

17th August 2016

Fiza Lam
Botanica, Lidcombe NSW 2141

**Attention: Director – Social and Other Infrastructure Assessments
Department of Planning & Environment
GPO Box 39
Sydney NSW 2001**

**Re: Forensic Pathology and Coroners Court (“Application”)
SSD 16_7545**

I’m writing to object to the above mentioned (**“Application”**) for a proposed Forensic Pathology and Coroners Court (**“Proposed Facility”**) to be located at Main Avenue in the named **“Botanica”** residential area at Lidcombe, NSW. I have outlined the reasons and recommend a number of changes to the Application.

Currently I am living in Botanica less than 500 metres from the proposed development and I have never received any correspondence from the Department of Planning and Environment or the Department of Health, NSW regarding this matter. Everything under this project has been very secretive, there is no open and transparent discussion / dialogue between the Department of Health, Department of Planning and Environment and the residents who are living next to the Proposed Facility. This development was brought to my attention by a fellow neighbor. No input or feedback other than through this submission process has been available to the majority of the Botanica residents.

Further to my above point, this *Application* has been classified as a State Significant Development (SSD) which I understand bypasses the Cumberland Council, residents and any heritage listings recorded by The Office of Environment & Heritage. I also note that staff (both the team leader I spoke to and the planning staff) at The Office of Environment & Heritage were not aware at the time of any such development proposal impacting their heritage listings at the Lidcombe Hospital Site.

Residents (including myself) are very concerned the potential traffic and risk that the *Proposed Facility* is being developed in a purpose built residential area with a child care facility but with public access proposed using all three access roads to Botanica; namely Main Avenue from Joseph Street, Main Avenue from Weeroona Road and Botanica Drive from Joseph Street.

Main Avenue, including the verges, flower beds and trees will be seriously impacted by the *Proposed Facility*. It is heritage listed but has been completely ignored by the both Departments showing they have undermined the significance of the place (it is deemed to be of exceptional heritage significance as it was the original ‘avenue’ entry into the old hospital and was preserved intact). I’ve included an extract from The Office of Environment & Heritage website summarising its significance.

Further, with the current design of the *Proposed Facility*, the public entry and exit (both vehicles and pedestrian) are from Main Avenue, Botanica, visitors to the court and morgue will compete with local traffic through Botanica’s residential streets.

I understand from the *Application* and its supporting documentation that this will be a 24 hour facility with scope for future expansion. Appendix D, Traffic and Parking Assessment, does not adequately address the traffic and associated safety risks on our community. Streets in Botanica are not set up for traffic to accommodate a

“significant state development” which are effectively commercial / industrial facilities with increased public traffic; in the narrow Botanica streets which are as a result of maximising the residential footprint by the developer of the Lidcombe Hospital site, Australand/Frasers.

From the residents that attended a community consultation meeting on Saturday 2 July 2016, I understand that at the meeting, a proposal was shown to build a new State Coroner’s court and morgue in Main Avenue, Lidcombe. This includes having a street address of Main Ave, Lidcombe, as well as the Public Car Park entrance and exit from Main Ave. The participants advised me that the presenters were not aware of:

- The Botanica Masterplan which covers Main Ave and the old Lidcombe Hospital site
- The Heritage listing that covers both sides of Main Ave, including its grass area, verges and brickwork.

It was also noted that the presenters identified that the *Proposed Facility’s* staff (along with trucks, police and others) entrance was off Weeroona Road specifically separated from the public entrance for safety reasons. I am unclear why the staffs need to be safe but the residents do not need to be safe, this suggests that Botanica Residents will be at risk as a result of this facility.

I want to confirm that Botanica is a peaceful residential estate with families, parks, playground and Ferguson lodge - for residents with a spinal cord injury, who use these quiet streets and footpaths for their wheelchair, especially Main Avenue to access Joseph Street.

