

Objection: Lindfield Learning Village (LLV) Stages 2 and 3

I wish to lodge my objection to the proposal relating to LLV Stages 2 and 3.

Background to my concerns

I have been a resident and unit owner at Dunstan Grove, Lindfield since February 2018. In almost two years of living in this development, I have become familiar with the streets, pedestrian ways, and flow of public transport and traffic at Dunstan Grove and surrounding areas, including the nearby Lindfield Learning Village.

I understand that at present, there are 350 students currently enrolled at the Village, which commenced operations in January 2019. And I believe an additional 65 students will be added next year - bringing the total in 2020 to 415 students. I am also aware that LLV (Stages 2 & 3) proposes to add another 1,575 students to bring the total to 2,000 students by completion in early 2022.

I would like to say upfront that I recognise the value of education and the importance of addressing future schooling needs. Further, I understand there is local community demand for the Village and that School Infrastructure, NSW Department of Education, is charged with the responsibility of delivering schools across NSW where they are needed, and planning accordingly.

However, I have grave concerns for the impact this development will have on residents at both Dunstan Grove and the nearby extended Lindfield community. Vehicle and pedestrian access to and from this peaceful area is restricted by narrow, winding streets and non-existent or poor quality footpathing.

Grosvenor Rd running between Lady Game Drive and the Pacific Highway is the main conduit for traffic in this area, and is already a busy road, with a busy set of lights at its intersection with the Pacific Highway; while Eton Road which runs parallel to Grosvenor, providing the only direct access to both the Learning Village and Dunstan Grove, is obviously not suitable for heavy traffic.

Austral Avenue which connects Grosvenor and Eton is just a small side street, and where it connects with Eton is already too busy and dangerous, despite two sets of dotted lines in Eton on either side of the T-intersection which are consistently either not understood or disregarded by motorists. There are frequent near collisions at this intersection caused by traffic going both ways on Eton failing to recognise the right of way of vehicles coming up Austral.

Come for a walk!

Every week I walk from Dunstan Grove to the Pacific Highway, along Eton Rd to where it too reaches the Pacific Highway. This is an interesting experience for a pedestrian as the 'pathways' are intermittent, on the left side (heading east) of the

road only, and uneven and steep in parts. As you walk and cross, you need to constantly look behind, ahead and left and right as the roads are winding, with frequent blind spots and limited visibility.

I invite you to go on this walk with me now.

From the roundabout at Dunstan Grove we take the left-side uphill footpath for about 50 metres. This ends just before the overhead school bridge which is a heritage-listed feature of the existing Sulman medal-winning building. At this point, we must cross the road to continue, noting there is no painted crossing. You have to be careful here, as there is a blind, winding corner about thirty metres ahead and traffic can appear suddenly. We cross, walk under the bridge and at the top of this rise we walk past a pedestrian crossing (no lights), about a metre wide, suitable for one person at a time. This is of no use to us now, as we were already forced to cross 30 metres back down the road. By the way, this crossing takes you directly to the Blair Wark VC Community centre alongside the Charles Bean oval - however, we are headed for the highway, the same way you would walk to Eton Bus Bay.

Just past the crossing we have the option of going straight ahead and wind around to the right, or you can take a little stairway directly up and into the LLV precinct which then takes you down another stairway to another crossing outside the main entrance and gates to the village. These little stairways are suitable for one person at a time and are inadequate for more than a few people in single file.

Now having crossed the road in front of the Village's main entrance at a two metre crossing, we continue straight ahead across a three metre crossing, past the plaques and spaces of Keysor Community Centre that commemorate the war heroes who name the buildings of the Crimson Hill project. On our left is a another small pedestrian crossing, which given there is no footpath on the other side of the road at this point, is of no use to us unless we wished to walk in the direction of Shout Ridge, toward that residential development or back towards the oval.

We are now in Eton Road, having left Dunstan Grove, and the next street on the right is Abingdon Road. Note only one side of the road caters for pedestrians. After crossing Abingdon, the narrow 'footpath' continues alongside Abingdon Road Reserve, but only for 20 metres or so. Then you need to cross to the other side of Eton where the footpath begins again, although this is still rough and narrow, suitable for one person at a time or several people in single file. If you encounter someone walking the opposite way, one or both of you need to move slightly to one side to allow each other room to pass.

