

Impact on My Family's Health - 20 August 2019

Background

My name is Olga Pedavoli (57), I live with my parents Giuseppe (85) and Maria (86) and up until May 2019 with my brother Tony (55). I'm writing on behalf of my family. We have been living at 2 Vernon Street Strathfield since 1971. It has been our family home for the past 48 years.

Late June 1994 our life as we knew it changed due to Meriden School's inappropriate actions and behaviour that was not associated with the normal use of school activities conducted from the junior school campus surrounding our family home.

My family has endured "offensive and excessive noise", bullying, harassment, verbal abuse, intimidation, ridicule that has continually caused deep and extreme distress and torment towards my family from members of the staff of Meriden including the teachers, grounds personnel, cleaners, their tenants of 4 Vernon Street, the Chaplin and his wife, junior students that were instructed by teachers and junior students would torment my mother by continually climbing on the fence and calling out to her until she became hysterical (teachers stood by and did nothing), the parents of the students, senior students and families that utilised the tennis court on Sundays. The ongoing hell was happening every single day for several years then carried on thereafter, Monday through to Saturday's without respite. All of the above stated took place between the hours of say about 7am until 11.30pm. Meriden School wanted to force my family out of our home.

Meriden's assault on my family was relentless through June 1994 up until 2010. We had tried everything possible through approaching Meriden School, writing letters of complaints, Strathfield Council, members of the local area and so on. We began legal proceedings that was protracted over about 10 years and costing an estimated figure of around \$200,000 all to no avail. In 2009 we obtained a noise abatement order but that was thrown out in the Land & Environment Court with costs \$30,000 awarded Meriden School in 2010.

After the Land & Environment Court in 2010 Meriden School then carried on disregarding my family completely as they continued redeveloping and expanding around us without obstacle. Unfortunately for my family the damage was done and has had far reaching consequences for us.

My family's Health, the Consequences

The well being of my family has been deeply impacted, affecting our health dramatically as we for the past 25 years and still existing daily with stress.

My father was diagnosed with diabetes in 1995, it's a constant battle especially being so stressed to keep check of a stabilised reading which causes him to mostly feeling unwell. He suffers from high blood pressure, osteoarthritis, mood swings, nerve pain, anxiety and depression and chronic stress.

My mother was diagnosed with and suffers from anxiety, depression, chronic stress, extreme mood swings, high blood pressure, osteoporosis, ulcers, infections and dealing with major surgeries like a broken hip that occurred about 10 years ago. Recently, due to a chronic cough, she has been diagnosed with **small airways disease (e.g. bronchiolitis)** which requires further investigation. Also my mother always complains about the excessive noise being in her head most of the time even when it's quiet because it's overwhelming for her. *My mother* had a passion for gardening but not any more.

I suffer with my heartbeat racing, having fits of panic that causes laboured breathing, depression, anxiety, chronic stress and arthritis. Since the age of twenty one, I had enjoyed exercising and looked after myself, six days a week for 2 hours every day up until 1994, when it became impossible because I was distressed and eventually I just gave up. Since I was forty three, I have lived with nerve pain in my feet, hands and arms that are swollen which causes extreme pain. Today as weight is more of an issue it's a battle because every day I live with pain.

My brother suffers constantly from severe migraines that normally last for days at a time, chronic stress, anxiety and depression.

Attachment (A) Medical Certificate.

Over the last 25 years, our sleeping patterns have been disrupted, bouts of overwhelming feelings of hopelessness, fatigued on every level (emotionally, mentally and so on), and great difficulty just trying to deal with simple everyday tasks because of the torment and distress that we have endured since 1994.

Over recent years Meriden School has encroached right around our boundary. The students numbers have increased. There are no measures at all to address the “offensive and excessive noise” that we must endure. Part of the so called fencing is original from when the tennis court was first constructed (around the mid 70s - my family built the fencing around the tennis court). There's an area that has no appropriate fencing and has no privacy the other part we thought (years ago) to place fiberglass panels for privacy overlooking our backyard. The back fencing was put up around 1988 and is dilapidated with privacy again an issue. It's true to say that the students are literally right up against our boundary.

Late June 2017, we were notified of a Complying Development Certificate issued for alterations and additions of the existing school buildings on the Junior Campus. This was due to the Lingwood site that had plans for works to be carried out. By the beginning of 2018 the students of Lingwood Prep were relocated for the purpose of those works. At the start of school year 2019 the students were relocated back to the Lingwood Campus. So why was there no fencing of any kind to address “offensive and excessive noise” to accommodate the use of the adjacent area due to the increase of activity by the school?

Attachment (B) Photos of North Facing Boundary & East Facing Boundary as currently at August 2019.

The last 25 years was not of our choosing, we had no say in the matter but rather Meriden School took it upon themselves and forced an existence of pure torture upon us. It has been a nightmare for my family ever since. They were fully aware of their actions. Meriden have stolen our right to enjoy a normal happy life in our home. Meriden School's agenda was to drive us out of our home and achieve their long term objectives to accord with their Masterplan.

I feel that to this day Meriden School has no remorse whatsoever for destroying my family. We have been ignored, forgotten and for all who were in a position to help my family, it just didn't matter to them. Meriden School wants to carry on as if they have done nothing wrong and accept no responsibility for their actions because it's justified by the fact that they educate children and that's important. But the real motivation for them would appear to satisfy their Board of Directors. Our reality of just existing on a daily basis would not be tolerated by anyone, especially if it was Meriden staff and their respective families.

The question begs, there's the Montessori Academy Child Care Centre situated at 110 Homebush

Road Strathfield. I would say there would be maybe 35 to 45 children, yet on the boundary to the neighbouring property which is adjacent to the allocated carpark area (the playground area is not located on this side), a noise barrier was erected as to comply with the Development Application put before Strathfield Council at the time. Meriden Junior School's student numbers are around say 350 to 450? What are seeking solutions that are a win-win to all concerned.

Attachment (C) Photos of the existing Acoustic Barrier between the MACC Centre and the adjacent residential property.

What I'm asking of the Planning and Environment department is to objectively consider our circumstances of the last 25 years. We have the right to peace and quiet as provided by the POEO Act 2007, to enjoy our property without Meriden School causing a detrimental impacts upon our health. There are solutions that could be considered to rectify the standing issues between my Family and Meriden Junior School and allow Meriden School to operate. Why is this such a dilemma for Meriden School, especially over the years of redeveloping and expanding, spending millions of dollars yet chose not to put in place noise ameliorative measures that would have easily resolved these issues.