

Barbara Rayner

Bungendore
NSW 2621

18 October 2021

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

Dear Sir or Madam

**NEW HIGH SCHOOL IN BUNGENDORE
APPLICATION NO. SSD-14394209**

I refer to the above state-significant development application.

I **object** to the proposal, for the following reason(s):

I wish to make it very clear that I am not opposing the establishment of a high school to serve Bungendore and the surrounding communities. As a teacher of nearly 40 years and a grandparent whose grandchildren will attend this school, when established, I am very supportive of a high school being built but I do strongly oppose the school being built on the Bungendore Park site.

“Quality green, open spaces are important for everyone. They are our free parks, gardens and sports fields, walkable shady streets...which form the heart of our communities. Our public spaces make life more welcoming and accessible. They delight and connect people. They support our health and well-being, environmental resilience and prosperous local economies. Public spaces are all places publicly owned or of public use, accessible and enjoyable by all for free... They are at the heart of everyday life”. This statement is from the NSW Government Department of Planning, Industry and Environment Great Public Spaces document. That same department that now wishes to deprive the residents of Bungendore of their primary public space, Bungendore Park.

Bungendore Park is “at the heart of everyday life in Bungendore” and has been since it was gazetted on Crown Land and zoned recreational in 1886, and, I believe, was intended as the “Town Square” in the original grid style layout of the village in the 1840s. Queanbeyan Palerang Regional Council’s (QPRC) Bungendore Structure Plan (Feb 2020) states that Bungendore Park is the “primary recreational facility” for Bungendore but now that same Council wishes to deprive the residents of Bungendore of their primary recreational facility.

“People with access to green, public spaces are healthier and happier than those who don’t”
(Great Public Spaces NSW Government Department of Planning, Industry and Environment). The

acquisition of Bungendore's primary green, public space by the present NSW government begs the question: Is the health and happiness of Bungendore residents worth less than the health and happiness of Sydney residents who are to receive eight new and improved parks under the NSW Government's Priority Greener Public Spaces program while Bungendore residents are to have their park taken from them?

As a result of COVID-19 communities are making greater use of public green spaces. The NSW government states that "open spaces are important public spaces where people can relax, exercise, play and enjoy the natural environment. Walkable, accessible, well designed open spaces are integral to the character and life of local towns and cities. We are investing in open spaces so that everyone can enjoy green open spaces and creating more accessible, greener, greater outdoor spaces close to our homes". This may be the case for Sydney residents but it definitely not the case for the residents of Bungendore who are to be deprived of their "primary recreational facility" that is central to the whole town. Bungendore Park is integral to the character and life of our community!

The recently released proposed Bungendore High School Landscape Site Plan shows fencing being placed within a few metres of the northern edge of the Bungendore War Memorial. Advice from the Crown Land Our Land group is that, instead of having the whole Park as its curtilage, the Bungendore War Memorial will become stranded in the narrow strip (about 16m wide) to be left along Gibraltar St. In effect, its footprint will be reduced from 4000m² to about 40m².

My great uncle was killed in October 1918 and is listed on the Bungendore War Memorial. As our family has never been able to locate his grave the memorial is held as the place honouring his sacrifice. I am appalled that the present NSW state government and QPRC feel that the sacrifice and service that the memorial represents is not worthy of the respect due to them, and that the families who wish to preserve their memories of their ancestors are also treated so shamefully.

I also understand that the school buses will drop and pick up from the northern side of Gibraltar Street, within just a few metres of the memorial. If this is the case the memorial, built to honour the residents that gave their lives, will become little more than a bus shelter.

The Bungendore War Memorial Committee was reported to have raised \$30,000 to undertake a major restoration of the memorial, two thirds of which was sourced from our community. The Committee works hard to ensure that the gardens around the memorial are kept immaculately. The gardens will not be able to be maintained when students are waiting for buses in the immediate area of the memorial. The whole of the memorial precinct will undoubtedly be littered and possibly vandalised.