Now we reach the hazardous intersection of Eton and Austral Avenue, where there is no crossing or lights - we stop and proceed with caution. We then enter a long stretch of Eton leading to the cross street Ortona Road, which to the left takes you to Grosvenor, or to the right, as far as Bayswater Road. The path continues to be uneven and narrow. If other people are out exercising or walking their dogs, many

people often decide it's easier to walk on the road itself, keeping close to the sides of parked cars. However, bear in mind in this direction the road goes steadily uphill at this stage, which means you can't see oncoming traffic until it suddenly appears. Keep as far to the left as you can. The same applies to motorists heading uphill in the same direction we are walking.

At Ortona Road, we continue straight for the highway - but first we must cross this hazardous intersection, again without lights or pedestrian crossing. At this point, the narrow footpath becomes even more irregular and steep, with a few little crumbling, concrete stairways here and there to help. At the highway, we need to be careful crossing from the left side of Eton to the right side, as this is a major shortcut for northbound traffic turning left into Eton Road, as a quick alternative to turning left at Grosvenor Road. As a pedestrian at this point on our walk, Lindfield Public School is three minutes to the left or Lindfield station, 10 minutes to the left; and Roseville station 10 minutes to the right, before you can cross at crossings with lights.

Come for a drive!

I own a car which is one of approximately 200 cars in the Dunstan Grove underground carpark, including visitor parking. When stage 1 of LLV was underway, there were frequent bottlenecks of cars leaving or returning to the carpark, waiting for trucks to backup and construction-related activities.

Let's take a drive then, to the Pacific Highway.

Ok, we exit the carpark and head uphill past the roundabout on my left. As we go uphill, heading for the overhead school bridge, I slow down as there may be traffic coming around the bend, which is a blind spot for vehicles heading in either direction. This is a narrow road too, which only makes it all the more dangerous.

After the bridge, I slow down again knowing that I have only limited visibility of people using the pedestrian crossing outside the Blair Wark VC Community Centre. Pedestrians can suddenly appear at the crossing, or can be in the process of crossing, giving motorists only seconds to stop. The road curves around to the right here, but I must also be careful in case one or more of up to 13 cars parked outside the centre are in the process of backing up to leave, or arriving in one of these car spaces. Because the road is so narrow here, if a car is backing up, it will stop traffic in both directions.

Past the community centre, I slow down yet again as I approach another blind spot on the road, as it veers left in a tight curve. Visibility in both directions around this curve is limited and hazardous. After this corner, I need to be careful again as I approach the pedestrian crossing at Keysor Centre near the intersection of Eton and Shout Ridge road. Again, visibility of pedestrians here is poor, and we may have only seconds to brake. We head further along Eton Road, veering to the right now and heading toward

the intersection with Austral Avenue. As the road straightens, we need to be careful as there will be cars parked on both sides of Eton which allows little room for two-way traffic. As cars have to stop on either side of Eton to allow cars to pass in the opposite direction, we watch out in case we need to wait to one side.

At this point on our way to the highway, we can go left at Austral, then on to Grosvenor - or we can avoid Grosvenor and take the circuitous route through the backstreets which brings you out at the highway via Shirley Road. If we take Austral, we turn left from Eton then right at the roundabout at the bottom and up along Grosvenor. I usually avoid this route because I find the intersection with lights at the Pacific Highway is frequently a bottleneck of cars waiting to turn right, with timing that only lets three or four cars through at a time. Although you can turn right from both lanes, the left lane is sometimes delayed due to left-turning cars having to wait for pedestrians to cross from the Burleigh Street side to the other side of the highway outside Lindfield Public High school.

To take the more adventurous route to the highway via Shirley Road, at the Austral Road intersection, we stop at the dotted lines, mindful that traffic heading up Austral from the Grosvenor Road roundabout, has right-of-way turning right on to Eton (meaning we must wait) and that as we are going straight ahead, cars on Eton on the other side of this intersection, turning right on to Austral, must give us right of way. Heading along Eton after the intersection then, we proceed slowly as the hill is another blind spot in relation to oncoming vehicles, which is hazardous, especially with cars parked on both sides of the road. After the hill we proceed to Ortona Road, this has stop signs on both sides of Eton at this intersection.

If we are heading toward Lindfield, turning left takes us to Grosvenor Road. But because turning right from Ortona on to Grosvenor can be difficult due to cars backed up waiting to get through the lights at the highway, we may decide to go further up Eton instead, to turn left from Eton on to the highway. It's a gamble though. There are no lights here, and there can also be a backup of northbound cars already on the highway stopped at lights at the Grosvenor Road interaction. Motorists on the highway are fickle and cannot be relied upon to let you in here - so we may be in for a wait.

