

**Submission from:**

Ruth Nahlous

Parent of high school student

Active member and Volunteer Marsden High School P&C Association

**Application Name:** Meadowbank Education and Employment Precinct Schools Project – Modification 4 – SSD-9343-Mod-4

**Have you made any reportable Political donations:** I have not

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To the Director Social and Infrastructure Assessments,

I Ruth Nahlous **OBJECT** strongly to the modifications submitted as part of the Meadowbank Education and Employment Precinct project.

We have grave concerns about the proposal as it will detrimentally impact student safety getting to and from school. Please help keep my child and all the other children now and into the future safe. Please do this now and not after some horrible accident that we will all regret.

I have taken the following information from the P&C of which I have participated in these conversations for the last few years:

The original approval for this school and TAFE complex was based on safety requirements that were deemed necessary for an area where the local road network was inadequate in safety terms for the development.

We have listed below a number of points, some which come under the Project Manager's "Modification 4 – SSD-9343-Mod-4" proposal and some further examples that demonstrate that there is an implementation problem where small, in terms of the total cost, are omitted, but which make a difference, and which affect the physical and mental well-being of students.

- **Deletion of the requirement to provide a 2.5m wide shared user path along the western side of Hermitage Road – REJECT** - The current footpath on Hermitage Road runs out after about 100m and turns into a grassed section, not level to walk on. It was part of the approvals to install a footpath along this section of road which leads to the school. The project team believe it will be too costly to install due to services that run under that section of ground and have put in a modification to plan seeking to exclude this footpath from being installed.

We have looked into this ourselves and have been told by a Sydney Water expert that this is an everyday simple exercise and that the water main that needs to be moved, in accordance with the plans that the developer submitted to Council, are not complex.

The data the Project Team has used to justify the removal of an upgrade to the Hermitage Road footpath with the reasoning it will not have a heavy pedestrian flow of children is clearly flawed to anyone who knows the area and how teenagers think and act.

The catchment area that the data has been taken from simply does not represent accurately where the students travel from and how they will get to school. This is evident from data the P&C have gathered from current students, who travel from places such as Dundas, Rydalmere, Epping, Carlingford, Telopea, Marsfield, Bankstown, Mount Druitt and many other suburbs outside of Ryde. The safety concerns will remain should the Department of Education change the school catchment areas in the future.

Ideally, the safety works should be completed before the schools open.

We believe this is necessary as our kids will get off buses either at West Ryde train station or outside the 7eleven on Victoria Road and choose to walk down Hermitage Road as it is the most convenient, direct route for kids coming from the Parramatta direction.

Business owners on the block commencing from Hermitage Road to Mellor Street are also hugely concerned with regard to the safety of students travelling on industrial streets with a constant flow of work vehicles and heavy trucks. They have paid for traffic studies by a private company but these are not being accepted by the project team as real evidence in our plight to have the safety concerns heard.

Another issue is the **Traffic light timing** at the intersection of Victoria Road to Hermitage Road: This timing of the lights is way too short for both motor vehicles and student pedestrians to cross Victoria Road.

Nonetheless, it is even worse for vehicles travelling along Hermitage Road from the north of Victoria Road and turning right (westward) into Victoria Road. Many of these vehicles do a work around which involves going straight through the intersection, then making a U-Turn in the southern part of Hermitage Road, and then turning left into Victoria Road.

This is already a chaotic and massive safety issue which will be exacerbated greatly when both Marsden High School and Meadowbank Primary School are functioning.

**Physical Barriers:** We would also like to see physical barriers on Victoria Road installed to discourage students from cutting across Victoria Road between traffic lights. This would be so much safer for everyone. This is a standard measure put in place for many schools and areas that are dangerous and assist pedestrians who need protecting from the traffic. There has already been a death on that stretch of road and we feel that without appropriate safety measures it will only be a matter of time before one of our children is killed or injured.

- Changes to footpath upgrade requirements along Bowden Street and Squire Street – **REJECT** – these footpaths need to safely accommodate the number of children and families who will walk these streets to and from school.

#### **Changes to Pedestrian crossing at/near the following intersection:**

- **See Street: - REJECT** - The Project Team has said that Council have instructed them to not install the pedestrian crossing that was planned for this intersection. **The Council have denied this and have written to confirm that they do want this pedestrian crossing included in the scope of the build as per the original requirements.** This omission is ludicrous when it is the direct crossing that families will need to take to enter the school when walking from down Bowden Street and either MacPherson Street or up See Street from Angus Street.
- **Rhodes Street and Macpherson Street – REJECT** - removal of pedestrian crossing in Kiss and Ride area.

