

SSI 5982 PROPOSED NORTHERN BEACHES HOSPITAL

The Northern Beaches may or may not need a new hospital. What they most certainly do NOT need is a huge new hospital in the currently proposed location, because:

1. Frenchs Forest is by no means central to the population the hospital is intended to serve;
2. the Warringah Road/Wakehurst Parkway intersection is already complicated and over-congested;
3. Wakehurst Parkway North (the main artery connecting the proposed site with its catchment), is totally inadequate and is often closed;
4. the pleasant residential character of the already-developed suburb will be destroyed if the proposed development proceeds.

I participated in the discussion forum on the new State planning system in Penrith at the end of August. One of the important features of the new system, we were told, was that a proposed development would not be allowed to proceed until ALL factors had been satisfactorily addressed. On this basis, the physical destruction in Stage 1 MUST NOT PROCEED before the problems inherent in Stage 2 have been solved. As stated in the Planning Bill, with regard to staged development applications, "A consent granted for staged development does not authorise the carrying out of development".

Furthermore, one of the "Five Big Changes" says that "Infrastructure will be planned and built alongside growth and development". In this context, that means that transport infrastructure needs to be in place first, to accommodate the extra traffic that will be generated during the building process, as well as when the hospital is operational.

Another "Key New Direction" is to be that "Development proposals with more potential impact on the local area will undergo greater scrutiny, including opportunity for community input." What rigorous scrutiny has been given to the choice of location? And what has been done to change the department's plans as a result of the very vocal opposition from the community?

The Department promises to take account of "the likely impacts of the development on the natural or built environments, and any economic or social impacts in the locality." There is no evidence that this is being done.

The planning system claims to be concerned to take care of the environment, but often "the environment" is restrictively defined as endangered flora or fauna. The environment is in fact the whole natural world around us, including intangibles such as noise and air quality.

Section 5.5 of the Stage 1 EIS states "The Stage 2 EIS would include development of a sustainable travel demand management strategy within the context of wider public transport planning for the Warringah Road corridor". Development CANNOT be allowed to proceed before there is an answer to the fundamental problem - how to cope with the additional traffic pressure that the hospital and other population increase in the peninsula will generate on an already over-congested traffic network, without adverse effect on the existing residential neighbourhood.

There are other locations better suited for a hospital to service the people of the Northern Beaches more efficiently and without the inevitable detrimental effect on quality of life which will result if the development proceeds as planned.