My major concerns with the development are:

Traffic & Access

- The current proposal will significantly increase the traffic flow through Botanica and this area never intent and only accommodates for local traffic, not for any significant increases in the broader public driving through its streets.
- On leaving the *Proposed Facility* only southbound traffic can leave with less impacting traffic flow in Botanica as the *Proposed Facility* is on the Joseph Street exit (Left Hand Turn only); therefore cars exiting the *Proposed Facility* wishing to travel northbound will need to travel through Botanica’s narrow streets.
- Appendix D - The SEARS Traffic & Parking Assessment assumes that the visitors to the facility will diligently use Botanica Drive to exit the facility when heading north and the volume analysis does not consider impacts on other streets. Visitors are ordinary people and when they are heading north normal people will most likely take the easiest, quickest and straightest route which will be Betty Cuthbert Drive; which is the road directly in front of the public car park exit of the *Proposed Facility*. Also, Betty Cuthbert Drive has a number of bends and is narrower than Botanica Drive with a significant number of resident’s cars that park on the street (like Botanica Drive). Pepper Tree Road would also be an alternative route especially when drivers realise on approach to Joseph Street that they cannot turn right. Furthermore, it must be remembered that visitors will be infrequent drivers to the area and not accustomed to the children and people exercising/walking along the local

streets.

- The proposed main exit road for northbound traffic is Botanica Drive. This road is narrow. Residents, visitors and public should have free access wishing to cross the road and access the park – increases in the volume of traffic to that street will significantly increase the chances of traffic accidents, especially vulnerable are the children and families residing on the Western side of Botanica.
- Further, on Botanica Drive, cars often park on both sides and with oncoming traffic vehicles need to wait, or move left in-between parked cars (especially when the 925 bus is oncoming). There are often near misses as drivers often take a chance and drive quickly to get through without pulling over to avoid oncoming traffic.
- Main Avenue (Weeroona Road entry/exit) will be used by the public wanting an eastbound exit, or for those visiting from the south which can come off Weeroona Road. Until you drive past the Church Main Avenue, this road is just as narrow as Botanica Drive and has a sharp continuous “blind bend” to the left on entry; this has the same safety issues as Botanica Drive, plus the additional risk for parents and children attending the child care facility entrance on Main Avenue.
- Further, pedestrians, traffic and cars parking on Main Avenue will increase once (Australand/Frasers) the current developments on Main Avenue and Brooks circuit completed.
- Appendix D of the *Application* does not mention the expansion of the *Proposed Facility* into the future, including additional courts, or other potential future developments on available land for example the Mineral Resources Building, and therefore any additional future public parking requirements and the subsequent impacts on the flow of traffic.
- Parking overflow is highly likely on local Botanica roads not designed to accommodate such volumes of visitors particularly for high profile court cases, nor can you assume that visitors will park only in the public car park; they will park on Main Avenue. This problem can be easily observed on every Sunday when people are coming to the church not just Main Avenue, Botanica Drive, Sussex Street and all streets will be full of cars.
- The siding coming off Joseph Street is currently sufficient for the site, however will not be long enough when there is significant increase in traffic coming from the north, which will impact the flow and safety of traffic travelling at 80kms per hour as they pass. Appendix D of the *Application* does not assess the future traffic impacts of this.
- The traffic lights at Botanica Drive and Joseph Street change quickly and are only just coping with local traffic as it currently backs up on Botanica Drive.
- Appendix D1 Traffic and Parking Assessment in the conclusion states that there were 8 options, but only one of these appears in the *Application*. The other 7 should be explored and explained to the residents.

Heritage Impact

- The access to Main Avenue for the *Proposed Facility* will destroy completely

of the heritage listed areas, include brickwork guttering through the creation of a new second entrance for exiting traffic to the *Proposed Facility*; this will require the removal of vegetation and possibly one of the listed trees.

- Removal of a number medical officers residences, I'm unclear why these are not heritage listed or of historical significance as they were constructed in the same period as my own property (1930-1940) which is heritage listed (why is there a significant difference in treatment in just 500 metres).
- Residents have already paid a premium to Austral/Frasers and to the Auburn (Cumberland) council to maintain the heritage aspects of the area.

