

To Whom It May Concern

I am writing as a parent of a child that attends Darlington Public School regarding the proposed development by the University of Sydney, MP 07_0158 – Abercrombie Street Precinct, Syd Uni. Darlington Public School is an inner city school servicing the suburbs of Chippendale, Darlington and parts of Redfern. The school is directly adjacent to the western border of the project.

I have major concerns that relate not only to the construction phase, but also the proposed development in its current form. Specifically, I have significant concerns that its size, scale, and use of the land will adversely impact the Darlington Public School and its children.

The following points highlight the areas that require review given the unacceptable risks that they pose for the basic health and welfare of the children and the school's capacity to continue to develop a high level of pre-school to year six education:

Construction phase

1. Access point to the development site for all trucks and deliveries.

The proposed access point for the site is on Abercrombie Street and is directly adjacent to the school classrooms on their North East border of the school site. Locating the access point for trucks would:

- produce unacceptable levels of noise and vibration in the school classrooms that border that entrance – year 2, 4, 6 and both kindergarten classes. This is also particularly significant for the 2 kindergarten classrooms which face the development to the north with only glass panels and glass doors on that side.
- create an unsafe corridor for school children and parents that walk, or ride to school along Abercrombie Street (north side). This includes many unaccompanied but young children entering and leaving the school.
- create an unsafe car drop off and pick up point on Abercrombie Street (the main drop off point at the school).
- reduce the drop off and pick up point area for numerous children who are transported by car.

Serious traffic incidents, involving the safety of children and parents, in Abercrombie Street and Golden Grove Street pedestrian crossings, are currently the subject of ongoing discussions with the Road and Traffic Authority, Police, City of Sydney, Darlington Public School and the Darlington School & Community Association. To create an additional point of traffic density in Abercrombie Street (and as this will increase traffic down a hill - to the Golden Grove Street pedestrian crossing), is an unacceptable risk to the welfare of the students and operation of the school.

The Transport Impact Assessment incorrectly states that “the main school access for students and other pedestrians is the Golden Grove frontage main gate”.¹ While this is the gate closest to the school office, it is not the main access, as it only has three car parking spaces; the others are taken by the high density residential complex opposite the school. It is also not the main entrance as the Darlington Public School drawing area is predominantly to the east towards Redfern and Chippendale. The children walking to school are coming from this larger part of the drawing area and walking along Abercrombie Street or being dropped off from the parking spaces with lower residential parking. This parking is necessary for a school with a 60 place pre-school.

It needs to be stressed that the University of Sydney properties are the only properties that would be impacted by the entry point being in Codrington Street or Darlington Lane. Proposing an entry point in Abercrombie Street will force trucks and plant to be transported through residential and school areas to the project site. The more direct route is from City Road to Codrington Street and will allow access directly into the project site without passing through residential areas or the proposed access that is within metres of classrooms, or across the footpaths and pedestrian crossing that children use to access the school.

The Transport Impact Assessment notes that the only rationale for not using Codrington Street is that it is a 'pedestrian spine'², which is incorrect as during the construction activity the whole site will be in very limited use by the University's 'pedestrians'. In addition, these pedestrians, predominantly adults, are better able to navigate driveways and construction zones, presenting a lower safety concern.

The Environmental Assessment does not address these issues sufficiently. There is no recognition of the impact on the amenity of the classrooms and play areas of a development of this scale, particularly on primary age students who will be expected to learn or play within a few metres of extensive demolition and building works.

2. Air quality

There are significant concerns that the demolition and excavation on the site will have an adverse impact on the health and safety of the children at Darlington Public School, and in particular on the classrooms and play areas that border or face the development site.

The Environmental Assessment states that “parts of the Precinct, such as the potential fill areas, may contain contaminants at shallow depth; Disturbance of the fill areas may produce dust containing elevated levels of contaminants, particularly asbestos fibres or lead. Dermal contact, inhalation and ingestion of contaminants may occur when the ground is uncovered e.g. during building works or excavations.”³

There is no recognition in the assessment documents of the risk of dust and contaminants on children who will spend significant hours of the 24 month construction phase in play areas

1 ARUP Transport Impact Assessment, March 2011, (Appendix P, p17)

2 ARUP Transport Impact Assessment, March 2011, (Appendix P, p17)

3 SKM, Phase 1, Environmental Assessment, Abercrombie Precinct Redevelopment Project, March 2011 (Appendix K – 6.3.1; 6.3.3).

and classrooms within metres of the demolition and construction site. There is no risk assessment in regards to the large number of 3 year olds (a particularly vulnerable population for dust contaminants) that start at the 60 place preschool each year.

