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Development Assessment Systems and Approvals

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University of Sydney Campus Improvement Program 2014-2020 – State Significant Development (SSD 6123) – Submission and Objection to EIS

The University of Sydney is a major part of the education services industry which, as the EIS states, is the second largest earner of export dollars in NSW after the coal industry.

As a resident of NSW and alumni of the University, I readily acknowledge the importance of the institution and wish it every success.

However, as a resident of Darlington I hope the University will become a better neighbour than it has been in the past and that in its planning and development it will exercise greater consideration and sensitivity to the surrounding residential community.

The University has not given the community enough time to study and discuss the implications of what it is proposing in its Campus 'Improvement' (really 'Development') Program. It has not adequately consulted with the Darlington community and informed people of its proposals. These are serious failures on the part of the University.

Due to the inadequate time given to consider the EIS my submission focuses on the University's Shepherd Street interface with Darlington.

Should the EIS submission period be extended I may take the opportunity to add to this submission and may object to other aspects of the EIS if I become aware of new issues of concern.

One of the proposals of the University revealed in the EIS is highly objectionable. This is the proposal to remove the stand of eucalypts (species not confirmed but probably Tallowwoods) near the Engineering School on the Darlington Campus. This stand of well-advanced trees and the green hedge along the University's boundary with Shepherd Street is the only significant break in the more than 400 metres of mostly ugly University buildings that extend from Cleveland Street to Lander Street. This grove of Eucalypts acts as a much needed screen for the University buildings from surrounding areas of Darlington; it has high aesthetic values; it provides a refuge for birds and other wildlife; and it is an important amenity for the University and its neighbours. The site in question also has utility value as the trees stand on a car park that is important in alleviating the pressure from the University on kerbside parking space in Darlington streets. Both the trees and the car park are to be negated in favour of a new building that would apparently occupy the whole site.

In the EIS at [5.3.2 TREE MANAGEMENT](#) it is acknowledged that trees at the University campus provide a significant contribution to the local landscape and form an important component of the wider urban forest within the City of Sydney.

At ['6.3.3 PRECINCT C - ENGINEERING'](#)

One of the 'key drivers' for the proposed developments in the Engineering precinct is stated to be to 'respect the precinct's interface with Shepherd Street and lower height residential dwellings to the east'.

At ['7.8 GENERAL VEHICLE STRATEGY AND TRAFFIC IMPACTS'](#) it is stated that a key element of the CIP is to restrict access to the University for general traffic to peripheral parking.

At ['7.11 FLORA AND FAUNA'](#) the importance of avoiding the removal of mature trees and minimising the loss of open space is acknowledged. So too is the importance of the University's mature tree canopy in the local landscape.

At '11.1 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS AND BENEFITS' it is stated that the likely impacts of the proposal have been 'examined in depth' and that this has 'enabled detailed consideration to the surrounding context, particularly to the residential development along Shepherd Street'.

At '11.2 SOCIAL IMPACTS AND BENEFITS' the University accepts that it has a responsibility to benefit the wider community, including the provision of public open space.

None of the above statements in the EIS can be easily reconciled with the University's plan to cut down the grove of eucalyptus trees on the Engineering precinct's Shepherd Street car park, to remove this peripheral car parking facility, and to erect on it a three story building close to the University boundary on Shepherd Street.

The EIS does not state the proposed use of the new building in the EIS, other than to say it will be 'Engineering'. The only justification given is the need to 'retain the Engineering faculty within its current location' (ref 6.3.3).

The EIS makes some statements in relation to this particular proposal that that are illogical and/or inaccurate. One example is in the figure on page 62 addressing the existing open space and contextual relationships in the Engineering precinct of the Darlington campus. This shows the trees on the Engineering car park as 'removed trees' when they have not been removed.

The EIS in the figure on page 63 compounds its errors in the figure addressing proposed open space and contextual relationships. The intention to 'create a unified feel ... not separation' is stated. It goes on to state: 'We propose to create a strong link from Shepherd Street to Cadigal Green ...'. and 'open up and strengthen the vistas to Cadigal Green from Shepherd Street'.

The forgoing statements in the EIS seem illogical. The EIS proposal is to develop a three-storey building on the Engineering precinct car park. If there ever were a possibility of opening up a 'vista' from Shepherd Street to Cadigal Green (which is doubtful), the planned new building will prevent it.

The subject of the EIS is stated to be the University's 'Campus Improvement Program'. However at its interface with Shepherd Street there is very little attempt at improvement. The succession of mostly unattractive buildings

that exists there will remain. The net result of the University's proposals is to degrade environmental and social values by adding more development to a precinct of the University that is already overdeveloped.

The University is aware of its responsibility to ensure that its campus presents an attractive face to students and the public. This is evident in EIS proposals over much of the Camperdown campus. However, along the Shepherd Street boundary of the Darlington campus the University seems intent on presenting an unattractive, even ugly, aspect.

I make the following further points:

The CIP proposes an increase of developed floor space within the University campus from 555,600 square metres at present, to 937,000 square metres in 2020. This represents a 68% increase in floor space over seven years which is excessive and conducive to over-development.

The declared objective of the CIP to provide a significant increase in affordable student accommodation on campus is open to question. This may be one of the causes of over-development in some precincts of the University. The alternative of developing more student accommodation off-campus needs to be properly assessed.

The University has previously expressed a desire to close Codrington and Butlin Streets and absorb them into its Darlington campus. The EIS does not repeat these proposals. The implications of proposals (if any) to slow or restrict traffic flow along these streets should be addressed in this EIS.

Some lab buildings on the Darlington Campus along Shepherd street are sources of occasional odours and night-time machinery noise. The CIP does not appear to address these issues.

Yours sincerely,

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