

**CHANGE OF USE OF 211 PACIFIC HWY, ST LEONARDS (GORE HILL MEMORIAL CEMETERY)  
FROM COMMERCIAL OFFICE USE TO A SCHOOL (PROJECT 10661)**

We write to request that the change of use of 211 Pacific Hwy, St Leonards from commercial offices to a school under Project 10661 be **rejected**. Although there is no objection to the site being used for commercial offices or medical purposes, this is **not** a suitable site for a school.

It is also asked that this rejection be considered with additional weight, in light of the fact that typical users of the public playground and those **most** impacted would not be on the DA notification list as they don't work in the surrounding office properties *e.g.*, local families at 5 Greenwich Rd, Greenwich (approx. 200 m up the road) were not directly notified of the DA. As grandparents, we frequently take our grandchildren to the playground at Gore Hill Park and the presence of a school adjacent to the park and sharing the park is unsuitable.

The site itself is far too small to accommodate a school as the school footprint cannot even cater for basic essential school facilities that a functioning school demands. The site area is approx. 1,500 m<sup>2</sup> and is effectively the equivalent of 2 house blocks.

The footprint of the building covers the entire site, leaving no space for any outdoor activities such as play areas and assembly areas. There is no provision for a school hall which could provide a meeting area for the students. The proposed site does not even have enough toilets for its proposed 210 students as required by school standards.

The proposed school would need to **permanently** rely on use of the adjoining public parklands, toilets, and facilities which are public amenities for all. The school's use of these facilities, particularly the public playground and toilets will prevent local families, including ours from using it. Students would dominate the playground near the start of the school day, every day during recess, every day during lunchtime and shortly after school ends, **excluding** others from using it. This is an inequitable restriction on the community.

It must also be noted that the public playground is **non-compliant for school use purposes** as it contains equipment prohibited by Dept of Education playground rules. For this reason alone, the proposed site should not be used as a school. It will impose undue pressure and the real risk of unnecessary litigation on Willoughby Council if a child inevitably seriously injures themselves since the playground is non-compliant.

If the site is used as a school, the car park would be taken over by parents dropping-off and picking-up their children. This would cause serious congestion to the local public who would be utilizing the carpark for sporting training and fitness activities on the newly upgraded oval. The car park is not large enough for the increased use by school parents. The entrance and exit are both just single lanes and many cars at once entering and exiting would be unsafe.

The traffic and parking statements in the report are somewhat inadequate as they do not cater for driver and passenger behaviour. The assumption that school drop-offs will take place over an hour's duration is erroneous, hence all related calculations and conclusions based on this must be disregarded. It will instead take place over 15 minutes as students are not able to attend school until a teacher can supervise them. Excluding 25 before-school places, supervision of the remaining 185 students begins at 8:45 *am* with the bell going at 9 *am*. The kiss & drop zone only caters for 10 cars. These students are from out-of-area and cannot walk to school.

This will result in a backlog queue of cars blocking the Pacific Hwy T3 transitway and buses, and will impede traffic flow on a major road. For this reason alone, the proposed site should not be approved for use as a school.

This site is suited to commercial type offices as there would be minimal additional traffic, and adult workers use local public transport options and have no significant impact on the very limited local parking. Commercial office users casually use the park facilities for exercise *etc.*, but they would not be dominating public facilities to the exclusion of others like hundreds of school kids will.

We are concerned that the site for the proposed school is part of the heritage listed Gore Hill Cemetery. The quiet and solemn ambiance of the site would be destroyed by the proximity of a school with all its associated noises.

Despite the applicant seeking advice that it's a new school under SSD "As the site has not been used for a school before that the above clause applies to any new school on the site regardless whether the school has an existing campus at Chatswood." This advice should be rejected. This is not a new school because it is **not** providing new enrolment places for local families. The proposed school has a very specific target demographic and is not a generic public school open to all local students of any religion or any language.

Therefore, this cannot be deemed as a new school under SSD for the purpose of relieving pressure on the existing local schools is the intent of what building a 'new school' really means.

**The site is too small for a school - insufficient space for basic school operational facilities.**

The proposed library is too small to cater for the proposed student enrolment. There are insufficient toilets and wash facilities as prescribed by the Department of Education. There is no on-site provision for the children to have physical education lessons and activities. The size of the staff room and offices are too small to be feasible and facile.