Impact of infrastructure on Botanica Residents

- The plans show pictures of removing our Botanica sign in which just goes to show how little respect are being held for this community.
- We understand that this is a 24 X 7 facility and will result in constant traffic flows in such a quiet local streets, and potential disruption overnight and into the early hours of the morning to the peaceful nature of the neighborhood.
- In light of the safety concerns of the *Proposed Facility's* staff at the community consultation meeting on Saturday 2 July 2016, there is no mention in the *Application* of any safety considerations for the residents of Botanica or the greater Lidcombe/Regents Park area.
- Botanica is already next to public infrastructure, industrial facilities and having a high profile and risk related facility, with access now for the first time directly via Botanica will significantly encroach on the wellbeing and safety of the residents of the Lidcombe/Botanica/Regents Park area. This infrastructure includes the Rookwood Cemetery (East Street), Sydney University (East Street), NSW Forensic & Analytical Science Services and other related government facilities (Weeroona Road), NSW TAFE (East Street), Optus facilities (East Street), Sydney Rail and Freight facilities running 24 hours everyday of the week (Weeroona Road, and adjacent), a high voltage substation on Rookwood Road and last but not least the Juniperina Juvenile Justice Centre which will soon become a female prison that committed serious crime (Joseph Street and Rookwood Road).
- I also believe the submission is completely insensitive and ignore the Asian community. A number of residents have raised their concerns at the last community meeting, whose values and beliefs are already challenged living close to Rookwood Cemetery (only acceptable as it is just far enough away, not accessible directly in Botanica and on another street). Having a morgue directly opposite residents is an affront to their beliefs and some residents' indicate their bedrooms can see the Morgue everyday. They were distressed because it is against their social belief and is disappointed that Australia being a multi cultural country has little respect for the citizen with different background.
- Ferguson Lodge is a spinal cord facility and residents use the current roads and footpaths; their continued safety does not appear to be addressed at all.

Conclusion

The *Application* should be reconsidered to:

- Have proper engagement with the Botanica residents, the greater Lidcombe and Regents Park residents to address their concerns
- Change the positioning and access of the *Proposed Facility* to:
 - be located on Weeroona Road at the former Mineral Resources Building site which has easy access to Joseph Street, Weeroona Road, East Street for traffic from Strathfield (it should be noted that the Weeroona Road/Joseph Street intersection, was previously sufficient when the Mineral Resources Building was operational)
 - comply with zoning requirements, I understand that the proposed site is zoned R3 which excludes the use of morgues
 - address the items listed above in the impact/amenity section
- notwithstanding the prior point, on the location of the *Proposed Facility*:
 - the *Proposed Facility* should be set back off Main Avenue, to respect the community's beliefs which will, in turn, protect the cottages that are of historical significance; *and*
 - All public access points both pedestrian, motor vehicle entry/exit and parking should be from Weeroona Road, just like the *Proposed Facility's* staff entrance (car parks can still be separated) to address the local Botanica traffic and residents safety issues and items as set out above
 - Access to the Proposed Facility need to be stopped from Botanica.
- Heritage listed areas on Main Avenue and the cottages should be strictly protected, especially when there is sufficient land available on the proposed site, as set out in the concerns above.

Last but not least, being the Department of Health one of their visions is helping NSW people to stay healthy ironically in this submission they have completely ignored the safety and put Botanica residents at risk. They appear to be treating Botanica residents as second-class citizens over their staff because their staff safety comes first (as outline above). They have shown their disrespect to the significance of the heritage site. Furthermore, NSW claims to be multicultural NSW and has a responsibility for promoting community harmony however in this submission the Department has demonstrated a disrespect of multicultural beliefs.

The ***Application*** sets out a proposed capital investment value of \$83,240,000 the proposed changes recommended above covering the relocation or change of entrance to Weeroona Road, and saving of heritage buildings and the heritage sites should be an immaterial cost of this "State Significant Development".

Yours faithfully,

Fiza Lam

Extract from The Office of Environment & Heritage website:

**“Lidcombe Hospital Precinct
Item details**

Name of item:	Lidcombe Hospital Precinct
Other name/s:	Rookwood Asylum for the Aged and Infirm; Rookwood State Hospital and Asylum for Men; Lidcombe State Hospital & Home; Rookwood Boys Reformatory & Model Farm
Type of item:	Complex / Group
Group/Collection:	Health Services
Category:	Hospital
Location:	Lat: -33.8837079954 Long: 151.0449011390
Primary address:	Joseph Street, Lidcombe, NSW 2141
Parish:	Liberty Plains
County:	Cumberland
Local govt. area:	Auburn
Local Aboriginal Land Council:	Gandangara

Set out below is the statement of significance.

