

STAKEHOLDER TYPE: Nearby resident in Felton Rd (East). Long-term resident (28+ years) and CWPS alumnus.

Dear Sir/Madam,

Firstly, I wish to complement the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment for carefully studying, preparing and widely consulting in determining how to improve Carlingford West Public School. The information that has been gathered has been extensive with detailed studies assessing traffic flow, landscaping and vegetation, acoustics, building sustainability and aesthetics. I was impressed with the extent of the information that was prepared and available for the public to digest. The care shown, in my opinion, entirely negates the notion of an indifferent centralised bureaucracy ordering in bulldozers to dump an unsuitable group of buildings whose plans have been photocopied from somewhere else. That has not happened in this case.

As a local resident, the first topic that springs to mind is traffic. I agree with the plan to signalise the intersection at Baker St and Pennant Hills Rd. This will be vital to increasing pedestrian access to the school from the BaptistCare mixed-residential development nearby, discourage pedestrians from 'playing chicken' in trying to cross a major road where other crossings are too far to be convenient and of course, greatly increase the capacity of cars to exit Baker St onto Pennant Hills Rd. This is vital as cars so quickly accumulate on Baker St as the first one waits to find a break in traffic. This then disrupts traffic flow further behind.

I also strongly agree with the plan's overall goal of reducing the use of private cars to reach the school. For a school of such a size serviced by ordinary, residential roads, these cars are as desirable as a cockroach in the kitchen. They bring congestion, their sheer numbers spoil the air with exhaust fumes for hundreds of pedestrians, stress from the associated congestion and danger to pedestrian safety and those of other motorists with an elevated chance of collisions occurring in the area.

Consequently, more people must turn to walking, cycling and public transport. However, for the targets to be reached that are indicated in Appendix 24, these types of transport must be the 'easy option' with driving cars being the most difficult option. I cannot stress this point any further. Many people catch public transport to the Sydney CBD because parking is scarce, expensive and because arterial roads are congested.

The plan must not cater for hundreds of 'Mum's taxis' ferrying tots to and from this mega primary school every morning and afternoon. To help keep a cap on this, I would recommend that when the proposed works are underway and even continuing after completion that a 'permit' system is introduced for private motorists dropping off and collecting children from the turning circle at Felton Rd E and the drop-off area planned for Felton Rd W. There should be a set number of permits available requiring an application form submitted to the school's office and granted according to priority of need. Approved applicants would then display a large removable sticker from the inside of their windscreen to allow entry to the drop-off area.

I have looked at the drawings for Felton Rd W and the drop-off area (Figure 4.7, Appendix 24). Are you sure that cars will be able to turn around at the end and head back up towards Arcadian Circuit? I have looked at it down there and it looks pretty tight with no road widening or turning circle provided. I can only strongly suggest that you practise turning around from one side of the road to the other with a variety of cars. Not all have the same turning-circles and not all are the same size. A planning failure here would be a major cock-up and twice-daily vexation for motorists.

Cycling is a good idea. Unfortunately, as a local resident, I predict that the cycling targets in Appendix 24 will definitely not be met and I would expect that the resultant number of bicycles sitting in all those lovely bicycle racks could be counted on one hand. I have this view because the school is entirely orphaned from any kind of cycleway. For cycling to be adopted it has to be safe and easy. Any kind of on-road cycling to this school is not appropriate for primary school-aged

children, particularly if unaccompanied. Who is going to have their primary-school aged son or daughter battle the cars and fumes on Felton Rd E and W in the mornings and afternoons? An off-road cycleway is the only way that there will be any chance of utilising the bicycle for a school commute. Although it is legal for children to cycle on an ordinary footpath, the existing footpaths in Felton Rd E and W and Baker St are so congested in the mornings and afternoons with pedestrians that cycling is not possible. Pedestrians often take up the whole of the current paths walking in the same direction as parents walk with several children, there are often prams and there are groups of friends walking together or playing as they walk. Children and parents cycling would be almost always having to cycle on the nature strip but this is not really possible due to the high number of trees and shrubs growing there.

So, what to do? Felton Rd E would have to have a cycleway all the way to Pennant Hills Rd as many people come from the new high-rise flats built or being built near the expectant Carlingford light rail station. Cyclists heading to that high-density precinct should be encouraged to cross Jenkins Rd at the lights, head down a nice, wide 'shared-path' down Jenkins Rd which then continues into James St and the light rail station. I wouldn't like young cyclists continuing alongside Pennant Hills Rd. It's too busy and the driveway entrance into the 7-Eleven petrol station directly after the traffic lights is dangerous. Crossing that driveway relies on pedestrians turning their head 180° to watch traffic coming from behind them and looking carefully for indicator lights signalling entry to the petrol station (many of these indicators are switched on very late). Additionally on the eastern side of the school, there would also be a need to have a 'shared path' along Baker St. on at least one side for some length beyond Felton Rd E to facilitate off-road cycling until pedestrian numbers thin out. Heading towards Moseley St., it would be good for the path to extend as far as the boundary of James Ruse Agricultural High School. In the other direction, the path would need to go to the proposed signalised intersection at Pennant Hills Rd and preferably into the upcoming BaptistCare mixed-residential development.

