



Matthew Gee


Normanhurst NSW 2076

March 8, 2021

Attention: Director – Social and Other Infrastructure Assessments

Dear Ms Coomar,

**LORETO NORMANHURST SCHOOL REDEVELOPMENT (CONCEPT PROPOSAL AND STAGE 1), 91-93
PENNANT HILLS ROAD NORMANHURST (SSD-8996) – OBJECTION**

I wish to register my stern objection to the abovementioned development proposal for the following reasons:

- Loreto trialled the link road on May 11 last year. **It was an unmitigated disaster.** They had traffic from Osborn Rd going across their oval onto Mount Pleasant Avenue ("MPA") through an exit point off the oval. The pictures tell a thousand words:



Traffic heading north along Mt Pleasant Ave waiting to turn into Pennant Hills Rd (traffic line was 500m long). How can residents break into this and how long will someone at the back of that line have to wait to get onto PHR? 30 minutes? (This happens at Unwin Rd and College Crescent at Barker College frequently and the same thing will happen here).



Traffic heading south along Mt Pleasant Ave unable to pass between parked car and cars heading north along Mt Pleasant Ave. The blue car is legally parked but the cars cannot get through as MPA is now a single-lane-only street in peak times.



Traffic in Pennant Hills Rd stopped across Mt Pleasant Ave intersection. Note there are no traffic lights here and no pedestrian crossing. Loreto say that the RMS want to ban right hand turns off MPA onto PHR as part of this DA. This will double the amount of traffic wanting to turn left. And what if we want to go to Hornsby? We'll have to dash across 3 lanes on PHR, relying on the good grace of other motorists and turn right onto Normanhurst Rd, getting caught in and adding to the traffic snarl created by peak hour car and pedestrian traffic accessing Normanhurst Public School and Normanhurst Boys High School. *Should Loreto's development really result in a trip from MPA to Hornsby (which normally takes several minutes), up to 60 minutes or more? On this day, this is exactly what happened.*

- If the school wants to grow, surely it should bear 100% of the costs of that growth, and not create a detriment to the residents of Osborne Rd and MPA and the community at large. Council and governments ensure that private developers do this, why should Loreto be exempt from bearing the costs of the traffic chaos that their expansion will create? A few small token carparks and laying a road through their school are hardly enough to cater for a fraction of the chaos that they will create.
- COVID has shown that these are now very different times that we live in. More people are driving to schools and to work, not less. Loreto's modelling where they bank on massive (75%) reductions in students being driven to school is baseless.
- There will be at least 4 more entrances and exits that will be built on MPA with cars and trucks using them in large numbers. The street can't cope as it is now.
- The safety of the residents will be compromised, especially considering that it is already a most unsafe street caused predominantly by Loreto-related cars clogging the streets and turning it into a single lane street during the day. Already people put their lives at risk crossing Pennant Hills Road ("PHR") in their cars when they finally get their opportunity to turn right onto it from MPA. Already several accidents have occurred when cars simply cannot see oncoming traffic as they exit their driveways as their vision is reduced by cars related to Loreto parking right up to their entrances.
- The proposed buildings are ugly and monolithic and will kill the streetscape. They are totally out of kilter with the residential homes that have been built on the street – some have been here for almost 100 years. Loreto may want their boarders to look out onto nice homes so they 'feel at home' but residents don't want to look back onto an ugly office-type building which is more in keeping with a CBD or industrial area.
- Residents of MPA, Osborn Rd etc didn't buy into these streets on the assumption that Loreto would double in size or change the way the traffic flows in and out of it. Some of us remember the school as having a few nuns and about 20-30 students. This proposal rockets the school into a completely different stratosphere and will sit outside of the residential zoning that we have enjoyed *and relied upon* when we purchased our homes.
- Loreto has a flawed traffic management plan. Their solution to the increase in traffic that an almost-doubling of the school would bring, is to bring cars through Osborne Rd and out onto MPA (**a street with no traffic lights**). How can the Department of Planning rely on Loreto's figures when they base this on an hour or two of observations on one day? Where is the quantitative analysis involving electronic pads on the street to get a proper 24/7 data feed over several days/weeks? Arguably, a simulation model should also have been commissioned, not a deterministic model like SIDRA.
- Loreto has a laughable Green Plan where its idea to reduce cars is to hand out brochures to people and inform them of bus routes that they could use and also to encourage people to ride bikes to school (honestly, who would be encouraging their child to ride a bike down PHR every day?).

According to this plan:

"3.5 Promote Public Transport Usage As part of any long-term sustainable transport plan, promotion of sustainable travel modes is a critical component. Users often face difficulties in using alternative modes due to a simple lack of awareness of their options. If these options can be presented to users in an easy-to-understand format, they may be more likely to change their travel behaviours. To improve user understanding of alternative and sustainable transport, this GTP seeks to clearly and regularly inform all users including staff and students."

That doesn't sound like a solid, comprehensive plan to me.

