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Director
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Re: Exhibition of Amended State Significant Development Application
New High School in Bungendore
Application No. SSD-14394209

SECTION 1: General Response to Amended BHS Plan

Thank you for this opportunity to have input into a major project which could “re-arrange the face” of this lovely old town of ours.

I object to the Bungendore High School Proposal, Application No. SSD-14394209, for the following reasons:

The problem with this plan for Bungendore High School is that *no actual planning took place*. That is why the Department of Education continues to struggle to attain support and approval for this development.

The concept of wholistic planning has been completely ignored in favour of piece-meal, ad hoc development. The result is that, every time a new problem with the design is revealed, in the ensuing scramble to solve the problem there is another negative knock-on effect, until for example we end up with a shambles of a high school on the playground of the local primary school, thus depriving the primary students of outdoor play areas, and tying up Bungendore Park as a de facto schoolground.

Wholistic Planning considers all aspects of design and social needs before settling on a proposal. This did not happen with regards to the Majara St./Gibraltar St./Turrallo Terrace site, and the Department of Education is not the only one paying the price: we residents are suffering as well.

Documents received from the Department of Planning and Environment via FOI in September 2021 revealed that Planning had selected a site for BHS at “Ashby”, Bungendore, and was advanced in its due diligence process as late as mid-May 2020. Secrecy surrounds the change of site from Ashby to “Mick Sherd Oval” (more accurately known as Bungendore Park.)

While I agree with the Department of Planning and Environment's assessment of Ashby as preferred site for BHS, I have no personal interest in championing it and believe that there are other greenfields sites equally suitable.

My main objections to the BHS SSDA, including amendments, are:

1. The Department of Education has ignored the overwhelming majority of submissions to the SSDA which criticised the chosen site and is forging ahead with its original plans to build in the centre of Bungendore, rather than taking the more sensible direction and re-visiting the site selection process.

2. In August 2020, John Barilaro promised that Bungendore High School would open in January 2023, so the Department has made another disappointing decision which is to situate a temporary high school on the playground of Bungendore Public School, effectively halving the available playing space for 500+ primary children. This badly affects both primary and high school students, neither of whom will have adequate outdoor space for recreation, sport, fitness, and well-being. Parents are justifiably upset. By changing the high school site, such problems would be eliminated.

3. Parking problems raised by many submissions have not been satisfactorily addressed. Many of the current parking places for the Primary School on Gibraltar Street and Majara Street will be lost. The informal parking at Bungendore Railway Station is already filled to capacity at peak times, as is the Bungendore Park carpark.

Provision of extra 90 degree parking places on Turallo Terrace will:

- replace wide green nature strips with concrete, in contravention of a QPRC policy designed to decrease the Heat Island effect in Bungendore (see QPRC Urban Forest Strategy 2022),
- cause inconvenience and disruption to residents on the northern side of Turallo Terrace, none of whom have been consulted about this plan,
- create an even more dangerous traffic scenario outside Bungendore Pre-School, Abbeyfield House (seniors' accommodation), Bungendore Scout Hall and the High School,
- cause the removal of even more trees (also in contravention of the Urban Forest Strategy.)

The problem that the parking is slated to be constructed on Council land, not land that has been compulsorily acquired, is not addressed in the amended plan.

4. Traffic congestion issues raised by many submissions have not been satisfactorily addressed. Much-increased traffic volumes, coupled with the proposed 90 degree parking on both sides of Turallo Terrace, will create a death-trap for the pre-schoolers and parents. A recent Bungendore Public School newsletter referred to a "near-miss" outside the school; the chance of that happening will rise when both primary and high school children are arriving at and leaving the schools. Bungendore's wide streets with both parallel and central parking are dangerous for children and other vulnerable pedestrians. No consideration for our special circumstances is included in the BHS plans. All these threats to safety would be avoided if a suitable site that really works was selected instead.

5. Size and scale of some Bungendore High School buildings have been reduced, yet capacity has remained the same. Room for expansion is minimal, yet we know that the school will need to grow because this town has become Nappy Valley due to untrammelled growth since the early 2000's. (Note that Bungendore has grown significantly, with a 43% growth in population over the

last five years.) My concern is that, with a restricted site such as the one proposed, the only way to grow will be upwards thus causing a greater negative visual impact on the heritage civic precinct surrounding the park. The alternative is for the school to gradually steal what is left of the park. Either outcome is bad and the only way to accommodate those future teenagers is to provide them with a school that has ample room for growth, and ample space for burning off that teenage energy....which this site manifestly lacks. And if the Department of Education is determined to pursue an agriculture stream in the curriculum, they will need a suitably large piece of land for that. Use of the Common is not suitable; it is far too small and it floods regularly.

6. Is there an Indigenous grave on the BHS site? There's only one way to find out, and that is to do a PROPER search. Carlo Bellinato informed me that a GPR search has been done and no evidence of a grave was found. I told him no-one had asked me or other people who mentioned the grave in our submissions where the site is and he confirmed that no locals had been consulted. Either the Department of Education weren't really trying to find it, or they were trying very hard *not* to find it, because the presence of a grave could be a game-changer for their plans.

