

Director, Social and Infrastructure Assessments
Planning and Assessment
Department of Planning, Industry and Environment
Locked Bag 5022
Parramatta NSW 2124

Re: Objection to SSD-14394209/Bungendore High School

Thankyou for the opportunity to make a submission. Please find the reasons for my objection outlined below.

In summary, this development is entirely unsuitable for the site proposed, as it would be detrimental to the amenity of Bungendore's heritage, institutional and recreational precinct.

Between 2004 and 2012 I was a Palerang councillor and proactively engaged with the community on many occasions, including instigating visioning workshops around the LGA, including in Bungendore, when the Council initially failed to do so. The overwhelming opinion of the residents and community groups I got to know was that they wished to retain the heritage and village feel of their town. Even many of those moving to new greenfields sites could relate to this and were keen to preserve the qualities and aspects that had drawn them to the district.

With the population growing, parents and others approached the State Government to build a high school that could serve the town and surrounding areas. The NSW Department of Planning came up with a proposal to build a new school on a greenfields site, the 'Ashby' property, which is close to the town and, in particular, close to the Elmslea Estate, the major focus of new housing development.

This was a sensible, even ideal proposal. It was accessible to students and the layout would not have been constrained by existing buildings and site limitations. There would have been plenty of room for single-level school buildings (negating the need for ramps or lifts for disabled access), open space for sport and recreation, open air facilities for the proposed agricultural science centre, and space left over for future expansion.

Nothing happened. And then quite recently this new proposal appeared, apparently out of nowhere. It became clear that it was little more than a pork-barrelling exercise by the now resigned Member for Monaro, in cahoots with the Queanbeyan Palerang Regional Council (QPRC) who seemed to think that this was a way they could offload the Palerang Council administration building by making it part of a new high school, along with a public recreation area (the Recreation Ground), a creekside passive recreation area and a road reserve which, when all were amalgamated, could create a site for a high school. It appears to many that this simply would be an expedient course for the QPRC who could realise some much-needed funds by selling off the Council building.

Given the lack of success of this enlarged LGA, which doesn't even pretend to be "local" any more, selling off this building would be an unwise move, as many hope that one day common sense and a commitment to true democracy will prevail and we will reinstate a genuinely local council as opposed to a regional one, so that those in the villages far from Queanbeyan can again have a voice and be properly represented.

Practically (and financially) speaking, the (lack of) space resulting from siting a high school here would require most of the new buildings be two storeys if they are to be accommodated. This is crazy stuff for a rural town that can offer much more appropriate alternatives.

Apart from space issues, and the lack of consultation with the community (a survey was conducted with just 74 residents!) there are European and Aboriginal heritage issues which have been totally disregarded. It is understood that the grave of an Aboriginal person is present on the site. Why hasn't this been taken into account?

And in regard to European heritage, the Recreation Ground is an essential element in Bungendore's Georgian period town plan. It is surrounded on three sides by community and institutional buildings including the Public School, the Police Station, the former Court House, the School of Arts, a Pre-school (formerly a Catholic Primary School), the Community Centre, Scouts Hall and the former Palerang Council's administration building. The Recreation Ground itself contains playing fields (with an amenities block), tennis courts and a swimming pool.

This proposal would destroy the character of this essential element, and the integrity of the community and institutional precinct. It would remove the Community Centre. It would remove the Swimming Pool paid for by the community, and the creekside park, and it would restrict the use of the playing fields, all of which are greatly valued public assets.

This proposal deserves only to be discarded and a more sensible one pursued.

Political donations declaration:

I have not made political donations.

Catherine Moore
October 18, 2021