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Submission Regarding Proposed Development

Forensic Pathology & Coroner's Court

Lidcombe

In response to the abovementioned proposal, I wish to object to the proposal on the grounds to be detailed below. I would preface my comments on this development by stating that this proposal appears to have been presented to the residents as a fait accompli. There were two information sessions at Carnarvon Golf Club but these were publicised only in the local paper which is not delivered to all residences in the area, (mine included) no letterbox drop was carried out so many residents were unaware. The only formal notification I have received was delivered on August 2nd, well after the information evenings.

I have no objection to the project in principle however there are certain aspects of the proposal to that will have detrimental consequences for the lifestyle and safety of local residents.

My objections are based on the grounds detailed below:-

1. Heritage Issues

The Botanica estate contains a significant heritage conservation area with a long history dating back to 1893 commencing as Rookwood Benevolent Asylum which ultimately evolved into Lidcombe Hospital. The area features some of the finest colonial and federation architecture in Australia. **Main venue itself between Joseph St and the intersection of Brooks is included in the heritage conservation area and as such must remain untouched.**

Viewing Main Avenue from Joseph St, one sees the original sandstone gatehouse, then a post with a sign depicting the history of Main Avenue. Looking further, one sees the glorious vista of Main Avenue, its historic Phoenix palms and Hoop pines forming a majestic driveway as close to its early 20th century appearance as possible.

To the left, running parallel to Main Avenue is Palm Avenue; the houses set back approximately 20 metres from Main Avenue so as not to detract from the historic appearance of Main Avenue. To the right of Main Avenue, hidden behind a hedge are four former hospital buildings. These were the Medical Officers homes, dating back I believe to the 1920s and in my opinion having historic value. The proposal is to tear these down to make space for the car park and entry. It seems incongruous and a double standard that the Government can require private developers to go to extremes to restore old buildings to preserve them whilst proposing to demolish buildings that share a common history just outside the heritage conservation area.

The proposal to create an entry and exit point on Main Avenue will undoubtedly negatively impact the appearance of Main Avenue and detract from its heritage aspect, thereby undoing all the important conservation work that has been done. I note in the Traffic and Parking Assessment a reference to “1,175 free on street parking available surrounding the site” and in regards Main Avenue, “unrestricted parking is available on both sides”. Clearly from this one can determine that insufficient parking is being provided on site and that the plan is to use the surrounding streets for overflow parking to the detriment of local residents. This will clearly have a negative impact on the heritage streetscape of Main Avenue as will the carving out of driveways across the approximately 15 metre wide grass verge between the property and the kerb.

It makes no sense to go to so much trouble and expense to restore and preserve Main Avenue only to turn it into a parking lot and driveway and for this reason I urge you to revise the proposal so that the Medical Officers homes are preserved and all entry and exit is via Weeroona Road. We only get one chance to preserve history, once it is gone, there is no going back.

2. Road Safety Issues

There is a plethora of issues relating to road safety that, when considered demonstrate that this proposal must not go ahead in its current form. The Traffic and Parking Assessment makes a statistical analysis that has been used to show that the intersections of the local roads can handle the additional traffic volume that will be generated however the assessment is flawed, demonstrates a lack of depth and research and is nothing more than a statistical analysis that does not take into account specific factors affecting the streets of the Botanica Estate. Statistics can be made to prove anything if one does not include all the factors involved.

Firstly, a quote from the Traffic and Parking Assessment:-

“Public consultation has been undertaken with the landowners of Botanica Estate. Botanica Estate is located to the north of Main Avenue adjacent to the proposed public access into the FPCC. The owners have indicated that a Master Plan has been prepared to expand the site for additional residential lots. At the time of preparing this report, details of the Master Plan and the proposed lot yields were not available.”

If any research had been done, this information could have been easily obtained. A block of apartments is already under construction on Main Avenue at the intersection of Chapel Road, a number of heritage properties are being renovated and converted to residential at present in an area known as section 87 fronting Brooks Circuit, Copeland St, Andrews Road and Main Avenue, a preliminary proposal has been lodged for renovation and conversion to residential and also a small apartment complex for the old nurses quarters fronting Andrews Road, Main Avenue and Weeroona Road and importantly, a DA has been lodged and approved for a small commercial development fronting Brooks Circuit and Main Avenue.

