

**Objection to Forensic Pathology and Coroners Court, Lidcombe**

**Specifically -**

Relocation and expansion of the NSW Health Forensic Pathology service and Coroners Court, including: mortuary and laboratories; counselling rooms; conference facility; forensic administration; courtrooms and staff amenities.

**Attn:**

**Director - Social and Other Infrastructure Assessments, Department of Planning and Environment**

I write to you today to lodge my objection to the proposed relocation and expansion of the NSW Health Forensic Pathology service and Coroners Court.

As a resident of the Botanica community immediately adjacent to the proposed development, I do not believe that - should the project proceed - it is in keeping with what the former Lidcombe Hospital has become – a home to many, many families, Ferguson Lodge (providing permanent homes and respite accommodation for those with spinal cord injury) and a child care facility.

What was once an adjacent hospital – is no more – hence for the project type to be categorised as - Health & Public Service > Hospitals – is a misnomer.

The area has been populated by residential homes for more than 10 years.

There are a number of reasons why this project should not proceed in the location proposed, if at all, when considering the following:

- Risks to Community Safety.
- Traffic & Access.
- Effect on Heritage sites.

**Risks to Community Safety**

I believe that the sanctuary and safety that Botanica has provided countless families and children in this time would be placed in irreparable jeopardy given that by its very nature, a mortuary and Coroners Court would invariably attract individuals and groups that could place the local community at risk.

It is not inconceivable that wrongful deaths caused by murderers, criminal gangs or the acts of terrorism are THE most likely reason a deceased person would be subject to Coronial Court examination and review.

Hence, the likely people drawn to the area, would be associates of these anti-social groups.

In addition, there is also concern for the safety risk to residents of Botanica if Main Avenue is used for the delivery of chemicals for the mortuary and laboratories.

Further, this is a development that is unusual by its nature. Its hours of operation can be 24/7 and, at times, will involve distressed relatives, emergency services and media attention. This is a serious issue for Botanica residents who are concerned about the impact this will have on their residential amenity.

**Traffic & Access**

The Botanica Estate has been designed with a Central Park. It is a popular children's playground within easy walking distance of residents' homes. It is inappropriate to direct traffic to a high profile government facility through a peaceful residential housing estate.

Ferguson Lodge is located within the Botanica Estate. It is the only supported accommodation for people with a spinal cord injury in NSW offering both a permanent home as well as respite accommodation. This development proposal will bring increased traffic to Botanica placing disabled residents at risk.

If the public entry/exit to the new Forensic Pathology and Coroners Court is via Main Avenue, then any visitors heading north will need to find an alternate route through the residential streets of Botanica as Main Avenue only provides an exit southbound onto Joseph Street.

By its very nature, the Coroner's Court will receive clients from across New South Wales. Many of these visitors will be distressed and there is concern that disorientated visitors to the Coroner's Court will be driving through the unfamiliar streets of Botanica Estate, placing residents at risk.

Public entry/exit via Main Avenue is inappropriate because it would compromise road safety and dramatically increase traffic movements throughout Botanica on local, narrow residential streets in a suburb that has been designed for local traffic only.

### **Effect on Heritage sites**

This development proposal disregards the heritage value of Main Avenue, which was the formal entry c1896 to Lidcombe Hospital when Rookwood Asylum was established. It is graded in the *2002 Lidcombe Hospital Site Conservation Management Plan (CMP)* by Godden Mackay Logan as *an element of exceptional significance*.

The avenue of hoop pines and phoenix palms along Main Avenue is also graded *as an element of exceptional significance* in the CMP. Construction of the proposed public entry/exit from Main Avenue, Botanica will require demolition of the historic brickwork and verges and interrupt the streetscape.

The Gatehouse at Botanica on the intersection of Main Avenue and Joseph Street is heritage listed. If Main Avenue becomes the access road for the public car park the intersection of Main Avenue and Joseph Street will become manifestly more dangerous and expose the residents, general public and the Gatehouse to the risk of injury and damage, respectively.

### **Recommendation**

The Mortuary, Pathology Laboratory and the Coroners Court should be constructed in an area where there would be far less impact on residential areas containing families, spinal care accommodation and child care facilities.

A far better location would be a "green field" industrial or mixed use site with ease of access benefits provided by current and future motorways that would also allow for further expansion, but still provide a suitable "safety buffer" away from the general community for the reasons mentioned above.

Yours sincerely,

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