

**SUBMISSION TO
PLANNING NSW REGARDING OBJECTIONS TO ACCESS PLANS FOR THE
GENERAL PUBLIC TO THE NEW FORENSIC AND CORONER'S COURTS AND
MORTUARY AT LIDCOMBE. - REF: SSD 16-7545**

RATIONALE FOR SUBMISSION

I, along with other residents from approx.. 700+ homes, decided to purchase homes in the Botanica Estate, which was sold as a residential estate. With the NSW Forensic and Analytical complex as an entity on its own, there was no threat to the residential only nature of Botanica as it was self contained and had their own access from Weeroona Road.

I, along with the other residents, certainly now object strongly to the plans of having the main public access to and from the Courts and Mortuary through our residential estate.

In summary the concerns are:

1. **The lack of transparency** and the seeming lack of procedural fairness
2. **Heritage Significance** of Botanica
3. **Traffic Implications**
4. **Safety Issues** that are posed by Botanica having to cope with those visiting the Courts & Mortuary
5. **Disregard of the safety of residents** of Botanica with staff from the Courts and Mortuary being 'protected' by alternate access.

1. LACK OF TRANSPARENCY.

There is much documented evidence with local historical groups with a complete lack of consultation in the planning stages by Government consultants causing the Heritage status of the area to be ignored.

- a. Botanica residents were not afforded genuine opportunity to attend consultation meetings about the project with no general circulation of information within the estate. Just a small advertisement in the Herald earlier in the year which obviously did not assure everyone knowing about the meetings.
 - i. Many do not get the SMH on a daily basis, many may have missed the notice, many may have been away and not read the paper on that occasion etc. etc.
 - ii. One resident was told by a staff member from the NSW Planning office that they didn't want to 'make too much fuss about it'.

SOLUTION: Demonstrate procedural fairness and offer true transparent consultancy. Consider the changes in Botanica since initial 'environmental' reports were done. There is still more residential development happening in Botanica.

2. HERITAGE IMPLICATIONS

- a. 'This development proposal disregards the **heritage value of Main Ave.** which was the formal entry c1896 to Lidcombe Hospital when Rookwood Asylum was

established. It is graded in the 2002 Lidcombe Hospital Site Conservation Plan (CMP) by Godden Mackay Ogan as an element of **Exceptional Significance.** Quote

- b. **The Avenue of hoop pines and phoenix palms** along Main Ave is also graded as ‘**an element of exceptional significance.** Any development in this area will require demolition of brickwork and verges and therefore interrupt the streetscape.
- c. **The Gate House** at the entrance to Main Ave is obviously of great significance and with increased traffic there is the potential of damage to this historic building.
- d. **Senior and Junior Medical Officers cottages and the Southern part of Palm Court.** With the planned destruction of the Senior and Junior Medical Officers cottages as well as the southern half of Palm Court, in order to build the Courts and the Mortuary, the Government is demonstrating double standards – ignoring the heritage nature of this area and its buildings. All the development of Botanica by private contractors were bound by the Heritage nature of the area and the buildings. These buildings need to be conserved as they are of the same historical significance as the Superintendents residence, the nurses quarters and the hospital wards which have been or are being restored and conserved. Buildings in Sussex Street have also historical significance and have been conserved.
- e. **Main Avenue.** A complete disregard to the important recognised Heritage implications of Main Avenue with its Heritage listed Palm Trees is also evident with the planned destruction of the grassed areas with the heritage brickwork all along Main Avenue. Another double standard demonstrated by the Government when the Private Developers were required to restore this area to its original state.

I quote from the publication ‘A Historical Tour of Lidcombe Hospital by Gregory Marcar and John Ballard ISBN: 0 646 23304 1 copyright 1995:

*“The Main Avenue became the focus of residential development with a row of residential cottages on either side. Of these the most significant are the **Senior Medical Officer’s Residence (Residence No 6) and the Junior Medical Officer’s Residence (No 5), built in 1929 and 1934 respectively. These are located on the north side* (see below) of the Avenue and are a good example of the Inter War Georgian Revival style”.***

NB A foot note appears which **states “*Located on south (not north) side of the Avenue”**

SOLUTION Do further research regarding the Heritage implications of both Botanica Estate and the Government precinct. The NSW Heritage ‘Committee’ had expectations for the development of Botanica. Surely the Government should respect these expectation and act as a role model rather than disregard them to suit conceived plans of those entrusted to govern and so demonstrate double standards?