The reduction in traffic figures that Loreto present are unrealistically aggressive (they are banking on a 75% reduction in children being dropped and picked up each day in the short term). How are they really going to get less people driving and getting dropped off? Also, staff won't be less inclined to drive in if they have guaranteed parks onsite. Witness the *Barker effect* up at neighbouring Waitara, where staff suddenly have guaranteed parks in a new carpark under their new basketball courts and there has been no noticeable accompanying reduction at all in parked cars on school days along College Crescent and Unwin Rd. Undoubtedly, in the case of Loreto, more and more staff will drive in. Simply educating people is not going to change their habits. Post-COVID, driving has only increased. Brochures, leaflets, encouraging cycling to school and providing Opal top-up machines, are simply not going to ensure systemic change.

- 105 Trees will be removed on or near MPA to accommodate the new boarding school, thru link road and carparks
- The boarding house is too large. Its height exceeds the maximum building height control for the site under the HELP 2013. Hornsby Council knocked back plans for our own residential home that proposed a simple extension to an existing roof, because it was too high, based on the HELP. Why then should the government/IPC approve this monolith that would dwarf our residential homes just metres opposite?
- From
<https://majorprojects.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/prweb/PRRestService/mp/01/getContent?AttachRef=SSD-8996%2120210215T054629.769%20GMT>

Buried in this is the description in relation to the development known as ENVELOPE 4 Primary School

"Short stay and drop-off dedicated car spaces adjacent to Primary School, accessed from Mt Pleasant Ave."

Parents are currently told by Loreto that they cannot use MPA to drop their children off (as they acknowledge that the road cannot support it as there are no traffic lights). From the look of this plan, this directive now appears to be out the window. Loreto school buses now regularly hurtle down MPA which never happened in the past. On Wednesday of last week (3/3/21) at approximately 8.12am one turned left off PHR into MPA and had to swing well over the double lines on the street (due to a tradesperson's van and trailer parked right up the top of PHR on the E side, blocking the lane into the street). The bus almost caused a **head on collision** with the cars travelling northbound up MPA to PHR (see pictures below). At the same time, several cars were dropping off their Loreto school children on MPA and performing illegal U-turns to quickly exit the street, holding up traffic both ways up and down MPA. To sit outside 19-25 MPA on any school day at about 8am-8.15am to watch the vehicular antics of Loreto staff, students and parents as they try to navigate through residential cars and food buses that already travel up MPA into Loreto, is a real eye-opener, to say the least. It is only a matter of time before cars get side-swiped, or worse, someone gets knocked over and killed. **This is not an over-dramatisation of the current situation.** Add in more development and this is all a recipe for disaster.



Here's how the MPA/PHR intersection problem plays out on a daily basis right now. Someone swings off PHR and parks in the first available park on the street in the left.



Cars and buses then swing around the corner off PHR onto MPA but they can't keep to their lane because MPA is choked up with Loreto staff and student cars. They must swing around the cars parked on the left and spray over the double lanes onto the northbound traffic travelling up MPA. You can see the station wagon on the picture on the left having to swing to avoid a head on collision. In the picture on the right, you can see the bus now travelling on the wrong side of the road just to move down MPA. Add in hundreds and hundreds of more cars every morning and afternoon peak hour and how is the street going to cope? **It is too narrow, there are no traffic lights and it is a dead-end street.**

Spotlight on Loreto's 11/2/21 Response to Submissions

According to Loreto:

"Signalisation of Mount Pleasant Avenue and Pennant Hills Road is supported by Loreto, however it is not permitted by RMS due to its proximity to the signalised intersection at Osborn Road. During the staged development of the School, Loreto will continue to discuss the potential signalisation of this intersection with RMS during the development application process. With the future changes to Pennant Hills Road as a result of NorthConnex future signalisation may become a possibility, however this will be subject to future approval by RMS."

Loreto say the problem that they are creating is now no longer their problem as the RMS have said no to traffic lights on MPA. Loreto should lobby the RMS and not even entertain this expansion until the RMS changes their mind and Loreto has footed the bill to have lights installed there.

The idea that the detriment that they create should be paid for by someone else (the residents) is completely unacceptable.

According to Loreto:

"The revised master plan includes additional car parking sufficient for staff demand and improved pick up and drop off. The Stage 1 works include additional car parking to account for the current shortfall of on-site parking at the start of the master plan."

Loreto in their revised plans have reluctantly made provision for a kiss and drop area but the result is that after the drop ALL TRAFFIC will now flow onto MPA, where previously it was confined to Osborne Rd. This is hardly a net gain for the community. They are simply swapping one street's traffic woes onto another one.

According to Loreto:

"The RMS aims to prioritise through movements on Pennant Hills Road to reduce congestion. As a result, they prefer to remove additional connections from Pennant Hills Road. This is reflected in their request to remove the existing access driveway into Loreto from Pennant Hills Road. Additional access driveways from Pennant Hills Road are therefore unlikely to be approved by RMS."

Loreto needs to go back to the drawing board and propose something to Transport for NSW that utilises that gate. RMS made this decision in a different era and pre-NorthConnex. Also, Loreto say that the RMS aims to prioritise through movements on PHR – is that true given that they could sync the MPA and Osborn lights and also now because of the existence of NorthConnex? Is it really such a priority for the RMS now?

