



# Northern Sydney District Council of P&C Associations

Email: [pcnsmail@gmail.com](mailto:pcnsmail@gmail.com)

David Hope, President

## SUBMISSION

### STATE SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENT MODIFICATION APPLICATION **Meadowbank Education and Employment Precinct Schools Project** MODIFICATION 4 Application No SSD-9343-Mod-4

#### About Us

The Northern Sydney District Council of P&C Associations has existed in various forms for a number of decades. It is constituted under the Education Act 1990 Sec 15. We are an independent, fully volunteer organisation with membership open to P&Cs in our area of operation. We do not exercise any control over our members. We are not connected in any way to the NSW P&C Federation after a change to the Act by then-Minister Piccoli in 2014. We do not receive government funding.

We provide support and networking opportunities for P&Cs in an area north of the Harbour/Parramatta River from the coast westward to Ryde, Epping and the lower Hills, and northward to the Hawkesbury River. We communicate with an ENews, Facebook page and at meetings once per term attended by the Department's Executive Director and various guest speakers.

See more at: <https://tinyurl.com/PCNSDC-About-2021>

#### Why are we making this submission?

The Meadowbank Education Precinct Schools are part of the NSW Government's \$8billion capital works program to provide new schools to meet demand and which provide best practice, 21<sup>st</sup> Century, student-focussed, flexible layout facilities.

The Meadowbank Project is part of the \$8billion capital works program, which had its genesis in our long campaign for more school capacity, built to modern standard, which began in 2010.

Our P&Cs in 30 public schools in the area from Mosman, through North Sydney and up to Killara began bringing severe overcrowding issues to their District Council. On approaching the Department, we were told that student numbers would begin to drop after 5 years, according to its modelling. The Department's figures were not in line with the investigations that the District Council and the school P&Cs had done separately.

Our long battle included many hundreds of hours of volunteer time by P&C volunteers in the affected schools and at the District Council. Our campaign included a 300 person meeting at Willoughby Girls' High School attended by local MP Gladys Berejiklian, representations to the Education Minister and MPs, and a media campaign.

Long story short, with the help of Ms Berejiklian and other local MPs we were granted a working group with the Department. We were able to demonstrate that there was a fatal flaw in the Department's modelling, and advocated for the need to considerably upgrade the Department's infrastructure capabilities. We also advocated that the new schools be built to 21<sup>st</sup> Century, international best practice standards.



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### Our objections to this Application

Changes requested “to the public domain works including pedestrian infrastructure upgrades”

**We are very surprised that the Department of Education is even countenancing reductions in safety such as requested in MOD 4 given its commitment, and that of the government, to the safety of its students. The Department should simply withdraw this application.**

The conditions were inserted in the approval in the first place for a very good reason, and were critical to the approval of the project – pocket money in the roughly \$300m being spent at the site. It is not uncommon for external and internal service providers to lose interest with what they regard as the fiddly items nearing the end of a project, and to want to avoid doing some of the work, as could be the case here. Sometimes this is due to budget and time over-runs.

The site is in a congested traffic area, which includes industrial premises, with some of the roads used as rat runs to avoid congestion on the nearby intersecting major road arteries – Victoria Road (A10) and the notoriously congested ring road (A3). The footpaths and road crossings are generally inadequate for the extra young pedestrians generated by the 2,620 new school students, and the additional TAFE students.

The traffic varies from large trucks, commercial vehicles such as utes and vans; school buses and cars – a mix not often found adjacent to a public school. Safety treatments at high risk sites generally include pedestrian traffic lights, overhead pedestrian bridges, wider footpaths, traffic calming devices, roundabouts and fences to prevent crossing in dangerous places, mirrors so that drivers of vehicles crossing the footpath have vision of people walking along the footpath, and facilities for bicycles.

In the circumstances at Meadowbank, student pedestrians and cyclists are vulnerable to vehicles crossing the footpath, vehicles double parked obscuring vision, vehicles parked on footpaths, frustrated and distracted drivers, and the whims of the students themselves.

**There has been cases of young children being run over and injured or killed in car parks and on footpaths near schools, sometimes by other parents.**

Change requested in MOD 4: “amend timing for the submission External Works Compliance Certificate and Works-as-Executed Plans to Council”

The current condition is important in that it provides for accountability whilst the project team is still properly operating.

These items are often neglected as projects wind down and staff disappear.

**We agree with the position put by the Marsden High School P&C in its extensive submission to the DPIE on the specific details, but we have added some additional observations below.**



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## Hermitage Road

This road is particularly dangerous on the eastern side with its footpath crossings, and with vehicles sometimes emerging from buildings right on the footpath level with no line of sight. Cars and trucks also park on the footpath – see the Google Streetview links following:

<https://goo.gl/maps/ie5oNJHHYmVvEAYzS7>

<https://goo.gl/maps/73yJTBWxyKFNf9vC7>

<https://goo.gl/maps/vgi6yC3mVg5bK9cW8>

On the western side of Hermitage Road is a steep bank in a relatively short section.

