelopment Out of Step with Local Character:

A large, high-density institutional complex being built in an established, R2 low-density residential zone destroys the local leafy character and amenity of Ku-ring-gai. The views of the complex as submitted by the developer do not demonstrate the size of the development and impact on the surrounding area.

39. Unrealistic Traffic Generation Modelling:

The developer's traffic reports drastically underestimate the actual daily vehicle movements of shift-changing staff, nursing specialists, medical officers, medical and catering deliveries, and visiting families. This impact will contribute to traffic issues already experienced by local residents with the increase in traffic over recent years and gridlock regularly experienced.

40. Inadequate On-Site Parking Provision:

Under-sizing the on-site parking spaces will force staff and visitors to park illegally or overflow onto the already narrow, lanes of Stanhope Road.

41. Heavy Construction Vehicle Gridlock:

The years-long construction timeline will see hundreds of heavy semi-trailers and concrete trucks squeezing down Stanhope Road, damage the road surface. The surfaces of our roads have already been affected over many years by a constant stream of construction vehicles.

42. Strain on Local Water and Sewage Infrastructure:

The existing local utility, water, and sewage networks are not built to absorb a sudden, high-density institutional surge of this magnitude.

43. Visual Bulk and Scale Intrusion:

The excessive height and institutional massing of the proposed multi-story blocks will cast significant shadows and completely overlook neighbouring residential backyards. The street maps in the proposal do not address this impact as they only provide vantage points from a few local streets.

44. Pedestrian Safety Risks on Footpath-less Roads:

Stanhope Road lacks continuous, safe pedestrian footpaths. Forcing heavy construction and operational traffic onto a narrow local road shared by elderly pedestrians and local families including dogs and children is a major safety hazard. There are inadequate footpaths to protect pedestrians from these vehicles.

45. Waste Management and Large Truck Manoeuvres:

The site design relies on large, heavy waste collection vehicles executing complex, dangerous multi-point turns on narrow public roads.

46. Loss of Property Amenity and Privacy:

The scale of the western and northern elevations create an oppressive visual barrier that strips surrounding residential properties of their privacy and solar access.

47. Delivery Bay Configurations:

The proximity of commercial loading docks to nearby residential fence lines will subject neighbours to early-morning noise from reverse beepers and heavy hydraulic tailgates.

48. Unresolved Civil Construction Risks:

The extensive excavation required for underground basement parking threatens to disrupt local natural water tables and destabilize adjacent residential foundations.

59. Complete Failure of the Public Interest Test:

A development that ignores local bushfire risks and resident safety, destroys native habitats, gridlocks a single access road, and inadequate community consultation fails the fundamental "public interest" test required for any State Significant Development approval in NSW.