3. TRAFFIC AND ACCESS

- a. **TRAFFIC STUDIES NOT REFLECTING REALITY.** The traffic studies done in relation to this project do not include (confirmed by paragraph 2.3. of the traffic assessment) the fact that Botanica was still (and indeed still is) being developed. Comments such as *'the area is isolated' and 'pedestrian activity in public areas surrounding the sit will be very low'* demonstrates the issue that there has been no recognition of the fact that 700 families live in this area.
- b. **NARROW STREETS** Within the Botanica Estate, streets are narrow, there are many blind corners that make it totally inappropriate to add to the traffic volume by having the public access to and from the Courts and Mortuary via the residential streets of Botanica. Entrances from either Weeroona Rd or Joseph St, to the courts and Mortuary will still require visitors – general public, media, police, etc to access these residential roads.
- c. **24/7 COURT AND MORTUARY ACCESS.** There is a very large Church in Botanica that has large numbers attending worship on Saturdays and Sundays. The Court and Mortuary traffic will have further impact on traffic issues on these days.
- d. **LIMITED ACCESS** Due to the traffic arrangements on Joseph Street, there is only a south bound turn from Main Ave. Traffic from the court and Mortuary needing to travel north, will need to negotiate the narrow streets through Botanica to the Botanica Drive entrance. Other traffic using the Weeroona Rd entrance will increase the volume of traffic around the Child Care Centre and an access road for residents from Ferguson Lodge. There are also blind corners due to car parks for residents and past the church along this section of Main Avenue

SOLUTION Create independent (to the Government Facility) entrances via Weeroona Road and/or Joseph Street directly into this facility thus not impinging on the Residential area of Botanica Estate. It is understood that the Main Ave. access is only one of at least 7 other options which were identified in the conclusion of the Traffic and Parking Consultant's report

4. SAFETY OF BOTANICA RESIDENTS

- a. **RISK TO RESIDENTS** It was reported back to those who were unaware of the Consultation Meeting that Project Officer Aaron Smith at the meeting on July 2nd 2016 reported that the entrances for staff (Weeroona Rd) and the Public (Main Ave.) were being kept separate *'to protect the staff from emotional and violent visitors.'* The Government obviously believes its OK to expose Botanica Residents to such visitors!!! (Another example of double standards)
- b. **DELIVERY OF CHEMICALS** There is also concern for the safety risk to residents of Botanica when vehicles delivering chemical for the mortuary and laboratories coming through the streets of Botanica

- c. **INCREASED TRAFFIC CAUSING HAZARDS TO RESIDENTS.** There is a unique facility – Ferguson Lodge - in Botanica which allows people with Spinal Injuries to live in an accessible community which includes bus stops, access to parks and gardens, ability to meet with friends and colleagues. This facility is the only one in NSW that provides a permanent home to those with Spinal Injuries as well as Respite Care options for others.

Increased traffic – often with people who are anxious or distressed, trying to get the first story (media) and police and other emergency vehicles urgently getting to the court and Mortuary poses a serious issue for Botanica residents who are concerned about the impact this will have on their residential amenity. This will certainly put those needing wheelchairs at risk as they cross our roads and continue to freely access our estate.

- d. **CHILDREN PLAYING IN THE PARK AREAS AND RESIDENTS WALKING AROUND THE ESTATE.** Increased traffic will cause greater risk for these cohorts of people who enjoy the freedom and independence of moving around Botanica. Quality of life for residents will certainly be impeded with this potential commercial traffic within our Residential Estate. The Central Park next to Botanica Drive is a popular children's playground as well as a walking area which is easily accessible from people's homes. It is inappropriate to direct traffic to a high profile government facility through a peaceful residential housing estate.

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5. **DISREGARD OF SAFETY FOR RESIDENTS OF BOTANICA** The residents feel very insulted to be told that the NSW Government has little concern for the effects of their planning on residents of Botanica. It has been stated in 5.a that they are concerned for their Staff members safety but are happy to put Botanica Residents at risk. This is unacceptable.

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CONCLUSION

I respectfully request that my submission is fully considered. I trust that it might ultimately have some influence on the decisions that are made regarding the impact that the high profile government facility might have on the residents of Botanica if public access to your facility is via Main Avenue.

18th August 2016

