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Director - Social and Infrastructure Assessments
Planning and Assessment
Department of Planning, Industry and Environment
Locked Bag 5022
Parramatta NSW 2124

Dear Sir or Madam

**NEW HIGH SCHOOL IN BUNGENDORE
APPLICATION NO. SSD-14394209**

I refer to the above state-significant development application.

I want a highschool for my kids to attend, I do not want the highschool to be a cramped place, which congests traffic and takes away one of the best features of our town. I am a nurse, a father of young kids and generally pretty busy guy. Yet, here I am writing a protest letter late at night. It seems crazy to me as a health professional that any member of any government at any level would EVER make a choice that removes open, leisure, recreation, exercise space for the whole community, makes it harder to ride or walk or scoot to school, and that gives the highschool kids a small puny playground. All human beings need space to move. Sedentary lifestyle is the plague affecting our entire society from ages 3 years to 93. Choices like these have huge health impacts.

Open spaces are key to mental health. A well flowing traffic plan keeps a community flowing a functioning well, so people feel safe to walk and ride as well as catch buses and drive cars. We need space in our lives, physical, open, free public space that is ALWAYS available, not just sometimes available, but not between certain hours. We need a high school where my kids will have plenty of space, to play, to chat, to wind down and recharge. I don't want my kids cooped up in a cramped school, no thank you. Why do people move to Bungendore? A huge reason is the space, the lack of traffic jams, the fact we have such lovely resources like the Bungendore park to enjoy playing on after school, that you can walk or ride safely. These are the things that matter, and your design, your proposed location takes that away.

Build a high school, but go back to drawing board and find a different location. As a town we deserve better, and you should hold the interests of our community in higher respect than your current site and design does.

I wrote an extensive objection to your initial proposal, and am dismayed to see that you have not addressed the central problem – the school's poor location, and the associated poor outcomes for the community and the school population.

I **object** to the location of the high school on Bungendore Park, for the following reasons:

The selected site is both far too small and is illogically located on Bungendore's main recreational area, Bungendore Park, and surrounded by the historic heart of the village.

The proposed 2.9 hectare site is much less than the 4 hectares stated by the Department of Education (DE) as being the minimum for a regional high school. The location and size not only mean the loss of the most important green space in Bungendore, as recognized in Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional Council's (QPRC) Bungendore Structure Plan, which states that *Bungendore Park is the primary recreation facility in Bungendore*; the size does not allow for any satisfactory expansion due to increased enrolments.

The proposed 450 enrolment figure disregards the expanded drawing zone that now includes Tarago-Bungendore Road to Collector Road and Taylor's Creek Road, Mt Fairy Road and Western Leg Road (Tarago). The well documented residential developments in and around Bungendore, including the newly opened Elmgrove estate and two further residential developments in Bywong and Sutton, both in the school's drawing area, will dramatically impact on enrolment numbers.

Information obtained under a Government Information (Public Access Act) application indicates that the DE anticipates student numbers will reach 478 in 2026, 511 in 2031 and 566 in 2036. Such is the expected increase that the local Member stated on local radio that the school would *accommodate more than 700 students...down the track*.

DE's response to the anticipated increase is to reduce both the size and number of buildings and is relying on the very small Area K (September 2022 site map) to provide room for *Possible Future Expansion*. In reality the only option will be to occupy more of Bungendore Park or increase the number of storeys or both. Either option will mean the further loss of community space and a subsequent negative social impact and a greater impact on the surrounding historic precinct.

The September 2022 site map also includes Area F, *Games Courts*, that seem to be merely two basketball courts in size. One might rightly ask: where is the playground, where is the sports training area and where is the space for the students to relax? Or does the DE plan to annex even more of Bungendore Park to make up for the lack of space? If so, it seems highly likely that the community will be denied access to this vital community space during every school day and this exclusion may also apply when school teams are training on the park before and/or after school hours.