**The park playground is not compliant with school playground rules and cannot be used.**

This playground is not fit-for-purpose for school children and should not be permanently used for school purposes. There is a very high risk of litigation against Council and/or the school.

Playground and equipment standards for schools are more restrictive than for public playgrounds, and different guidelines apply.

There are at least 6 pieces of non-compliant equipment present:

School playgrounds are not allowed to have swings

- there are 4 swings

School playgrounds are not allowed to have swinging birds nests

- there is a large swinging birds nest

School playgrounds are not allowed to have merry-go-rounds

- there is a merry-go-round in the public playground

Schools are not also permitted to have see-saws or flying foxes.

With the proposed arrangement much younger and much older students will be competing for the play space and this will be unsafe for younger students. Even if the proposed school tried to split up access according to age groups, as there is insufficient on-site outdoor space for the remaining students to play outdoors, they'd be cooped up in classrooms instead. Further evidence that this site is not suited for use as a school.

Lastly, the playground is owned by Council, not the school, but would presumably be used by the school with permission from the Council. However, if a child incurred a serious injury on such equipment, who will be held liable? If the State approves this application, will the State be held liable for damages for allowing the change of use to a school? Will Willoughby Council be held liable and be sued for damages? Will the school accept legal liability and pay any claims and litigation costs?

#### **School children will dominate the park to the unfair exclusion of others.**

It is not acceptable that the school permanently utilizes the adjoining park to play on its equipment and use its toilets. This will exclude other members of the local community from using their local facilities. This is inequitable. With the park being recently renovated, this park is used by many local families with toddlers and pre-schoolers, local kindergartens, and children visiting the hospital. School students would dominate the play areas to the exclusion of others.

Supporting this is a key finding in the traffic report that the playground "proved to be consistently busy between the hours of 10:00 and 14:00", the same hours that the proposed school would want to have up to 210 students use the playground during recess and lunch breaks. The report also stated "The use of the playground may be more difficult considering the consistently high number of people using it each hour." This conflict of interest where the public lose use of their local facilities because a proposed school's site is too small to provide a playground of its own for 210 students is unacceptable.

#### **Queueing on the Pacific Hwy blocking a T3 transit lane and the public buses.**

There will be so many cars dropping children off within a short timeframe that cars will likely be queued up on the Pacific Hwy waiting to get into the carpark.

The assertion in the traffic report that parents dropping their children off can do it, staggered, over an hour and that it will not occur within a single concentrated period has to be rejected.

Only 25 children can be on-site in before-school care. All remaining 185 children not at other organized on-site before-school activities, need to be dropped off at the school within a 15-minute period. School standards dictate that parents are not allowed to drop their children off at a school before they are supervised. Supervision at the school will commence at 8:45 *am*. The bell goes at 9:00 *am*. Therefore, the set-down activity **WILL** occur within a single concentrated period, contrary to the report. Hence the calculations and the conclusions in the report should not be relied upon.

If parents did drop their children earlier, it would mean young children were being left unsupervised and probably playing in the park next door. This is not a safe option, and possibly illegal.

With an estimated 110 cars used for dropping children off in the morning within that 15-minute period, \* all the cars who don't or can't park in the surrounding streets or in the public carpark will be left to queue up for the kiss & drop zone. \*The calculated time to drop-off a child is 8.2 seconds!

The kiss & drop zone has a queue capacity of a mere 5 cars. With the short-term, concentrated demand, these will bank-up past the carpark entrance and out onto the Pacific Hwy. This is a T3 transit lane in the mornings. If there are more than 10 cars dropping children off simultaneously (which is what will actually happen if you do the maths) they will block the T3 transit lane, and the public buses. This is an unacceptable consequence inconveniencing the wider public on a major road.

### **Increase in dangerous and illegal U-turns on Greenwich Rd, near corner Pacific Hwy.**

The traffic report states the obvious of what roads and access points are around the proposed school, and counts cars, but it does not address driver and passenger behaviours.

If parents are near the front of the queue and their child is not ready, they will need to loop around and line up again (else stay queued up and cause more of a backlog).

