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Submission from UNSW Tiggers Parents' Committee to TfNSW re: Modification Report: SSI-6042 MOD 4, Stop changes – High Street, Randwick

We welcome the valuable contribution of the CBD and South East Light Rail project (CSELR) to UNSW and the broader community. However, in order to minimise adverse impacts on the UNSW Tiggers Honeypot Childcare Centre ('the Centre') we respectfully request the formal consideration of the following points regarding the proposed access road through the Centre located on Lot 1 DP330632 and Lot 1 DP60283 as detailed in Transport of NSW's *MODIFICATION REPORT: SSI-6042 MOD 4, Stop changes – High Street, Randwick*:

- the design proposed may benefit from enhanced cost and space efficiencies relating to site specific constraints, contexts and requirements;
- reducing impact of construction activities (noise, dust, vibration) on young children;
- reducing impact on quality and reputation of the Centre as a national leader in early childhood and sustainability education with regard to its award-winning 'teaching garden'.

1. Background

The Award winning¹ UNSW Tiggers Honeypot Childcare Centre was established in 1995. Research conducted at the Centre makes a significant contribution to Australian educational scholarship and the Centre has been cited in the Productivity Commission's Report for its high quality services.² Tiggers is the centre of choice for UNSW staff³ selected for its reputation for excellence in curriculum development and environmental education. Activities and achievements associated directly with the Garden have been presented at Early Education conferences at both national and

¹ The Centre and its staff have received numerous awards and grants since incorporating the Garden into its curriculum: *National Inspirational Teacher 2013*; *Australian Family 2014* – State Winner (Early Childhood Educator of the Year); *Early Childhood Australia 2014*-Leadership Scholarship; *UNSW Excellence Awards 2014* – Sustainability; *Landcare Grant 2015* - composting system.

² Australian Productivity Commission, *Childcare and Early Childhood Learning*, Inquiry Report No. 73, Canberra 2014.

³ Many strategic employments at UNSW have involved packages that included a position at this Centre (of all the UNSW Childcare Centre options) for their children, selected for its established reputation for excellence in curriculum development and environmental education.

international levels since 2010⁴ as a leading example of creative outdoor curriculum, building resilience and community engagement. Related qualitative research has been cited in scholarly publications.⁵

The Centre's Garden was gifted to the Centre in 2006 from the University (having previously been a community garden) to 'ensure that the garden space will remain for the benefit of the children and assist in their early childhood environmental learning' (Attachment 1). Since then, the staff and parents of the Centre have dedicated hundreds of hours and invested significant funds to develop and maintain the Garden - it is where the current 107 children and 25 staff spend much of their day, joining with the thousands of children from previous years and future years.

The Centre's curriculum connects closely to the several educational assets of the Garden that teach children about sustainability, physical development and well-being through resilience. Consequently, the Garden is one of the most important aspects of our children's educational experience at the Centre, using it in all weather and at all times of day. The Garden consists of numerous native Australian edible species, and four raised garden beds in which the children plant seasonal herbs and vegetables; all of which are tended, harvested and eaten by the children through their own cooking activities as well as in meals prepared for the children by the Centre's cook. The children learn about life cycles and how to care for animals through the curriculum connected directly to the five chickens housed in the Garden. The children collect the eggs for their own cooking. The Garden is also used for social events for UNSW such as morning tea fundraising events; grandparent events; Sorry Day; Naidoc Week; International Mud day and the annual Family Feast. The Garden is also visited by the children of the other UNSW Early Years Centres, to highlight its integral role in the pedagogy of the Centre. The development of the Centre consciously prioritises the Garden over other facility developments due to its extensive and recognised educational, social and environmental benefits. The Garden itself is now also Award-winning⁶ and contributes significantly to the reputation for excellence held by the Centre.

We are concerned that the access road in its proposed location presents substantial negative impact on the reputation and experience of the Centre. The Garden is central to the scholarly-cited and award-winning curriculum as well as to the experience of children at both this Centre and other UNSW childcare centres. The unique and invaluable 'teaching garden' is the focal point of the entire Centre, its development plans, curriculum planning and reputation for exceptional early education service.

We are concerned that the proposed access road presents a number of risks and hazards that are unnecessary, expensive and avoidable. Construction would create increased noise, dust, vibration and other disturbances that would adversely affect the children at the Centre. Construction hours

⁴ *International Conference, Intergenerational Action on a Global Scale* 2015; *Early Childhood Australia Biennial Conferences* 2014; 2012; 2010; *Centre for Equity and Innovation in Early Childhood* 2013; 2011; *Social justice in Early Childhood Education* 2014; 2013; 2012; *Educators Day Out* 2015.

⁵ 'Contributors to quality long day care' – Fenech; Harrison; Press and Sumsion *Programming and Planning in early Childhood Settings* Arthur; Beecher; Death; Dockett; Farmer; *Leadership: Context and Complexities in Early Childhood Education*; *Talkin up and Speakin out: Aboriginal and multicultural voices in Early Childhood* Guigni & Mundine; *Early Childhood Australia – Research in Practice* Cheeseman and Feenach.