All of these developments will have an impact on parking and traffic in the area and also road safety due to the shortcomings of the roads in Botanica, shortcomings that I will detail below. That the Traffic and Parking Assessment did not take into account residential developments in progress, an approved commercial development in progress, makes no reference to the potentially hazardous layout of the streets of Botanica, makes no mention of the hazards faced by wheelchair bound residents from Ferguson Lodge who regularly cross the streets in their wheelchairs and makes no mention of the existence of a childcare centre on Main Avenue underscores the flawed and cursory nature of the assessment that has been undertaken. Purely on the grounds of the inadequacy of the Traffic and Parking Assessment, this proposal must be rejected in its current format.

Specific Traffic Hazards

- **Betty Cuthbert Drive** is approximately opposite the proposed entry/exit point, is narrow at approximately 7 metres and inevitably there are cars parked on both sides of the road leaving just enough room for one vehicle to pass. It is absolutely certain that some traffic will enter or exit via this road as many people rely extensively on Satnav and Satnav will certainly direct traffic along this street and others will simply see it as a good rat run option to get in or out quickly. This street has a 50 Km/h speed limit but in reality, even travelling at 40Km/h is potentially dangerous with all the driveways and with the potential for young children to run across the road.

- **Main Avenue** was never designed as a through road; in fact, it was never designed as anything more than an access road to a group of hospital buildings. In its original form, it did not intersect Weeroona Road, in fact it pre-dated Weeroona Road and it meandered along as a service road for various hospital buildings. The section from Joseph St to Brooks Circuit does not create any specific traffic issues as it is approximately 8 metres wide and straight. That all changes from the intersection of Brooks Circuit all the way to Weeroona Road, there are bends, undulations, irregular shape, an off camber bend, dangerously located driveways, a commercial precinct under development, a child minding centre with hazardous parking , and intersections dangerously lacking visibility. If one wanted to create a textbook case of how NOT to design a road, Main Avenue would be the perfect example.
- a) Main Avenue intersection of Brooks Circuit. When turning from Brooks into Main, visibility to the right is poor, a 90 degree angle parking bay which is almost invariably occupied makes it necessary to partially enter the intersection whilst continuing to look right. Visibility is limited due also to vegetation and curvature of the road. Many people simply enter the intersection on the basis they cannot see any traffic coming rather than seeing that there is no traffic coming. This is exacerbated by the many people who significantly exceed the speed limit along this road. My house overlooks this intersection and I often see near misses whilst sitting on the verandah.
- b) Driveway for 1-4 Brooks Circuit. This driveway exits onto Main Avenue approximately 60 metres from the intersection of Brooks and Main. There is a parking bay to the right of the driveway meaning one has to partially enter the street with no visibility of oncoming traffic. The road curves at this point and the driveway is on the inside of the curve making it difficult to see traffic approaching from the left. This issue will be exacerbated when apartments under construction across the road are completed as I anticipate many more parked cars on the street.
- c) Driveway for 5-8 Brooks Circuit. Similar issues to point b), limited visibility to the left, approximately 50 metres due to curvature of the road.
- d) Garages for 14-16 Brooks Circuit. These garages also face onto Main Avenue in proximity to the intersection of College St and are built within 3 metres of the edge of the road. These residents take their lives in their hands when reversing into the street which at this point is approximately 7 metres wide. The driveways are approximately 3 metres long, this means they have no visibility of oncoming traffic until their vehicle is protruding significantly across the road and they are attempting to check traffic coming each way along Main and also any traffic approaching from College St.
- e) A few metres away from the garages mentioned in d), is Bennedick way. This is a footpath running between Main Avenue and Brooks Circuit and is the primary access for residents of Ferguson Lodge to access Brooks Circuit. This path will become more utilised when the commercial centre is completed. To get to Brooks Circuit, it is necessary for these residents to cross Main Avenue at the intersection of College St. The commercial centre buildings are aligned very closely to the road and visibility in the direction of Weeroona Road is limited to approximately 60 metres due to the curvature of the road, this means that wheelchair bound residents will be forced to move onto the roadway to determine if it is safe to cross. This will expose them to the risk of being hit by any vehicle travelling close to the edge of the road as is often the case due to cars parked on the opposite side of Main Avenue.