Additional Rhodes Street Dangers - This is the allocated street for Kiss & Ride. Having schools that cater for over 2,500 + students, with parents who need to drop children for Primary School, High School or TAFE at the same location is going to cause chaos. Even with different start times, this will not make much difference to the traffic jams that will occur at this point. There will be massive issues with cars doing illegal U-Turns or three point turns on every street from the school to Victoria Road so they don't have to do the full loop involving coming back onto Victoria Road and back around to the drop zone again. This issue was brought up many times by the Project Reference Group (PRG) representative who suggested a roundabout where Hermitage

Rd meets Rhodes Street so that cars can easily return to the direction they have come from. This was disregarded as a possible solution.

The [PTC Consultants](#) assessment of the character of Bowden and Macpherson Streets being residential and cafes completely ignores the fact that it is the street where all heavy vehicles and rat run cars turn onto Bowden Street from Victoria Rd. Hermitage Road is too narrow for all industrial heavy traffic to turn onto so they all transit to the industrial area via Bowden Street. Saying this street has less opportunity for conflict is completely wrong.

- **Mellor Street and Victoria Road – APPROVE** – open to an alternative pedestrian crossing solution to be presented.

Other:

- Deletion of the requirement to provide upgrades to streetlights – **REJECT** – all lighting should be up to standard and available on all access roads to and from the school
- Provide flexibility in the timing for completion of public domain works where existing overhead/inground services or approval cause delays to the required works – **APPROVE** once conditions that Council have set out on their Attachment 1 document pg. 12.
- Amend timing for the submission External Works Compliance Certificate and Works-as-Executed Plans to Council – **APPROVE** once conditions that Council have set out on their Attachment 1 document pg. 13 is met.
- The modification application also seeks consent for extension of the approved construction hours to allow construction of the public domain works, where approval has been granted under Section 138 of Roads Act 1993. – **REJECT** - Extension of construction hours – this build has already caused major impacts to the local community. They can currently work until 7pm but are out of the site before 3pm in the afternoon. How about they just work until 5pm or 6pm like normal people. That is an extension to their work day. Residents in the surrounding streets don't need anything beyond that. - **REJECT**

#### **Additional problems with the school build impacting school operations**

In addition to the safety concerns of students for the transit to school, we also have concerns about a number of key aspects that we believe needed to be included as part of the build. Unfortunately, we have been continuously told that there would be no additions to (detailed) scope, as perceived by the Project Manager, even though so many decisions made do not make any sense.

We deem the below points are essential to students' safety and best practice as demonstrated in other new build designs.

- All weather surface: the school has a tiny oval installed at the site, it is at the lowest point on the whole site and is in a flood zone. Due to the fact that it is not a full-sized oval and no full game of field sport can be played on it, it will have a heavy flow of students - at full capacity will have 1,620 students.

We believe it will be either a dust bowl in summer or a swamp when it rains. We had requested right from the start of this process that an all-weather surface be laid so it can be utilized by the children all year round. This is a standard that is already been implemented in a number of new school builds and we don't understand why this is not possible for our school with a budget of \$300M.

This omission will turn into a costly exercise for the Department of Education to maintain, which we are sure won't be budgeted for in the school's Annual Plan. We have looked into this, and have found that playgrounds and playing fields that have been installed by Councils and other bodies do not include a concrete base. There are some places on school sites where artificial grass has been laid on concrete, usually for other reasons, such as the fact that the concrete is there for another purpose.

- COLA: we believe there are not enough shaded areas for students to play at the new school site. We have requested an all-weather COLA to be constructed over at least one of the designated court areas outdoors.

The need for sun protection is well-known, as quoted on the Department's web site as below. The new build at Meadowbank simply does not meet the Department's own position on sun safety. See:

<https://education.nsw.gov.au/student-wellbeing/health-and-physical-care/sun-safety>

"Our schools take sun safety seriously and implement a range of strategies to support school environments that protect students from the damaging effects of the sun.

Much of the sun exposure that causes skin damage occurs in childhood and adolescence.