If they need to do a loop around, one of the quickest options is to turn right into Berry St, to turn around at the Marshall St roundabout, and turn left back onto the Pacific Hwy west-bound. Next is to turn left into Greenwich Rd, do a U-turn somewhere, and head back to the lights to turn right onto the Pacific Hwy and return to the carpark.

The frequency of U-turners from the Pacific Hwy heading west-bound wanting to head back towards the city are already a problem for the unit block at 5 Greenwich Rd, Greenwich and is unsafe.

### **Parents parking in visitor parking at 5 Greenwich Rd, Greenwich.**

As there is such limited local street parking, the Owner's Corporation of 5 Greenwich Rd, Greenwich already have an issue with people parking in their visitor parking spots when visiting the hospital, doctor's appointments, and local offices. Add to that approx. 110 parents dropping off or picking up their children every day who struggle to find a parking spot on the streets and are running late.

There's a very high likelihood that the residents of 5 Greenwich Rd, Greenwich are going to suffer an additional problem with parents parking in their visitor parking to drop-off and pick-up children, as well as attending school events during the day or evenings. The Gore Oval carpark will only cater for 32 cars. For a school of 210 children, the public carpark and street parking restrictions mean there will be even less street parking available.

Despite the Owner's Corporation installing coded, locked bollards in individual spaces to prevent unwanted parkers, people are so desperate for car parking in this area that they nudge forward and drive over them! The Owner's Corporation has had to keep paying to install new locks and repair the broken bollards and order and install replacement parts.

As a condition of any approval, will the State, Willoughby Council or the school agree to pay the Owner's Corporation costs to capture information (photos, times and dates of people parking there), lodgement costs for NCAT, plus the time and effort to appear at the Tribunal hearings to have people fined for parking on our private property? The Owner's Corporation may incur costs of up to \$3,000 per car to have them fined through NCAT for parking on our private property.

The Owner's Corporation faces the issue of non-residents trying to use their private property as a public carpark **each and every week**. This may only increase with the parents of 210 students trying to find street parking in a commercial zone within a concentrated time period for carrying out drop-offs and pick-ups.

### **In summary:**

This is not a new school as it does not deliver additional school enrolment places to local residents.

This site is far too small to sustain a self-contained, functioning school. The proposed site cannot provide for a school hall/major assembly area, or rehearsal spaces for bands, choirs or string ensembles. There is insufficient on-site amenity to properly cater for 210 children with a proper school library or break out spaces.

It cannot provide safe traffic management where children in the playground have to cross traffic zones to enter the school.

It degrades the emotional experience of a very widely important, nationally significant cemetery. It's not just a school being located to an historic heritage building. It's a cemetery.

There is no on-site space for the students to all play outside.

If approved for school use, it permanently relies on a **non-school compliant public playground**, and puts the local Council at high litigation risk. Local residents will be restricted from utilizing their local facilities as the playground and toilets would be dominated by the school's daily use.

The concentration and volume of traffic at drop-off and pick-up times for the proposed school will block traffic and buses in the Pacific Hwy T3 transit lane, risk accidents for buses coming around the blind corner at speed, is likely to cause additional dangerous U-turns in Greenwich Rd, and will unnecessarily impact on an already strained public parking situation increasing the likelihood of parents using the visitor parking at 5 Greenwich Rd, Greenwich.

The location is unique in that it borders 3 LGAs (Willoughby, Lane Cove, and North Sydney) but only serves to benefit existing students of a school 5 kms away.

We fully support the establishment of new schools for local residents, but the negative impacts of the proposed school being shifted from Chatswood to this particular site far outweigh any merit it could deliver to our local community. How do local residents and business benefit from this proposal? In every way, they don't. In fact, there are no demonstrated merits, only domination and over-utilization of local public facilities. The change of use proposal to a school for this site does not enhance the local community, it just serves to exclude it.

What makes a school? Creating a school from an office block design involves more than just refitting the insides of the building. A school has very different needs, amenities and learning facilities to an office block! There is no practical "fit-out conversion" solution to make a small 2 storey office block on a postage stamp into a school for 210 students.

No on-site playground, non-school compliant off-site playground, no on-site school assembly area, not enough toilets, blocked traffic on Pacific Hwy? **No school is the only answer!!**

We request that this proposal be fully rejected, and the site remains as per the current commercial office use.

Yours sincerely,

Alan and June BELL

Greenwich