Bungendore's population is expected to more than double by 2041 (Bungendore Structure Plan, QPRC Table 1, p 16). The proposed high school on Bungendore Park is to be situated on just 2.9 hectares, much less than the 4 hectares recommended by the Department of Education in its Guidelines for School Site Selection

(www.schoolinfrastructure.nsw.gov.au/news/2021/03/guidelines-for-school-site-selection-and-master-planning-.html). One must ask why would the Department of Education suggest a site that is completely sub-standard in terms of size and in complete contradiction its own guidelines when the preferred Ashby site meets its own criteria.

I have taught in schools that have had overcrowded sites and seen firsthand the problems that this creates in the playground. This is why the NSW Department of Education has guidelines for site selection. Why have these criteria been ignored in Bungendore?

As the population of Bungendore increases so will the enrolment numbers. Will the young people of Bungendore be herded into a site that does not even meet the guidelines for the 450 proposed students let alone the increased numbers that will eventuate as the population of Bungendore increases?

The choice of Bungendore Park is especially puzzling as a preferred site at Ashby had already been chosen by the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment after extensive evaluation of its own criteria for selecting school sites. The NSW Department of Education then intervened and process was stopped by the Dept of Education stating that they had chosen a different site in Bungendore. They noted that it is not their responsibility to choose the site for the school. On 15 June 2020 the Education Department emailed the Department of Planning:

“Hi... Just a short note to let you know we have confirmed our preferred site location for the new high school at Bungendore. The preferred site is the ‘Mick Sherd Sports Oval’ located adjacent to the existing Bungendore Primary School. Cheers...”

Eleven days later, on 26 June 2020, the Department of Education wrote to the Department of Planning. It simply said:

“the Bungendore project has taken a significant change in direction as discussed with [Department of Education staff]. The preferred site has swung towards the Mick Sherd oval and SINSW has and continues to engage with council and the Deputy Premier, both supporting the oval as the preferred site.”

One has to question why the NSW Department of Education did not follow the usual practice and intervened in a process that is the responsibility of the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment.

The immediate area surrounding the proposed location holds many of Bungendore’s historic structures that are recognized in QPRC’s Bungendore Structure Plan, it notes that “the east-west grid subdivision pattern of the original settlement and low scale development creates an open, informal and spacious character that contributes to the rural village character of Bungendore. This area is bounded by Molonglo Street, Rutledge Street, Majara Street and Turallo Terrace. There is a clear delineation between the historic nineteenth century village and the late twentieth and twenty first century residential areas” (Page 6).

The proposal will see a two story, concrete structure that will be totally out of character with this historically significant and very important civic precinct and will detract from the character of the surrounding 19th century buildings.

I am also concerned to read in local media that a new high school will be built in Jerrabomberra and that it will sit on 4.5 hectares, will accommodate 500-550 students at a cost \$24.9 million whereas Bungendore high school will occupy just 2.9 hectares, will accommodate only 450 students and has been costed at some ten million dollars more (\$34.7 million). Not only is this a clear condemnation of the Bungendore proposal but raises questions relating to the cost effectiveness of the Bungendore plan.

I have two grand-children who live in Bungendore and while I feel that a local high school is absolutely essential, the proposed location will mean my grand-children will be subjected to a sub-standard site while being deprived of a beautiful green space.

Surely Bungendore's high school must be located on the Ashby site previously identified by the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment as being the preferred for a new high school. This would allow Bungendore Park to remain a "well designed open space integral to the character and life" of our town (NSW DPIE, Great Public Spaces, Open Space).

As a tax payer my final objection to the building of a high school on Bungendore Park is to object to the money that has been spent on a site that is clearly not fit for purpose (www.schoolinfrastructure.nsw.gov.au/news/2021/03/guidelines-for-school-site-selection-and-master-planning-.html) and a site that was not the preferred site of the department whose job it is to decide these matters. I have to wonder why the Department of Education intervened in these decisions and wonder if these are not matters that should be referred to ICAC.

I have not, and no associate of mine, has made any political donation to any person in the 2 years preceding this submission.

Yours faithfully,

Barbara Rayner