Statement of significance

Lidcombe Hospital is of outstanding significance in the history of NSW health care, operating for over a century from 1893-1995 as a major State Asylum for the aged and infirm, then an important State teaching hospital specialising in geriatric care and rehabilitation. Lidcombe Hospital became a leader in geriatric care and rehabilitation practices in the 20th Century. The expansion, then the closure, of the hospital reflects the changes in State and Commonwealth government health care policies over the twentieth century. The site has significance for its association with innovative medical practitioners, specialists in geriatric health care, nurses and the local community for over a century. As the site of the Media Village, the place also has associations with the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games, which provided short-term accommodation for approximately 5,000 visiting journalists.

The precinct contains an exceptional and rare collection of fine, intact architecture and landscapes of the Victorian, Edwardian, Interwar and late-20th Century styles, together with outstanding examples of asylum and institutional planning from leading Colonial, Government and private architects from the 19th and 20th Centuries. The asylum and hospital planning is an exceptional example of the 19th century advancements in health care along the principles of Florence Nightingale, where it was considered healthy to surround hospital and asylum buildings with gardens as part of patient treatment and the buildings were designed with particular attention to natural light, ventilation and climate control for the care of patients. The collection of reformatory, asylum and hospital buildings include dormitories designed by James Barnet (1885-1887), the former Dining Hall (1885), the Superintendent's Residence (1887) and nine wards designed by Walter Liberty Vernon (1893-1906). All reformatory and asylum buildings are designed in harmony around the central Village Green and unite qualities of shelter and surveillance, community and destitution, within a landscape both picturesque and functionally self-sufficient. The Recreation Hall and Chapel (1963) designed by Ken Woolley, the No. 1 Nurses Quarters (1910),

Herdsman's Cottage (c1885), Boiler House and Chimney (1901) and the later Nos 2 and 3 Nurses Quarters (1931 and 1939) all contribute to the aesthetic and historic qualities of the place.

The nine Vernon-designed wards, individually and collectively, are outstanding examples of hospital pavilion buildings in a bungalow form, which are a deliberate continuation of the hospital pavilion typology found in some French and British Colonies of the time, with innovative design variations demonstrating the early use of the colonial vernacular in NSW public buildings and advancements in design for patient care. Australian designs for naturally ventilated hospital wards were well known internationally. Vernon's work demonstrated greater attention to light and ventilation than English examples and landscaping of a much higher standard. The ward buildings demonstrate Vernon's deliberate (and early) use of the Australian Colonial vernacular in his design of public buildings, particularly the wrap-around verandah as a means of climate control, rather than the Italianate arcade or colonnade. The building designs of Vernon at Lidcombe Hospital thereby represent one of a series of public buildings built in NSW, such as the Lands Board Office, the Bourke Courthouse and Grafton Experiment Farm buildings, that mark the search for a distinctly Australian architecture, an architecture that drew on the colonial vernacular. (Boyd)

The earliest roads demonstrate the pattern of development of the Lidcombe Hospital site and the location of the former farming activities and isolation facilities of the earlier Asylum and hospital periods, including Farm Road, Mance Avenue, Brooks Circuit, Main Avenue, Church Street, Sussex Street, Copeland Road and Peden Lane. Landscape plantings including the hoop pines and phoenix palms, tallowwoods, brush boxes, iron barks, pepper trees and spotted gums contribute to the aesthetic qualities of the precinct, including a surviving grove of eucalypts situated on a separate portion of the former hospital site. The Village Green, at the centre of the precinct, is of outstanding significance at a State level for its historic and aesthetic qualities.

The archaeological resource of the site has the potential to contribute to our understanding of the early modifications of the landscape through farming activities and the development of early institutional care for the aged, infirm and the destitute. The Hospital was the site of first Septic Tank system constructed on a large scale to service an institution in Australia. Remains of the Tank are now located on an adjacent site but infrastructure associated with this system may survive.

The Lidcombe Hospital site has played a significant role in the development of the surrounding suburban areas and the growth of the local area as an employer. It has also acted as a physical barrier to development within the area. The Lidcombe Hospital has continued to be held in high esteem by the local community, including in the present day a number of local community groups, for its cultural, social and landscape values."