

16 October 2021

Major Projects

RE: Proposed Bungendore High School

SSDA-14394209 --- FORMAL OBJECTION

Specific Objection Topic: Major Suicide Risks Associated with Proposed Location

Dear Sir/Madam,

As a long-term resident of Bungendore I am extremely concerned with many issues to do with the proposed location of the Bungendore High School (BHS). By way of short background, I was for some time the IT Administrator at Palerang Council and therefore am **quite** familiar with Council, local government, planning, and probity issues. I have objections in all categories.

In making this objection I'm relying on my background in Environmental Psychology and more broadly Social Psychology, as both a lecturer (ANU) and social researcher.

In this objection I wish to focus on the absolute FAILURE of the proposal to assess the risks of student and teacher suicides resulting from the proximity of the proposed high school to the train station, tracks and rail corridor. There have been at least 2 suicides by train in the last decade around this location. There are available through the NSW Coroners Database and are generally summarized in the statistics collected by the TrackSafe Organisation. See [Suicide Prevention - TrackSAFE Foundation](#)

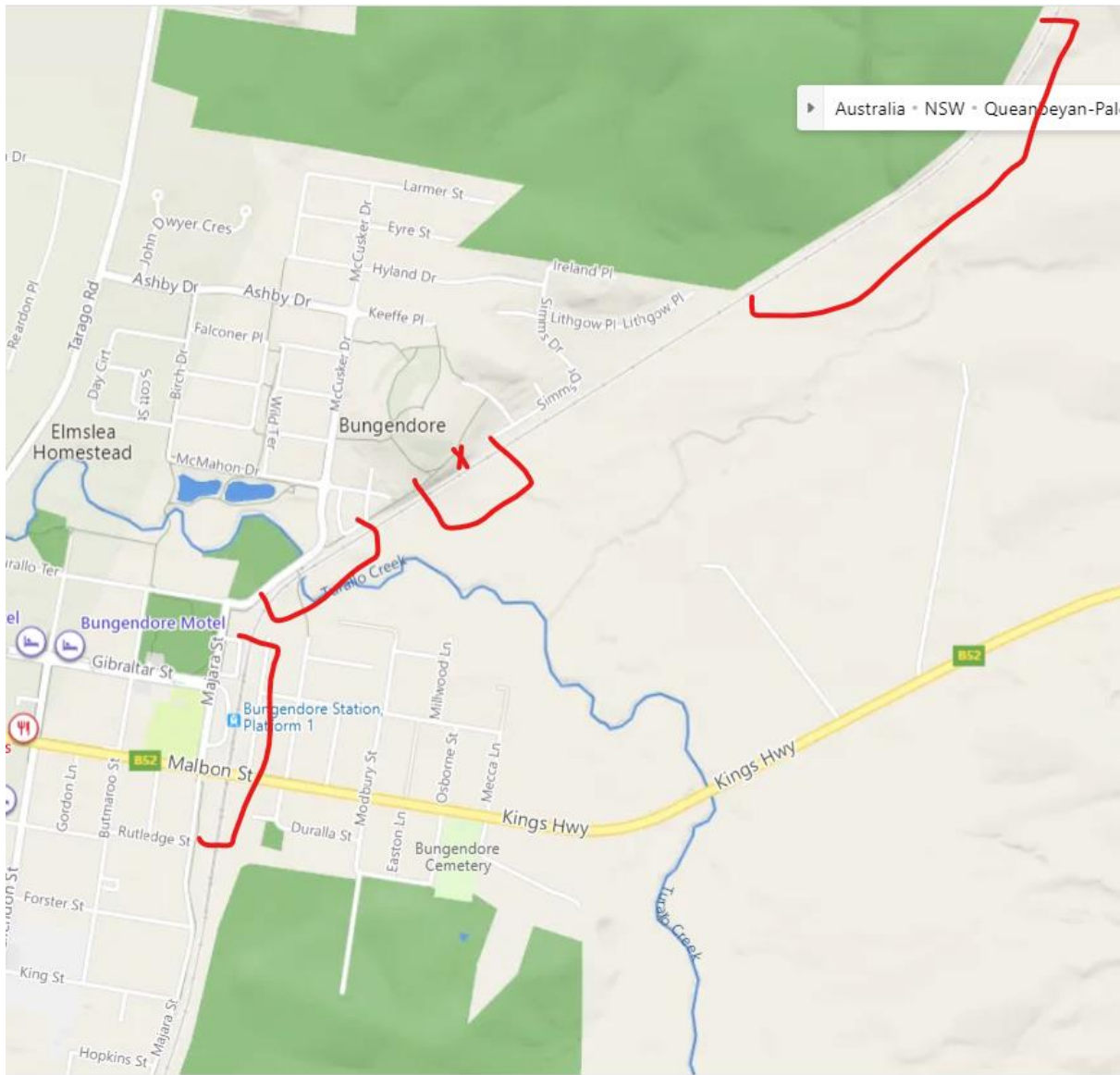
Teens and their teachers are notoriously anxious and prone to suicidal ideation and a portion of them turn it into a sad reality. Quite a number of these occur each year in NSW alone with people jumping in front of trains. This almost always results in death, not always instant, causes grief for families, traumatizes the school communities, and worse, stimulates copy-cat suicides by other teens.