If we are heading towards Roseville or Chatswood, there is no right turn from Eton on to the Pacific highway. An alternative is to turn right on to Ortona from Eton - however, this is hazardous. First, traffic on Eton coming in the opposite direction down from the highway intending to cross Ortona and head further down Eton, has right of way at this intersection. These motorists must abide by a stop sign too though, and even though they have right of way, there is often a 'Mexican standoff' scenario, as we wait for them to stop and proceed, before we can make our right turn.

After turning right from Eton into Ortona, after 30 metres or so, we come to another stop sign at Westbourne before we continue straight ahead. At Bayswater Road we

take a left, watching for traffic on the right, then another hazardous, uphill right turn into the extremely narrow Ontario Ave; left at Bromborough Road, left again into Shirley Road heading for the lights at the highway (with poor visibility of fast-moving traffic coming from the right).

Finally at this intersection with the Pacific Highway, a block from Roseville station, we have to decide which of two narrow lanes offers the best chance of turning right, considering the number of cars queueing there, which often forms a bottleneck of itself, given the inadequate few seconds these lights give you to complete the turn, and the confusion caused by turning into what appears to be a red light!

What does the above tell us?

I am not complaining about overall quality of life at Dunstan Grove and Lindfield generally. In fact, like other residents at Dunstan Grove, other apartment blocks within the Crimson Hill development, and in the West Lindfield community, I love the peace and quiet and proximity to the bush.

But as the name of LLV suggests, it should be borne in mind this is an educational village style facility, located within a village style suburb. The surrounding network of roads and footpaths providing access to the site of the Lindfield Learning Village are inadequate for high volume vehicle or pedestrian traffic.

I anticipate that for Lindfield Learning Village to increase its total student numbers from the current 350 to 2,000 - which I gently observe is close to a 600% increase - the corresponding rise in vehicle and human traffic around the area would have serious impacts in respect to:

- traffic congestion and parking issues
- noise and air pollution
- pedestrian and vehicle safety

Impact on roads (West Lindfield) / The proposed loop road (Dunstan Grove)

The 'Lindfield Learning Village - Project Update' document, dated November 2019, estimates there would be '322 cars and up to 14 buses' using the loop road 7.30 - 9.30am every weekday and '165 cars and up to 14 buses' from 2.30pm - 5.00pm, Monday to Friday.

Simple arithmetic tells me this equates to one car every 22.3 seconds and one bus every 8.5 minutes for the morning period. For the afternoon period, the update flyer estimates that for this 2.5 hour period (30 minutes longer than the morning peak period) up to the same number of buses would be involved, with 165 cars. This equates to one car every 54.5 seconds for the afternoon session (if we suspend disbelief momentarily about the total cars in the afternoon being half the number

estimated in the morning), and one bus every 10.7 minutes.

First, however, it is important to note that should this project proceed as proposed, the loop road issue is just one aspect of traffic concerns for the whole West Lindfield residential district. As the primary conduits to LLV, Grosvenor and Eton Roads are already known for congestion at peak times, with traffic lights on the Pacific highway only available at Shirley Road and Grosvenor.

Although there are lights at Shirley, this is little more than a winding, narrow street. While it is part of the 565 bus route from Chatswood Station to Eton Bus Bay, it should be acknowledged it consists of a labyrinthine sequence of side streets, with trees that scrape the sides of bus as it passes, and cars parked on both sides of the road, allowing barely enough room for cars in single file, let alone buses. It is without doubt, highly unsuitable for high levels of bus or car traffic and in the absence of pedestrian crossings, highly dangerous for anyone on foot.

As another option for accessing Eton Road, it is possible, heading north on the Pacific highway, to turn left on to Eton (where there are no lights) - however, this is a tight corner, leading to a narrow, steep section of Eton Road which again typically has cars parked on both sides, limiting passage again to one vehicle at a time.

The proposed Loop Road

Of particular concern to residents of Dunstan Grove, is the proposal for a loop road extending the current road from the existing cul-de-sac and private road to the Grove's underground car park, off to the left into the Village precinct. I understand that the new one-way loop road would circumnavigate the school complex, ending up back at the existing main entrance gates.

