



14 March 2019

A085-18 Crown Cemetery Development, Varroville

Mulgoa Progress Association (MPA) successfully objected to the development of a major cemetery by Rookwood at historic "Fernhill" at Mulgoa, which threatened to destroy one of the most historically important man-made colonial landscapes in Australia, as well as the rare unity of a grand historic house and its landscaped park.

A cemetery is not a compatible, appropriate use of an state heritage listed historic landscape.

With manicured maintenance and an infrastructure of roads, paths, signs, lighting, chapels and auxillary buildings, a cemetery would irrevocably destroy the rural character of the landscape and, specifically, destroy the integrity of the Varroville historic site. The adjacent cemetery will fill the immediate landscape and provide an entirely antipathetic view from Varro Ville house. It will seriously degrade the important curtilage, dating from 1810, of the property Varro Ville at Varroville.

We object to the proposal for Macarthur Memorial Park due to concerns regarding destruction of heritage values and the unique environmental landscape of the Scenic Hills.

Heritage Concerns

The Statement of Significance for the State Heritage Register Listing commences –

'Varroville is a 'celebrated early farm estate dating from 1810 with early structures, the 1850s homestead, layout, agricultural (vineyard) terracing and evidence of early access road.' (Morris and Britton, 2000, 98) *'Varroville is rare as one of the few larger estate landscapes remaining in the Campbelltown area where the form of the original grant and the former agricultural use of the estate and its rural landscape character may be appreciated.*

In submissions to the Public Exhibition of the cemetery plans, March 2016, NSW heritage organisations united in their opposition to the Catholic Metropolitan Cemeteries Trust's 136,000-grave Varroville cemetery plan (Macarthur Memorial Park) saying it **should not be approved:**

- The National Trust of NSW (a former owner of Varro Ville Homestead) had listed all the land intended for the cemetery on its heritage register in 1976. ...*'This proposal would seriously degrade the important curtilage, dating from 1810 of the property Varro Ville...and damage a long term proposal, supported by the National Trust, for statutory recognition of the Scenic Hills Environmental Protection Area'.... 'is essential to incorporate an area around Varroville House comprising the outbuildings, former drive, remnant vineyard terraces and the majority of the potential Sturt dams'.*

- The **Australian Garden History Society** (Sydney & Northern NSW) ...*'fail[ed] to consider the full implications of the infrastructure required for this type of development as viewed from the heritage property [Varro Ville Homestead] and the broader Campbelltown urban area. The planning proposal **should not be approved**'.*
- Heritage consultant, Geoffrey Britton, in his curtilage study for the Varro Ville homestead owners, May 2016, rated the Varro Ville landscape as nationally and state significant. He wrote that the cemetery proposal would so compromise the landscape that.....it *'would no longer be a landscape of State heritage value. This would have consequences too for the 1850s homestead which would be marooned and closeted in isolation from the integral landscape that gives it its critical historic context.'*
- The **NSW Heritage Council**: ...the proposed use of the land as a cemetery *'will result in formal lawn graves, mown areas, memorial terraces, increased site car access, car parking, roads, signage, condolence rooms and formal lines of trees which are at odds with the informal rural character of the subject land.....[T]he landscape and the outbuildings surrounding Varroville Homestead is an exceptionally significant part of heritage of the Varroville Homestead... [T]he Planning Proposal for Macarthur Memorial Park is **not supported**.'*

On 28 September 2017, the NSW Heritage Council recommended to the Heritage Minister that most of the land intended for the Varroville Cemetery be listed on the State Heritage Register as a curtilage (boundary) extension for state-listed Varro Ville Homestead.

As the National Trust recently successfully argued against a cemetery proposal, within another State Heritage Register listed property, "Fernhill" at Mulgoa, "*this development is totally incompatible and in fundamental conflict with, and destructive of the use of, this site as an historic landscape of State Significance.*"

We feel very strongly that there is much more at stake than the heritage of Varroville. If the State Government approves a cemetery on Scenic Hills it would negate the importance of state heritage for the present and future generations of Australians and 'legitimise' INAPPROPRIATE development of more State Heritage listed properties and their curtilage.


Mulgoa Progress Association.