By the age of 15 many children have developed irreversible skin damage from exposure to the sun.

While skin cancer is the most common cancer in Australia, it is estimated that 95% of skin cancers can be prevented through reducing exposure to ultraviolet radiation from the sun.

Each school has a responsibility to provide a safe environment for students and staff and this includes providing adequate protection from the sun".

- The response we have had so far is that the school will have a basketball undercover area at the end of the building. This space is not capable of running multiple sports classes in an all-weather situation. In addition to this, it is located directly across from the canteen area. This will be an extremely high traffic area in break times and we are already anticipating that the court area will struggle to be used for sport and recreation when there will be so many students gathering for food and then requiring a place to eat it.

At the current Marsden site, we have a great all weather COLA area behind the hall. This is utilized in all weather, is a place where students can play outdoors when it is raining or very hot for either classes or break time and often is used by other classes when doing lessons outdoors. The new site is seriously lacking all-weather shaded areas of a suitable size to accommodate the number of students who will be directed away from school buildings during recess and lunch and in an area that is monitored by teachers on duty. We experience a large duration of extremely hot weather and from a sun safety perspective the school is inadequately equipped to deal with the 1,620 students that will be using this space.

### **Parking**

And lastly, teacher parking. The school will only have enough parking for half the teaching staff that will be at the school each day.

The Department has stated it is not required to provide parking for teachers and that teachers will be encouraged to use public transport like the students. We all know this is an unrealistic expectation. A large number of teachers are also parents and will often have to drop children to childcare centres or schools and then transit to school. Others will not live-in public transport areas. Teachers who live further away are often not serviced well by public transport.

There is zero all-day street parking within the vicinity of the new school's precinct and any all-day parking that is available will have been taken up by workers from the industrial area, who have been parking on these streets for the last 50 or more years and start work anything from 5.30am. We see a huge lack of empathy for what will be a massive issue for the hard-working staff of these schools. We believe that the schools will lose good teaching staff because of lack of parking. This is contradictory to the perception that having a brand new, state of the art building will attract the brightest and best. Experience tells us that this isn't the case. Mostly people choose working for schools on reputation and conditions. This is a vital condition that we believe will impact teachers' decision making when weighing up the benefits of working at Marsden High School.

### **Concluding Remarks**

Most concerning to top all this off, our parent representative on the Project Reference Group (PRG) has been part of the process for 3 years and had to sign a Non-Disclosure-Agreement. This has ensured a total block on any timely information flowing into the P&C or broader community on the progress of the build or her ability to seek any input from the community to improvements on the design. Including a parent on the PRG has proved to be merely a "tick box for community engagement" exercise, which has been both frustrating and insulting to those involved.

I believe our concerns are real and valid and seek the NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment to refuse amendments to the application and also assist in the process to have our other highlighted concerns raised above. The gravity and importance of safety to students and teachers of Marsden High School and Meadowbank Public School should be the highest priority not the cost cutting exercise at the end of the build to speed up completion.

I look forward to a positive outcome in addressing the concerns of both myself and the Marsden High School P&C and stopping this ridiculous modification process and short changing the community with inclusions within the school development.

Ruth Nahlous

### **Research links which question the Department's motivations when responding to parents' issues;**

- <https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/for-real-hard-wear-sydney-s-council-turn-to-fake-grass-20190524-p51qtx.html>  
A grass field might be able to be used between 30 to 40 hours a week, said Ryde mayor Jerome Lexale. But a field with artificial turf could be used up to 90 hours per week.
- <https://www.ryde.nsw.gov.au/files/assets/public/publications/parks-open-space/synthetic-surface-action-plan-2016-2026.pdf>  
**2.1 NSROC SYNTHETIC SURFACE PLANNING.... But lots more information in this file**  
A recently completed regional plan for synthetic sportsfields<sup>1</sup> found a strong indication that "...demand for access to consistently available playing areas for field sports outstrips supply of available facilities [in NSROC] and that the gap will widen as population in northern Sydney continues to grow. It also noted that the region does not have large greenfield areas to develop new sports fields to meet forecast demand. Potential strategies to increase the supply of sportsfields included: 1. Developing sports fields on greenfield sites (opportunities limited but examine possible conversion of land to open space eg former tip or industrial sites) 2. Increase community use of existing natural turf or school sports fields 3. Community access to synthetic sports fields in schools, including private schools 4. Increasing the maintenance regime on natural turf sports fields for increased training and competitions (may require significant capital

costs on drainage and irrigation) 5. Improving floodlighting to spread the load on natural turf surfaces 6. Convert natural turf to synthetic surfaces