- f) Forthcoming commercial centre. This development occupies the buildings opposite 32-36 Main Avenue. Whilst this development is nominally located in Brooks Circuit, there is insufficient parking for both customers and staff and it would seem inevitable that some customers will park on Main Avenue. It also seems inevitable that service vehicles will access the premises from Main Avenue. Given that there are almost invariably cars parked outside 32-36 Main Avenue, and the road at this point is only 7 metres wide, this will become another potential trouble spot on Main Avenue.
- g) Adjacent to the commercial centre is the previously mentioned section 87, heritage buildings being renovated and converted to residential and opposite this development is Scribbles and Giggles child care centre. The proximity of these developments and the characteristics of the road at this point conspire together to create a potentially dangerous scenario. This particular section of road comprises a significant curve; the road undulates at this point and is off camber. As part of the renovation of the section 87 buildings, approximately 8 below ground garages are under construction, these garages will access Main Avenue via steep driveways onto a section of Main Avenue where the road curves just beyond the crest of a hill meaning significantly impaired visibility of any vehicles travelling along Main Avenue. This is in the vicinity of a child care centre where parents park in 90 degree angle parking spots and have to reverse into the traffic to depart with extremely limited visibility due to the shape and contour of Main Avenue.
- h) Intersection of Andrews Road and Main Avenue. Visibility at this intersection is appalling, exiting Andrews Road, to the left, visibility is at best 30 metres, even less when vehicles are parked on Main Avenue. One often has to creep forward until the car crosses the centreline of the road before one can see if the road is clear and one has to do this whilst also checking traffic from the right which is also difficult to see due to the curvature of the road and also checking for traffic coming out of Herdsmans Avenue opposite.
- **Botanica Drive** was also never originally designed as a through road, it evolved in a similar manner to Main Avenue and when the Botanica Estate was developed, it was re-shaped to its current form and became a through road. As it passes through the new build area rather than the heritage area it does not have as many fundamental flaws in its design but it does have some fundamental issues some of which are simply poor design.
 - a) Botanica Drive has an approximately 500 metre frontage to the very well utilised Central Park where on any day one will find numerous local residents exercising, walking dogs and children playing in the playground area. Any resident in the area between Botanica Drive and Joseph St must cross Botanica Drive to access the park and it should also be noted that the area known as the Village Green in Brooks Circuit becomes a virtual extension of Central Park with many, many residents crossing Main Avenue on their daily walk. Any increase in traffic is a risk for the local residents utilising the parklands in this estate.
 - b) Botanica Drive in the vicinity of numbers 57-63 is hazardous. The road is approximately 9 metres wide, almost invariably there are cars parked on both sides of the road and at this point, the road turns through approximately 45 degrees. It is not uncommon to see vehicles crossing well beyond the centre of the road to negotiate this bend and often I've seen near misses caused by this.
 - c) Intersection of Pepper Tree Drive and Botanica Drive. This intersection provides poor visibility in both directions for drivers exiting Pepper Tree Drive due to the road turning through approximately 45 degrees approximately 40-50 metres either side of the intersection whilst also commencing its descent towards Joseph St.

Of concern is the possibility that visitors attending the Coroner's Court and particularly the morgue may be experiencing various emotions such as anger or extreme sadness at the loss of loved ones. The potential exists for some of those people to be in an emotional state whereby their driving ability is impaired by their emotional state. It is well documented that one should not drive when in an emotional state but it is inevitable that this will happen. It would be bad enough that such drivers be driving on the major roads in the area but it would be totally unacceptable that these drivers drive on the demonstrably flawed and hazardous roads of the Botanica estate. For this reason alone, the decision must be made that all entry and exit to the site be via Weeroona Avenue, it is incumbent on those making this decision to use the other options available to ensure that this happens.

Yours Faithfully

George Darnton