7. The campaign to build an Abbeyfield House for Bungendore has been long and hard-fought. The Committee was formed in 2012 (I am a founding member but am not representing Abbeyfield Bungendore Committee in this submission, these are my personal views) and had been promised a site in the Anglican Church grounds a few years later. Plans to sub-divide off the site were dropped when the church withdrew the land offer. Back to the drawing board for our dedicated committee of volunteers! Then after amalgamation, QPRC offered 4-6 Majara Street for an Abbeyfield House. Architect's plans were drawn up, reports written, and a DA was lodged in mid-2020. Then along comes Mr. John Barilaro with his plan to "deliver" Bungendore High School on Majara Street and there goes the Abbeyfield site again. QPRC has now offered a very narrow site on a paper road just above the flood zone, between the new Scout Hall and the heritage-listed Catholic School (now the Pre-School). There are many problems with this site: the new \$80K bitumen Scout Hall carpark takes up much of the site and will have to be demolished, and there is very little room for a new one; Turallo Terrace will be a very busy thoroughfare if Majara St. is closed and BHS built; brand new plans have to be produced. But all these problems would evaporate if a proper high school site was chosen.

8. Two major NSW Government announcements in the past month have not been taken into account in the amended plan, even though the plan was created by the NSW Government. Bungendore Pre-School is set to double in size thanks to the NSW Government Start Strong Capital Works Grants Program, providing approximately 60 more desperately-needed places (currently there is a waiting list of over 100) for local children and doubling the parking requirements adjacent to the BHS. And the NSW Department of Natural resources Access Regulator has done a back-flip and reversed its support for several planned large housing developments, due to uncertainty around the reliability of the required water supply which is based on groundwater. (see Regional Independent, 14/9/22, p.4, "*Lack of secure water supply places greenfield urban development in bungendore in 'limbo'.*") This means that QPRC's Bungendore Structure Plan 2018 -2048 which was quite recently adopted by the Council, has to be re-written. A review of the Structure Plan could offer opportunities for a change of site for BHS which the whole community can agree upon. Adoption of an alternative site would immediately end all the tortuous processes that the Department of Education is bogged down in.

9. The amended plan remains totally blind to the heritage values of almost 200 years-old-Bungendore town centre. It is clear that the NSW Government regards heritage and history as very minor considerations.

10. The pandemic has proven the incalculable worth of urban outdoor space to the physical and

mental health and well-being of our citizens. Destruction of Bungendore's only park, strategically and aesthetically placed in the centre of the old town, would be an act of vandalism.

11. “Removal of community facilities”: the amended plan has deleted the Department of Education's proffered “sweetener” to the Bungendore community, which came in the form of new community assets located in the school grounds. We didn't want them anyway; we'd rather keep our valued assets, all of which were fought for by the community and in the case of our pool, partly funded by the community. Put the school somewhere else!

12. Great news: reduced tree removal! However, it turns out that means that instead of killing 76 trees, they will kill 75. But they will also remove more trees on Turallo Terrace where carpark provision is now planned.

SECTION 2: Response to the Social Impact Assessment (SIA) amendments

The amended plan no longer includes community facilities. There is now deep concern in the community that the development of the high school will not only deprive us of highly-valued, long-held community assets, but is offering no replacements. At this point, QPRC has made no reliable

offers to provide a new library, a new community centre or pool.

The social impact of placing a modern high school campus on this site is very high. My friends and I feel as though the Department of Education, by manipulating a small section of the community (children aged 12 to 18 and their parents), is holding the rest of the community to ransom. What is more, members of the community who will directly and immediately benefit from having a new high school have been indoctrinated into believing that if they do not accept the offer of a high school on the proposed, contentious, Bungendore Park/Majara Street site, Bungendore will not get a high school. It's no wonder that this project has torn our town apart.

One piece of community infrastructure, a high school, is being touted as “more important” than all the other community assets it is expected to replace. Promises to replace those assets are limp and seem baseless at this point. We know that QPRC faces huge financial challenges, and we have only vague promises of compensation from the Department.

That is bad enough, but the fact that we are expected to take the Department of Education's word that “*this is the only available site,*” when we know perfectly well that the site selection process has been rail-roaded for political purposes, makes the whole situation farcical.

The presence or otherwise of the grave of an Indigenous person on the BHS site is still contentious. The Department of Education's attempts to find the site were ineffectual (and a waste of precious funding); a proper search is required.

The Department of Education still fails to understand the current values of Bungendore Park and surrounds to residents; I listed them in my previous submission (October 2021), as:

- open green space for sports fixtures and many kinds of spontaneous recreation,
- preservation of our architectural and cultural history
- safety for children and other pedestrians

- the convenience of the clustering of primary school and pre-school, playing fields, public pool, public library, community centre and railway station all on one central site, within easy walking distance for locals and visitors of all ages.