In Felton Rd W, a shared path up to Arcadian Circuit would be advisable. Also, along Edinburgh Av. to the entrance to Hunts Ck Reserve. It must be noted that the numbers of streets with a footpath in the area around the school has increased significantly in the last 5-10 years under the management of The Hills Shire Council and now City of Parramatta Council. This is good and will allow children at the school to complete their commute to/from school by bicycle off the road on paths with few pedestrians.

To further mitigate congestion problems in the mornings and afternoons in the narrow Felton Rd E, I suggest that both kerbs be classified at 'No Stopping' zones all the way up to Baker St. During these times, we do not want anybody parking or even 'kiss and ride' instances occurring here as just one vehicle doing this disrupts the whole flow of two-way traffic along that artery. This is vital if there are to be school buses. Only the school entrance at Felton Rd E can receive buses. Therefore, such a large vehicle/s must be able to easily reach Baker St. Although I have seen suggestions in the plans that the Felton Rd W section of Kingsdene Oval could be modified to be a bus stop, I am not as enthusiastic about that as having buses going into the Felton Rd E entrance because the tight residential streets that would have to be negotiated for buses to arrive/depart that bus stop mean there is little room at T intersections for buses to turn into another street.

On the subject of school buses, I believe that the provision of such should be seriously examined to further reduce desire for driving cars to the school. There could be a loop service that orbits the school from an approximate distance (e.g. 500m or 1km) to service households where 'active transport' is not very appealing. If this service was in place, it would allow the tightening of criteria for permits to be issued to private motorists to collect or dispose of children at the school. Therefore, only the most needy would come by car. As I have said, walking, cycling and public transport must be the 'easy option'. People must have to jump through several high hoops to drive there. Driving is often seen as the 'lazy' option. The conditions at the school must challenge that suburban mindset. You can see this regarding Kingsford-Smith (Sydney) Airport at Mascot. From 2000, the airport has been serviced by a railway whose operation involves the private sector and the collection of a station access fee. Consequently, there are no public buses entering the airport

from the city as there used to be which would compete with the railway today. The only bus going there has a very strategic route that services areas that unlikely to benefit or use the new railway. People are 'channelled' into using the railway because going there by bus from most places is the hard option which involves long trips and transfers.

The plans indicate that there are to be 53 spaces in a staff carpark. While I agree with the argument in 5.7.2 of Appendix 24, I would recommend consultation with the teachers at the school. Many primary-school teachers have a lot of marking and reading of students' work. They often take home big heavy bags/boxes full of homework and school workbooks which they dump in the boot of the car. They mark these while slumped in a lounge chair with a glass of wine and dark chocolate after being with other people's children all day. As you can imagine, this activity cannot happen using active or public transport. What teacher is going to carry big heavy boxes of homework up to Pennant Hills Rd so they can board a bus to begin their long trip home to who knows where? It would be interesting to survey where the teachers live. It's possible many teachers live far away as a teacher's salary is largely insufficient on its own to allow living in a private home in the Carlingford area. To achieve your active and public transport goals with the staff you may need to do something creative to convince staff to finish this work at school. Encouraging staff to use the library as an 'after-dark' marking area is an idea. They may like a comfortable lounge room that does not look institutional where teachers can relax and consume chocolate and coffee while they get on with the unpaid overtime. As I have said, you will need to talk to teachers to find a solution because if you don't, the local streets are likely to keep being used as an overflow parking area for over 50+ vehicles. That's not really fair to the school's nearby residents who are burdened with morning and evening mayhem every weekday on residential streets from an oversized suburban primary school.

To ration access to the staff carpark, there may need to be a permit system introduced to ensure access to those in greatest need. The principal and senior staff will have to implement a programme to educate and encourage teachers to do more of their marking at the school and use public transport to go home. They must be discouraged from parking in surrounding streets.