To make way for this, a section of the school's heritage-listed building would be demolished, along with trees and land lining the perimeter of the school site. Excuse me, but can someone explain how can a heritage-listed, award winning building be partly demolished in this way?

Further, I expect the estimates provided by the 'promotional flyer' of traffic volume during the weekday peak morning and afternoon periods to be conservative. So if Schools Infrastructure says 322 cars between 7.30am to 9.30am, and 165 cars between 2.30pm and 5.00pm - then what we will probably see is 500 cars at both times, given that I fail to see why there should be half the number of cars in the afternoon.

As mentioned, the Dunstan Grove underground car park holds up to 200 cars. If the Loop Road is constructed as proposed, I can only imagine the bedlam every morning when Dunstan Grove residents leave the carpark, to drive (as many of them do, given the distance from Lindfield and Roseville train stations) off to work. Traffic will be likely be backed up Eton Road from the carpark at least to the intersection of

Eton and Austral, as cars dropping off students at the Village, rejoin Eton to head back to the highway, or Lady Game Drive. There is also the concern that motorists connected with the Village, looking for a shortcut (ie. as a 'quick' alternative to using the Loop Road), might drop off students outside the village or outside Dunstan Grove itself, then use the Dunstan Grove roundabout to head back up the hill – causing further congestion. It is fair to say, there may be serious delays to Dunstan Grove residents trying to leave the carpark every weekday morning.

During peak time at the end of the day, 2.30pm to 5.00pm, it might also be expected that residents returning to Dunstan Grove will encounter delays in accessing the carpark, merging with the line of Loop Road motorists.

Clearly this represents a substantial increase in traffic to the Village, with serious impacts for all residents of West Lindfield including Dunstan Grove. Even if the loop road does not go ahead, Dunstan Road residents will still encounter the same issues as everyone else living in West Lindfield relating to traffic congestion, safety and noise and air pollution further up Eton Road.

Finally, if LLV Stages 2 & 3 and the Loop Road goes ahead, what can Dunstan Grove residents expect during the estimated two-year construction period? There were frequent delays to residents driving up the Grove from the carpark during the 12-month construction of Stage 1 of the Village - so one can only assume similar or worse conditions would apply.

Possible strategies to improve outcomes for everyone involved

I am not a scientist, traffic flow expert or town planner - but 'blind freddy' can see the problem comes down to student numbers. Surely this is negotiable. I fail to see how anyone can be confident Lindfield Learning Village can viably and safely accommodate 2,000 students in respect to the current location.

I understand that the infrastructure within the Village precinct can be developed to handle a student cohort of this size - but what are the logistics of students, teachers and allied staff travelling there every day? Surely negotiations must be underway with Ku-ring-ai Council and traffic flow experts as to what is feasible for the current road system surrounding the Village.

Short of using a fleet of helicopters to deliver students and teachers to the main entrance, I believe that aiming for 2,000 (by the way, that's students only - add another 200 perhaps, to include teachers and other staff?) is irresponsible in the current set of circumstances.

Consideration needs to be given to the following:

- Reducing the projected number of students. Even just a 300% increase on the current 350 (to 1,050) or 400% (to 1,400) would be a vast improvement on

what is being proposed. I understand there may be high demand, but you can't get blood out of a stone. At some point, physical and environmental limitations must decide what is possible or not possible.

- The total number of students bears a direct relationship to negative impacts on Crimson Hill residents (including Dunstan Grove) and West Lindfield residents generally. Common sense tells us all that doubling, tripling, quadrupling or as proposed, sextupling (yes, a sixfold increase!) the current student cohort, must proportionally increase pedestrian and motorist safety problems, traffic congestion and parking issues, and noise and air pollution.
- Reducing the number of cars and buses travelling to and from LLV every weekday. For example, car pooling could be enforced by making Eton Road a T3 zone during morning and afternoon peak hours. Crazy idea? In the context of the current Stage 2 & 3 proposal ... I don't think so.
- Reducing the number of buses by using double-decker buses. Yes I know they won't fit under the student overhead bridge near Dunstan Grove; but that's the point - we're trying to eliminate the loop road. Crazy idea? In the context of the current Stage 2 & 3 proposal ... I don't think so.
- Eton Bus Bay which is essentially a mini version of a loop road, works really well at present - especially as buses are kept clear of the Village campus. At present the daily times of arrival (up to 5pm) of 565 buses from Chatswood to the Bus Bay are 7.48am, 8.19am, 10.26am, 11.26am, 12.26pm, 1.21pm, 2.21pm, 3.02pm, 4.01pm, 4.20pm, 4.56pm. And the departure times of 565 buses from Eton Bus Bay (up to 5pm) to Macquarie Park every weekday are 8.19am, 9.26am, 10.26am, 11.26am, 12.26pm, 1.21pm, 4.20pm, 4.56pm.