<https://goo.gl/maps/DWryiTnXrfeTQvbx8>

There is just one main footpath crossing at Sydney Water's main gate, where visibility is good.

The Project Team has produced designs for the 2.5m wide elevated walkway/cycleway for part of the way along that road. Part of the reason for renegeing on the original approval is said to be "complex underground services". The drawings, already submitted to Sydney Water, show only a 100mm diameter water main (Sydney Water's smallest in the more than 20,000km general reticulation system) needing to be relocated. This is definitely not complex for Sydney Water and its approved contractors. Sydney Water spends around \$60million each year on renewing water mains or relocating them due to roadworks. The work is simple bread and butter and the excuse is overblown.

It would appear that the Department of Education has assumed that its MODIFICATION 4 Application would be approved. The provisions it seeks approval to remove do not appear in its Marsden High School Info Pack, Page 6, dated back in October, 2021, including the works in Hermitage Road. [See:](#)

[https://www.schoolinfrastructure.nsw.gov.au/content/dam/infrastructure/projects/m/meadowbank-education-precinct/nov-2021/Marsden\\_High\\_School\\_Information\\_Pack\\_-\\_complete.pdf](https://www.schoolinfrastructure.nsw.gov.au/content/dam/infrastructure/projects/m/meadowbank-education-precinct/nov-2021/Marsden_High_School_Information_Pack_-_complete.pdf) which states

"A new shared path will travel along Rhodes, Macpherson, Bowden and Squire streets to provide safe access for those walking and riding bikes to school. New pedestrian crossings will be located across Macpherson and Bowden streets".

## Completion of the MOD 4 Works

Whatever the outcome of the MOD 4 Application, there needs to be some assurance that the safety works will actually be completed and within a reasonable time frame.

It may be that Ryde Council and Sydney Water, or their approved contractors, are contracted by the Department of Education to undertake these works. Irrespective, in order to ensure expedient completion, payment for completion of these works should be subject to normal contract conditions – ie payment on satisfactory completion of parts of the work, rather than a full lump sum before work starts. Payments should not be made to Council, Sydney Water or others until satisfactory completion of specified works. We would like to see this provision added to the sign off by the DPIE on the total project.

## Other issues not directly related to this MOD 4 Application

The District Council has been concerned for some time that the P&C nominee on Project Reference Groups (PRGs) is unable to communicate with the community due to unnecessarily burdensome Non-Disclosure Agreements. P&C Nominees are often bulldozed by the professionals on the PRG when it suits them. This is not genuine, best practice community consultation as we think that the DPIE would expect. This sometimes leads to sub-optimal solutions and dissatisfaction in the community.



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The main additional issues in this category identified by the soon to-be-relocated Marsden High P&C are briefly described below.

Apparently the small “oval” for general play for the high school is not getting artificial grass, which has less maintenance and is all weather. This allows for significantly greater use of the area. On a congested site where space is at such a premium this makes no sense, and [the children need room to exercise and play](#). The parents seem to think that the Project Team put forward the idea that a concrete slab was required underneath by way of undermining the idea. The “concrete slab” is not required, as demonstrated by the many Council playing fields in metro Sydney and elsewhere now equipped with artificial grass.

The Marsden P&C has said in its submission that the Project Team has said that Ryde Council has instructed the Department of Education not to install the pedestrian crossing that was planned for See Street. The Council has denied this and has written to **confirm that it does want this pedestrian crossing included** in the scope of the build as per the original requirements.

There is not enough sun-safe covered outdoor learning areas (COLAs), despite the Department’s policies on safety, which are based on the science. See links below:

<https://education.nsw.gov.au/parents-and-carers/going-to-school/preparing/starting-primary-school/health-and-wellbeing/sun-safety>

<https://www.cancercouncil.com.au/cancer-prevention/sun-protection/preventing-skin-cancer/shade>

### In conclusion

The overall build of the school provides for international best practice, 21<sup>st</sup> Century education.

Removal of any of the provisions for child safety in adjacent public domain work departs significantly from best practice urban design principles, and amounts to an unjustified attempt to renege on the original approval.

The PRG process has left a number of minor items undone as mentioned above, compared to the overall cost. The requests by the Project Manager in MOD 4 will make that situation worse.

It would add value to the outcomes if Marsden High P&C’s suggestions for some extra improvements be embraced by the Department. These would also improve the amenity for the fast-growing local community, an outcome which the Department says it seeks generally on its projects. We recommend that the DPIE counsel the Department of Education on this broader point if necessary.

### We recommend that

- all of the MOD 4 changes be rejected.
- DPIE put in place orders on the Department of Education that all the public domain works must be completed within a reasonable time frame as approved by DPIE.
- DPIE talk to the Department of Education about improving its community consultation process via the Program Reference Group method.

David Hope 0419 247 547  
President, Northern Sydney District Council of P&C Associations