- <https://www.ryde.nsw.gov.au/Council/Media-Centre/News-and-Public-Notices/Council-votes-for-Synthetic-Turf-to-ease-soaring-demand-for-Sporting-Fields>

Council votes for Synthetic Turf to ease soaring demand for Sporting Fields

**Published on 16 December 2015**

ELS Hall Park No. 1 and Christie Park Nos 1 and 2 will be developed with all-weather synthetic playing surfaces to meet the soaring demand for sporting fields in the City of Ryde.

Councillors voted unanimously in favour of the staff recommendation for a 10 year Synthetic Surfaces Program as part of the draft Sport and Recreation Strategy that will go on public exhibition in February 2016.

City of Ryde Mayor, Cllr Jerome Laxale, said the decision was a good outcome for the sporting community.

<https://www.ryde.nsw.gov.au/files/assets/public/committees/wac/past/2013/works-and-community-19-nov-2013-attachments.pdf>

**And pages like these.....**

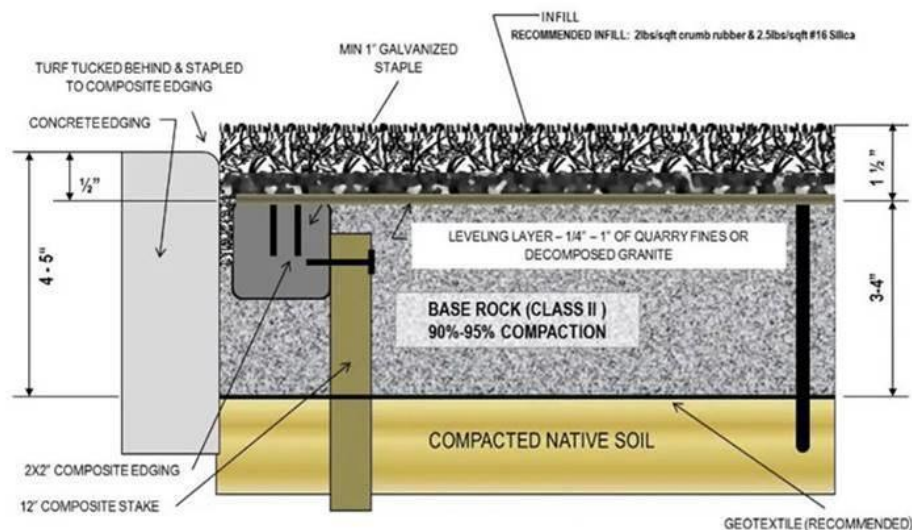
- <https://enquire.grassports.com.au/case-studies>
- <https://www.easyturf.com.au/recent-artificial-grass-installs>
- <https://enquire.grassports.com.au/sites/default/files/casestudies/Hume%20Anglican%20Grammar%20Customer%20Story.pdf>

**Turf Installation for fields – concrete slab not required P&C person told this**

<https://www.purchasegreen.com/artificial-grass/artificial-grass-installation/sports-fields/> Diagram below

High level approach of planning in converting this precinct Gladesville > Parra

Loss of Marsden High which we are concerned about given history ... new site not as good as this one. Meadowbank has major traffic and congestion issues and promises were made to alleviate these .. reneging not good form ....



*This sports turf is being installed next to a hard concrete edge using a bend-a-board.*

1. Excavate 3-5 inches of the native soil; an optional weed barrier may be laid down on top of the excavated area.
2. Fill in 2 inches with a crushed rock base, compacted to 90%-95%

## Sun Safety Policy

<https://education.nsw.gov.au/student-wellbeing/health-and-physical-care/sun-safety>

Each school has a responsibility to provide a safe environment for students and staff and this includes providing adequate protection from the sun.

- seeking shade during peak UVR times during the school day
- wearing SPF 30+ (or higher) sunscreen.

Schools use the [sun safety for students guidelines \(DOC 268KB\)](#) to plan and implement comprehensive sun safety for students. Support tools and information sheets are included on this site:

- [Sun safety for students checklist \(DOC 386KB\)](#)
- [Sun safety for students action plan \(DOC 245KB\)](#)