According to Loreto:

"Loreto is also committed to implementing the Green Travel Plan to reduce single occupancy vehicle trips and reduce parking demands."

How are they going to do this?

According to Loreto:

“At all entrances to Loreto provision is made for vehicle to enter and exit in a forward direction. Additional pick up and drop off facilities on site will prevent informal pick up and drop off movements occurring on Mount Pleasant Avenue.”

The new childcare centre already approved to go on MPA will itself see 70-80 parents dropping off small children at the same time and picking them up at the same time each day. Where are they going to park to pick up their toddlers? Hornsby council has approved this with little onsite parking. Most of the parents will obviously have to park on MPA and will have to turn around somewhere. They will cause traffic chaos on the northern end of MPA creating a dangerous situation and further lengthening the wait time for residents to exit (and enter) MPA from their properties to (and from) PHR. Residents now shudder at the thought of more chaos on MPA.

According to Loreto:

“Updated SIDRA models have been prepared that rely on SCATS volumes from Thursday the 7th of November 2019 while the School was in typical operation.”

Loreto needs to go back to the drawing board and do quantitative analyses using electronic means to survey all traffic into and out of MPA and Osborne Rd rather than taking snapshots at times of the day chosen by the survey company. One thing is for sure, all of the year 12 students that park on Mount Pleasant Avenue were not at school that day (their school year had finished), which greatly skewed the traffic situation in favour of Loreto as both kerbside lanes were largely freed up of traffic, improving traffic flow in both directions. To say the school was in typical operation is simply not correct, especially in terms of the extraneous congestion that the school does indeed create on a typical day (when students who drive to school) are in session.

Solutions for Loreto to Contemplate

[1] Loreto use their already existing entry point from PHR

Loreto say RMS are anti-traffic lights at the intersection of MPA and PHR. They also say that RMS have told them to shut their access point off PHR. The Department of Planning need to probe this further as these decisions would have been made in a different era: pre-North Connex and pre a full analysis of the Loreto plans where they envisage an almost doubling of student numbers with more pressure being put on the two dead-end and quiet residential streets that flank the school via through link roads and the like.

It is the hope of residents from many surrounding streets that Loreto will be asked to go back to the drawing board on this development. In that process, it would be constructive to consider a widening of their PHR entry point so that all cars in and out of Loreto do so via PHR, not Osborn Rd or MPA. After all, the incoming and outgoing traffic has to enter and exit *somewhere*, why not off PHR now that the NorthConnex has taken away the danger factor that the RMS may have previously been wary of? This way, neither Osborn Rd or MPA will have the inconvenience of this traffic in what are already difficult streets to get in and out of for residents. This idea should be considered by Loreto and RMS and is in keeping with the maxim that the Department of Planning should surely be guided

by – and that is that developers should bear the economic and social costs of their development, *not the community*.

Loreto may say that their gates are historic and cannot be moved to widen this entry point. But historic gates are moved all of the time (Barker College's main gates were from the Sydney Mint).

[2] Osborn Rd/PHR intersection widened

Where Osborn Rd meets PHR, Osborne Rd is widened to create more feeder lanes in and out of the street (see Michael Wensley – MPA resident – objection to this development, for a pictorial representation of how this could work). There is merit in this option, as Osborn Rd already has traffic lights, but it would involve a substantial cost to be borne by Loreto and a relinquishment of some of the land on the corner of their property. As with the option [1] above, this idea should be considered by Loreto and RMS and is in keeping with the maxim that the Department of Planning should surely be guided by – and that is that developers should bear the economic and social costs of their development, *not the community*.

Conclusion

The flow-on effects of this development have not been adequately addressed by Loreto or the plethora of consultants whom they have commissioned to support it. In my opinion, this is indicative of their disregard for the safety of members of the community and more specifically, the residents who have been great supporters of the school in the past (but are now losing patience with them).

To support my contention that Loreto have a blatant disregard for the nearby residents, I quote from the revised Design Statement, prepared By Allen Jack + Cottier Architects, where Loreto justify the position of the 5-storey boarding house to be built on MPA:

“The relocation of boarding to Mount Pleasant Avenue ensures improved amenity for boarding students in a more homely environment, distinct from school buildings enabling students to engage in a home life which is separate from school. “

“Mount Pleasant Ave is also a residential street, characterised by homes which is a more suitable location for the Boarding House than within the educational fabric of the site. This part of the site is also further away from Pennant Hills Road and therefore is acoustically more suitable for this noise sensitive use.”

It is great for the boarders that our homes can remind them of home, but it is not so great for the residents that must stare back at an ugly monolith 7 days a week, every day of the year, every year that they live on the street.

At the end of the day, the Department of Planning and the IPC must surely ask themselves how this mammoth development can still blend in with the residential community that it finds itself in.

Development and education can and should go hand in hand, but in my opinion, if one wants to develop a property, then **the government should ensure that the costs of that development are borne by the developer**, not the community (in terms of the major traffic snarls that they will have to put up with) and not the ratepayers (in terms of the traffic lights, pedestrian crossing etc that should be being built to support any increase from current numbers).

Perhaps a simple question needs to be pondered. **Why so big?**

Yours sincerely,



Matthew Gee



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