Appendix 25 indicated that the school has a well-known and highly-sought reputation for academic excellence. This is true and was the case when I was there as a student. It also notes that since 2015, the student body has increased by 762 students or 83%. This is extraordinary because I don't believe that the catchment's population or number of dwellings has increased by 83%. I believe that at least a portion of this increase is attributable to school and department policy failures at stemming the flow of increasingly desperate parents trying to secure enrolment. I do not have any intelligence on the matter but I have heard gossip that renting is used as a way to enter the school, especially with the large number of tenanted flats in the high-density developments around the upcoming Carlingford light rail station. Apparently, parents rent for a while and then shortly after enrolling their child, then move away which results in an inflated student body and an increased need to drive children to/from the school. If they move away, the students need to leave the school and there should be no automatic acceptance of siblings once the eldest has been accepted, despite the family living somewhere beyond the catchment. Additionally, you would need to very closely investigate whether applicants are telling the truth about where they live. Cross check with the electoral roll, passport office etc. to ensure that is where they live. It's possible that desperate parents could use a relative's or friend's address and/or water/electricity bill to prove residency or argue that the child lives with that person in the catchment area when they actually go home in a car every afternoon outside the catchment. As an ex-student, I know how strong the desire and drive can be for enrolment at CWPS. This is also accentuated by the school's very close proximity to the 'Holy Grail' of academic excellence: James Ruse Agricultural High School. Living around here can be very important for parents who highly value these schools.

I know some of these policy settings seem harsh but having an exponential rise in the school's student body is not fair on local residents or the students themselves. At what point do we decide that a primary school is too big? 2000? 2500? 3000? How healthy is it for young learners to be amongst such a sea of students? Housing density in the school's current catchment will continue to

grow with an expectant increase in parents seeking enrolment. How else can you ensure genuine applicants that want to live in the area secure a place without being stamped out by frenzied parents from elsewhere who are convinced that teachers sprinkle academic fairy dust around the classroom? As a resident, I am OK with the fact that the school is going to be modified to permanently accommodate 1610 students with an associated private-motorist reduction programme. I am not OK with allowing that plan to never reach fruition because student numbers couldn't be successfully capped with current mechanisms with the result that daily traffic mayhem continues or even increases and demountable classrooms swallow up remaining green space at the school. Everybody in my household does not want to see one single demountable at that school after the construction project is finished and in the years ahead. I know the current enrolment is over 1610. Therefore, good management and an eye single to the benefits touted in these plans will have to ensure numbers get down to 1610 ASAP and kept there as students graduate to high school. If this number is not maintained and traffic and demountables return, then what you are selling to the community, including residents, parents, teachers, staff and the students themselves is a lie. You will be guilty of misleading us all with your coloured illustrations of green space, playgrounds, new facilities etc. if you don't keep numbers low enough for all of us to enjoy the planned benefits. We will continue to suffer the same problems we do now.

I also wish to note that surrounding primary schools are being under-utilised. According to the information on the Dept. of Education's 'School Finder' website, Telopea Public School has an enrolment of 86 students, Yates Ave at Dundas Valley with 127 students, Oatlands Public School with 201 students and Burnside Public School with 257 students. This is too lop-sided when compared to CWPS and it indicates that something is not right. The NSW Government will have to pursue policies to ensure enrolments increase at these schools instead of CWPS. Some of these schools are operating at below capacity while others could be sustainably modified to increase capacity. Strategies that do not involve capital works will also have to be utilised to ensure more enrolments. This includes dynamic principals and teaching staff hand-picked to ensure positive student outcomes and the deliberate cultivation amongst community social networks of the suitability of those schools for parents seeking academic rigour. Parents need to know that CWPS is not the only school in the world, they can be convinced to have confidence in these other schools with such capable staff afoot and that their children will not end up uneducated at these schools. To relieve pressure on CWPS, catchments would have to be changed and attractive school bus options would need to be provided.

I do not have too much to say concerning the proposed buildings themselves other than that I would have thought it would have been a good idea to increase the number of floors to buildings K and L. Can those buildings support additional floors? Can they be modified to do so? If so, we may be able to reduce the footprint of buildings X and Y taking up valuable land and maybe even reduce the need for building X altogether. Additionally, is the proposed development future-proof? In the unfortunate and unpleasant event that there is no other option but to increase the student body beyond 1610, can buildings X and Y have additional floors added above? I know that in the case of building Y this would be undesirable due to the shading impact on the southern play space, particularly in winter. However, I believe that this would be preferable to those awful demountables consuming play space. If the shading from the extension had a negative impact on grass then I am sure that the area could be modified to serve as an enjoyable play area that is not reliant on green grass. At least the space is there. Also, please make sure that all the cladding installed on the new buildings is good quality and meets the Australian Standards. Be strict in not allowing that cheap, imported and flammable rubbish to be installed.

In conclusion, this is a good project with serious consideration of the site and the desire to best accommodate an extraordinarily large number of students within a site and locality that was never designed to do so. There is however, a strong need to communicate with teaching staff on the issue of car parking, consultation required with other transport infrastructure providers to ensure facilities are there beyond the school gate to ensure that the use of active transport does materialise and goal-focused, single-minded management by the school and the Department of

Education to ensure that student numbers stay at what they are planned to be and therefore, allow the students and the community to benefit and enjoy what you have worked so hard to bring about.

I wish you and all of your colleagues every success in seeing this project come to physical fruition.

Yours sincerely,

Damian Turco