It is inconceivable that this major RISK was not assessed. It is core to the Department of Education and Department of Transports *duty of care* obligations and public liability risks. As indicated in this map there are numerous points along the rail corridor where suicidal jumps are possible but there is one in particular that would be easily accessible from the walkways near the proposed High School. This constitutes an EXTRAORDINARY RISK as well as exposing the Department of Education to the possibility of significant law suits for liability and failure in their *duty of care*.

The map indicates easily accessible areas of the rail corridor. X indicates the site of one of the suicides, just off a walking track which is concealed from Train Drivers so extremely risky.

One can only conclude that neither the Department of Education nor the secondary teachers nor the Department of Transportation was consulted or considered in the rush to have this quick fix politically "selected" site. This amounts to culpable neglect by the Departments involved and exposes them ALL to great risks and the potential for huge compensation claims and liability law suits.

It is imperative that the new Bungendore High School be located WELL AWAY from the train station and rail corridor. Both of the alternative green fields sites are FAR SAFER, LESS RISKY options and environments.



In short, one can only conclude that the entire handling of this proposal has been subject to sloppy Council processes, possibly *corrupt* negotiations between Mr Barilaro, the Department of Education, and the Council, malicious selective use of consultants (particularly the Heritage Consultant), and other unacceptable behaviour. Some of these matters are serious enough to require that the NSW ICAC take a proper look as the evolution of this proposal and the many ways in which the process has been perverted.

The deliberate overriding and abuse of proper planning processes, community consultation, and accurate representation of the town, it's history, and the community involvement by Council and by its representatives, misleading information from the Department of Education all point to political meddling in what should be a much better, cleaner, and "above board" process which would enable Bungendore to develop a new High School for the *long term* future of this special historical village. As it stands the proposal and the manner in which it was developed all indicate it was a lazy, short-term, political "deal" for Council to squeeze money out of the State to fix its many financial missteps.

None of these are reasons for the BHS as proposed to proceed. Every indication is that the design, planning, and consultation processes are fatally flawed and could see the matter land in relevant Law or Planning Courts.

I respectfully submit this objection to the proposed BHS in the strongest possible terms.

I respectfully submit that this perverted process should NOT stop the development of a proper, built for the future, new Bungendore High School on appropriate green fields lands to the north or the south of the village, as was originally proposed before the dubious negotiations with Council came about.

I reserve the right to recommend to ICAC that they investigate this entire questionable and suspect process and the resulting “deal” which has been dumped on the citizens of Bungendore, with minimal and flawed consultation processes, and highly suspect Council processes.

Yours sincerely,

Russell (signed)

Dr Russell Darroch

[REDACTED]

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