⁶ *Randwick Council Garden Award 2014* – Highly Commended (Best School Garden); *Randwick Council Garden Award 2015* 3rd Place (Best School Garden).

between 8am to 5pm corresponds almost exactly with the opening hours of the Centre (8.15am-6pm). We would be interested to see an alternative construction schedule that reduces the WHS risks to staff and children at the Centre given that they spend the majority of their day outside in the immediate vicinity of the proposed construction and operation of the access road.

2. Proposed Design

The CSELR proposed access road for residential addresses SP9261 (42 High Street), SP22052 (44 High Street), Lot 2 DP234000 (46 High Street) and Kenvale College Lot 110 DP836801 (36-38 High Street) is through Lot 1 DP330632 (Centre's western section of the Garden) and Lot 1 DP60283 (eastern section of the Garden and Childcare Facility), would divide the Garden reducing the space to approximately one third of its current space.

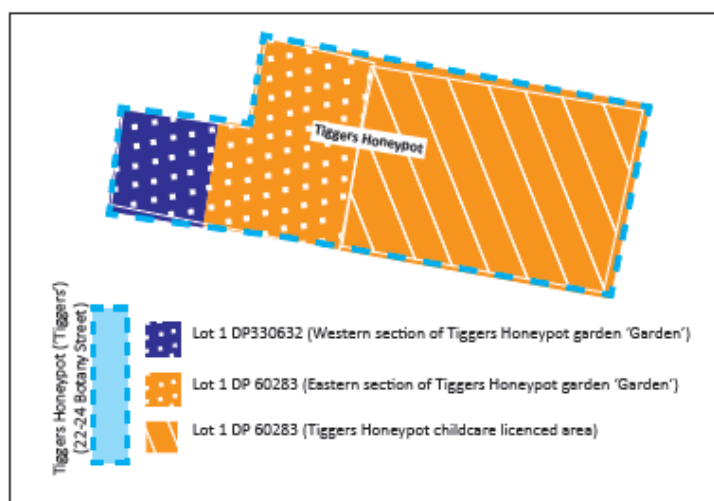


Image A: Illustration of Tiggers Honeypot and related Lot and DPs.

A review of the proposed design indicates the potential additional benefits to the outcome of the following input (which may not yet have been considered):

- i. Site restrictions re: operational requirements of Centre as a childcare facility;
- ii. Detail, cadastre and level run – survey;
- iii. On-site geotech assessment re: implications for construction on sandy soils;
- iv. Level difference between Centre and adjacent properties (Lot 2 DP234000 is 1.6m (approx.) level difference from Lot 1 DP60283 (closest to Centre), and 0.7m (approx.) level difference at the most western connection of SP9261 to Lot 1 DP330632. (See Attachment 2);
- v. Reinforcement or rebuilding of current retaining wall (plus monitoring during and after construction) between the Centre and adjacent properties noting especially impacts on the structure of the Centre's building;
- vi. Traffic and transport assessment (use of proposed access road by College staff and students and whole-of-network impact)
- vii. Environmental assessment including effects of noise, dust and vibration impacts from construction and operation on human health (including children at the Centre with specific

- health conditions, such as cancer and other chronic diseases),⁷ and to flora,⁸ fauna, Aboriginal heritage;
- viii. Childcare facility specific fence and security requirements and associated budget for this;
 - ix. Mechanisms to ensure safety of children and staff crossing proposed access road, and budget for associated costs of extra staffing requirements under staff:child ratio regulations for excursions of staff and children across the access road to conduct Garden activities;
 - x. Replacement of mature trees, size, location and timing of replacement garden for loss of existing Garden given extent of development over past decade and daily use in curriculum and associated budget for rapid development of replacement garden to same level as existing Garden including its several features. The hundreds of human hours and financial investment in developing the Garden to its current state adds up to substantial cost, time and effort over a decade and any replacement would need to be high-level and installed in the shortest possible time with the least possible impact on the Centre, the opening hours of which cannot be reduced for such purposes so associated budget costs would necessarily include weekend work;
 - xi. Whether the property at 46 High Street (UNSW student housing - Lot 2 DP234000) has any parking requirements at all given its student residents' existing proximity to University, consider feasibility of replacing current car parking with secure bicycle parking facility and relocation of laundry from behind the building to under it creating more active drying space in the yard;
 - xii. Whether Kenvale College access necessarily goes through existing Garden rather than through the UNSW access driveway Lot 1 DP546495 into the north-east rear section of the Kenvale College where the parking lot is currently situated (Attachment 3);
 - xiii. Whether waste services (garbage truck) necessarily enters access road rather than collect garbage at designated spot on street (as with most collections of apartment buildings) and whether this could be facilitated instead through the connection between UNSW driveway property and the rear of the Kenvale College (Attachment 3);
 - xiv. Mechanism to ensure the ongoing attachment of children to the Garden (who are key stakeholders of this process) who actively use the space in all weather throughout the day;
 - xv. Possibility of using (UNSW owned) Lot 1 DP 15324 as an access road and parking for the residential property Lot 2 DP234000 to minimise impact on the Centre;
 - xvi. Review of residential property access needs from local road standard to relevant driveway access given purpose of properties as housing;
 - xvii. Transparency of timeframe for consultation, construction and operation could improve quality and impact of outcome and avoid unnecessary risks associated with off-site and fast-tracked assessments (notably geotechnical, traffic assessment, road design, health impacts on children and staff).