I appreciate that timetabling will change in future, but again that's the point. With only four buses (arriving or departing) at the Bus Bay at present, during the 7.30am-9.30am and 2.30pm-5.00pm timeslots - there appears ample opportunity for extra buses to be accommodated. Is there something I'm missing here?

The passage of buses from the Bus Bay back up Eton Road heading towards the highway could also be facilitated by installing a roundabout or traffic lights at the Bay, given there would be cars travelling on Eton toward the Village. I don't think the proposed Loop Road necessarily solves this problem because they still end up at the Village main entrance, trying to enter Eton against the run of other vehicles using the Loop Road.

- Could Eton Bus Bay accommodate 'buses only' at these peak times; and for general traffic could a separate 'Eton Car Bay' be constructed around the existing bus bay, perhaps even under it, using the space that currently surrounds it? Again, this would keep traffic out of the LLV grounds.

- Could the LLV plans be amended to include construction of student living quarters on campus or at walking distance nearby? For instance, if the number of students was capped at 1,250 (a 350% increase on the current cohort) with say 250 students accommodated on or near campus, this would reduce congestion on nearby roads. Students living onsite would not need to commute, and the number of cars and buses travelling to and from LLV every weekday would be a consequence of 1,000 students only - 50% of the current proposed number. Also, the savings on servicing 750 less students might then be invested in construction of the student living quarters.

Meeting with residents

The purpose of the meeting of mostly Dunstan Grove residents with representatives from Schools Infrastructure - NSW Department of Education, at Roseville RSL on Saturday 7th December 2019, 11.30am - 1.30pm, attended by local M.P. Johnathan O'Dea - was for Government representatives to 'listen' to the locals.

Some 'listening' did occur I believe - however I'm not so sure there was any documenting of the concerns raised. 'Minutes' might have been a good idea. Accordingly, I question whether the meeting achieved anything other than the opportunity for those same representatives to experience firsthand the level of concern - not to mention outrage - felt by the many residents in attendance who articulated their reasons for opposing the proposal, and made their feelings known.

With Thursday 12 December as the original deadline for submissions, it is no wonder the meeting became heated. Schools Infrastructure met with the Dunstan Grove owners' committee once in September this year, and committee members complained about the lack of information provided and consultation generally.

The need for due process and proper consultation.

I understand the deadline for submissions regarding LLV Stages 2 and 3 is now 18 December, 2019. This is still inadequate. It is hard not to be cynical that the timing of all this reflects a Government strategy of "Let's push it through just before Christmas, to minimise the amount of consultation needed".

Accordingly, it was raised with Schools Infrastructure representatives at the Roseville meeting that the LLV proposal has been in development for 18 months. Why, therefore, does it have to be rushed through in a few short weeks with a deadline just prior to Christmas?

As for other residents at Crimson Hill and throughout West Lindfield generally, I am seriously concerned the majority are still not aware of the Stage 2 & 3 Development proposal and its implications for their quality of life.

Jonathan O'Dea, M.P. expressed the view that the consultation process has not been

adequate or proper (some would say ‘disrespectful’), and that he will do everything he can to make sure due process is adhered to.

I request that:

- This letter be read carefully, the issues I have raised addressed and my suggested solutions examined, assessed and responded to appropriately with evidenced-based information. No rhetoric please.
- As raised at the above-mentioned meeting - Schools Infrastructure needs to properly communicate the proposed development plan to all the Lindfield community; and be prepared meet with and consult with residents from Dunstan Grove, other Crimson Hill residential blocks and the wider West Lindfield community early in 2020.
- Dunstan Grove and other Crimson Hill residents, and all West Lindfield residents be given a fair and proper hearing in relation to this proposal, and much more consideration than what we have received so far. We all have a right to be heard.

At present, for example, the maps of the development including the Loop Road, don’t even recognise the Dunstan Grove residential buildings – there might be the barest outline of an unmarked building, and sometimes nothing at all, other than a circle for the roundabout! Well, that says it all.