The assessment of risk of dust and contaminants must also be extended to the classrooms inside the school due to the fact that Darlington Public School is not air-conditioned and has un-flued gas heaters, so that all year round the classroom **windows must be open** in order to provide enough air flow in summer and ventilation of heaters in winter

The current proposal provides an unacceptable risk to the health and safety of the children. The proposal must be varied or halted if precautions cannot be taken to protect the children from the air pollution that will be caused by the demolition, excavation and construction phases.

As this project will **continue for five years** the impact on the school and children also needs to be considered for the long-term impact on the health of school students, their education and amenity over the length of the project.

3. Noise impacts

There is significant concern that increased noise from the construction site on the border of the school will have an adverse impact on the learning environment and welfare of students at Darlington Public School, and in particular on the classrooms and play areas that border or face the fence line.

The project's Noise Impact Assessment concludes that noise associated with construction activities has been found to exceed the noise management level of the *Interim Construction Noise Guidelines* and that this assessment of noise impact has been based on a 2m high acoustic barrier being installed on the western boundary of the site adjacent the school.⁴

This level of noise impact is unacceptable for the learning environment of the school and as noted above, the school is even unable to shut windows to address noise levels.

As this project will **continue for five years** the impact on the school and children needs to be considered for the long-term impact on the health of school students, their education and amenity over the length of the project.

Development phase

1. Scale of the new Business Building

The new Business facility building will be seven stories high, and with its location in the North West corner of the school playground it will cause a large shadow effect over the majority of the playground.

4 Marshall Day Acoustics, Abercrombie Precinct Redevelopment Project Noise Impact Assessment, March 2011 (Appendix L, p24)

What consideration has been given to this impact, and the requirement for natural light for the play areas, making it a suitable area to play?

2. Use of the land for other purposes

The school has had an ongoing discussion with the University regarding use of the ovals and other open space areas for the children to use for playtime and sporting activities. At this point a good solution has not been reached. Given that the University is proposing this development it would be a benefit if grounds adjacent to the school could include a multi-purpose 'open space' that would both benefit the school and the community. Can this be proposed and evaluated with all the stakeholders?

It is noted that the University values the balance between buildings and open areas on its main campus. How has this been taken into consideration with a similar view in the Abercrombie Precinct?

3. Ongoing access point and traffic congestion on Abercrombie Street.

As per the current development plan, the proposal calls for an underground car park to be built for the student accommodation and University staff. The car park will accommodate 185 car spots, and its entrance will be on Abercrombie Street, at approximately the same point of the construction access.

The concerns raised above about the access point to the construction site are the same for this car park access point increasing the risk to school children's safety, in an area that has already been highlighted through the respective organisations (Council, Police, and RTA). The increased traffic flows and access point are an unacceptable risk to the children who attend the school. There is no justification for this level of risk to a school community, particularly as the University has another street frontage without school or residential issues (the University being the only stakeholder for Codrington Street) and an access street internal to project (Darlington Lane).

4. Closure of laneways and lack of through site link

Boundary Lane and Rose Street are historically significant remnants of an earlier Darlington, a Darlington that existed prior to the major land resumption by the university. These lanes currently maintain a fine-grained and activated street pattern that City of Sydney Council and other eminent urban thinkers now place great value in. Once resumed by the university it would be most unlikely that the lanes could ever be reinstated.

Contrary to the Traffic Report submitted, the school does currently use these lanes for both pedestrian and vehicle access. The lanes also serve a role as a second means of fire egress for the school population. The school has a rear gate accessed off Boundary Lane where safe bus pick-up and drop off can be made. The university's current proposal contains no clear provision for the relocation of these important facilities.

An alternate design could retain the lanes breathing new life into them whilst achieving a similar amount of floor space. The lanes could be cobbled as a shared zone enjoyed by university students, primary school students and slowed vehicle movements. An associated green space could also be shared with Darlington Public School and the community. Student housing would provide passive surveillance of the laneways on the weekends.

As a local pedestrian, resident and business owner I request the university give further consideration to retention of these lanes and the valuable contribution they can make to the various communities that would use them.

I ask that you please give appropriate consideration to the issues mentioned above and provide a response in due course.

Kind regards

Adam Russell
32 Lander Street
Darlington NSW 2008
0408 246 264 m