⁷ The 0-2 year old Room of the Centre in which babies play, eat and sleep several times throughout every day is located closest to the proposed access road.

⁸ The Garden is home to more than 50 species of flora, some of which may be protected under *Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995* (NSW) and *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Cth).

3. Alternate Design

The Parents' Committee have consulted with engineering and planning professionals and experts and have prepared for formal consideration by TfNSW, and UNSW, the attached alternate design that builds on and varies the existing design, overcoming some current issues and minimises adverse impacts to the Centre (Attachment 3). It achieves this principally by avoiding a single access road for all the affected properties and does not divide the garden in two separate areas. This design offers a more practical and commercially sound variation of the current proposed access road with regard to both construction and maintenance.

The key features of the alternate design are as follows (from north to south):

- A. Residential properties 42-44 High Street (SP9261 and SP22052) and Kenvale College (Lot 110 DP836801, 36-38 High Street) would use the existing UNSW access driveway (Lot 1 DP546495) and any land identified by TfNSW and UNSW to create a suitable road width. This section would meet the standard for the College's commercial requirements.
- B. Kenvale College property connects at junction point of existing UNSW access driveway.
- C. Going south from key feature A. the access road would run the western section of the Centre's Garden (Lot 1 DP330632), with minor use of eastern section of the Garden and Centre (Lot 1 DP60283), to link the residential properties 42-44 High Street to existing UNSW access driveway. This road would be to a driveway standard road. The access point to residential properties 42-44 High Street from the Garden would be at the junction point of the Garden where the smallest level difference is located.
- D. The driveway on the Centre's Garden is pushed as west as possible along the boundary of the Garden to maximise the Garden size.
- E. UNSW property 26 Botany Street (Lot 1 DP15324) is used for the access requirements for UNSW residential apartment 46 High Street (Lot 2 DP234000) and remaining space on the land be used as UNSW parking facility.

The key benefits of this design are:

- i. Removes the need to address the approximate 1.6m level difference between Lot 1 DP60283 (Tiggers) and Lot 2 DP234000.
- ii. Removes the vibration impact associated with building the proposed access road and retaining wall on Lot 1 DP60283.
- iii. Minimal construction requirements and fewer complications for access roads.
- iv. Reduces construction impacts on the Centre including noise and vibration due to the construction of the proposed access road/driveway further from the Centre.
- v. No impact to Lot 1 DP 60283 (eastern section of the Garden and building) other than the minor connection to Lot 1 DP330632 (Western section of the Garden) and that the land is maintained for use by the Centre as a Garden.
- vi. Minimal impact to Lot 1 DP330632 (western section of Garden).
- vii. This design meets actual need for access for all properties impacted by the tram stop.
- viii. This design uses UNSW land that is not currently in use for UNSW purposes.
- ix. This design increases parking spaces available for UNSW staff and students.
- x. Reduces the amount of the Garden required for the access road thus retaining maximum ongoing benefits of the Garden for the children, and the Centre's national reputation.

- xi. Removes approximately 1/3 of vehicle access for the impacted residential properties from Arthur Street to Botany Street.
- xii. Reduces operation impacts on the Centre, including reduction of noise due to the access road being moved further from Tiggers facility and lower than the Tiggers facility (access road 26 Botany Street).

4. Consultation

The Parents Committee look forward to a written response to this submission including especially a response to the variation to design contributed here (Attachment 3) which professional engineers and planners with relevant training, experience and proficiency prepared after detailed on-site consideration of various aspects of current proposed design. We welcome the opportunity to discuss further the variations described above and would be happy to make ourselves available to meet/discuss with reasonable notice.

It is important to consult directly with the Director of the Centre and the Parents Committee at least one month ahead of any construction activity including relocation and upgrading of current Garden assets (whichever occurs first) to enable the Centre to document and celebrate the significance of the Garden before a permanent and significant change to it and consequently the Centre as a whole. The Director also needs time to prepare the children for a major adjustment to their daily learning and play space to which they are strongly attached.

We respectfully request to be involved with the decision-making process as the children of the Centre are key stakeholders and in particular that the process take into account and undertake to minimise on them the adverse health, environmental and education impacts of this access road/driveway.

Sincerely,

The Parents Committee (representing 106 parents)
UNSW Tiggers Honeypot Childcare Centre

Attachments

1. Letter from UNSW to the Centre re: Garden, 2006.
2. Property boundary with constraints
3. Alternate Design proposed by Parents' Committee