The overuse of the park for school activities will almost certainly lead to a rapid deterioration of the playing surface and, if the DE sees the park as Queanbeyan Palerang Council (QPRC) land, it is council and, ultimately, the rate payers who will be responsible for repairs. Overriding this potential expense is the matter of insurance, will QPRC's premiums rise? Will QPRC be liable for injuries sustained by community users arising from damage to the grounds? Each scenario will again impact QPRC'S financial position and result in further pressure to raise rates.

The threat of further encroachment into Bungendore Park and the expansion of the palisade fencing, a feature of all DE schools, and the likely declaration that the school and the Agriculture Plot (that is subject to flood!) are *Inclosed Land* will further discourage community use of what little will remain of the park.

Issues such as community access and the responsibility of the grounds used by the school must be addressed.

Nothing illustrates the ad hoc nature of this project than that staff, student and visitor parking could not be accommodated within the site, because it's too small! Unlike most other schools, Bungendore High School's parking will be entirely outside the school grounds. It appears that the parking will occupy both sides of Turallo Terrace for the entire length of Bungendore Park. This will inevitably lead to major traffic congestion that will affect local through traffic and parents and buses dropping children to the high school, Bungendore Public School and Bungendore Pre-school.

Bungendore Pre-school has just received NSW Government funding to increase its accommodation by three rooms and 60 places, again this will mean more congestion before and after school. One must ask whether an accurate traffic plan has been developed. The chaos and potential for accidents that may result if the current parking proposal comes to fruition suggests that such a plan has not been conducted or if it was it was fleeting at best or, worse, ignored.

The traffic increase that the current location the attendant risks to pedestrians in the immediate area is underscored by an email sent to parents by the Before and After School provider regarding their continued service. It reads, *To ensure the future of our Service, the Bungendore Scouts have been supporting us to move our Service to the new Scout Hall. Unfortunately, we are unable to go ahead with the request for a Service Approval to operate the Country kids Club from the Scout Hall. Several issues have come up in particular the risk assessment conducted for the access from the Scout Hall to the school with the route changes when the build for the High School commences.*

The NSW State budget reveals that Bungendore's high school will cost \$71 million. In comparison the new high school in Jerrabomberra is very interesting from a value-for-money perspective it is being built on 4.5 hectares and is intended to accommodate 500-550 students at a cost of \$57 million.

One must ask if the Bungendore proposal is in any way cost effective and whether it will meet the expectations of those of us who believe that Bungendore should have a high school that will genuinely meet the needs of the students and wider community alike.

In the development stage of the high school NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (DPIE) conducted a search and assessment process to find an appropriate site for the new school. Several sites were short listed and an offer to purchase the preferred site was made to the owner.

However, on 15 June 2020 Geoff Waterhouse from DE contacted DPIE with the inexplicable request that, *Can we please put a hold on the Bungendore property process until further notice.* No further explanation was given other than a follow-up email that stated, *The Bungendore project has taken a significant change in direction. The preferred site has swung towards the Mick Sherd oval [Bungendore Park] and SINSW has and continues to engage with council and the Deputy Premier, both supporting the oval as the preferred site.*

This decision was made despite DPIE's recommendation, following a survey of publicly-owned land undertaken at the same time, that concluded that Bungendore Park (the proposed site) was *not suitable* for various reasons, including *insufficient land area and student safety concerns.*

The obvious result of DE's disregard of DPIE's recommendations is what we face now, an ill-conceived plan, an unsuitable site, significant negative social impacts, detracting from the historic centre and an ever-worsening educational future for the children of Bungendore and surrounds.

The only solution is for DE to admit its error and ask DPIE to re-open negotiations with the owner of the preferred site or any or of the other suitable sites identified by DPIE. In doing so our children will have a built for purpose school that will allow for the known future expansion of the town and our community will retain its most valuable civic space and have its historic precinct protected.

I have not, and no associate of mine, has made any political donation to any person in the two years preceding this submission.

Find a different location and build our children a school that meets their needs, and lets us keep our park.

Yours faithfully,

Damian Hursthouse, father of two kids.