



DISCALCED CARMELITES

Mount Carmel
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Submission following the IPCN public meeting on 25 March 2019 re Varroville Cemetery DA

I write as Prior of the Carmelite community of friars resident at the Priory and Retreat Centre immediately adjacent to the whole west side of the proposed Macarthur Memorial Cemetery and Parkland.

Our most sensitive areas of residence and Retreat Centre will be immediately affected by the first stage of development, including first up building operations planned a mere 210 meters (café) from our chapel, with a proposed function facility only 334 meters and a proposed staff building only 350 meters away, respectively. From all reports, construction and traffic noise from these developments will immediately affect the tranquillity of our chapels and gardens so close to the proposed development. On this basis, we do not see any compatibility between the retreat house and proposed cemetery existing side by side. The sad fact is, in the event of DA approval for the cemetery, the Retreat Centre will no longer be viable. Without this facility the essential work, apostolate and mission, of the Carmelites in the Scenic Hills area will certainly cease.

While I present the above as necessary for the Panel in response to its request for frank and honest input, I emphasise that, in the spirit of our Catholic faith, we Carmelites distance ourselves from any idea that we are the only ones adversely affected by the proposal. We wish only to present our own case within the broader context of issues that affect others even more deeply. We well understand all these views are to be individually and collectively weighed conscientiously by the Panel. But within this broader basis we wish to add to our basic criticism that we have always taken our strongest stance against the proposed cemetery on principles of respect for the scenic preservation of the Scenic Hills enshrined in the Campbelltown Local Environment Plan, and on principles no less important to local, state and national cultural and historic heritage. These values cannot be regained when lost or compromised. Any development such as the cemetery will mark an irrevocable loss to the local community, state and nation.

We are far from being unsympathetic to the need of the various religious bodies requiring accessible and affordable burial spaces for their deceased loved ones. These organisations include our own Catholic communities and ethnic groups. The point being, where there is a will there is a way. Land must be found elsewhere that fits the necessary criteria of not obliterating, destroying or compromising the values held dear by local Council and State and National interests regarding heritage and environment.

Looking back over the past years of this contentious project, I have personally come to realise that spot rezoning has been an unfortunate mistake. Cemeteries should be as much part of government long term infrastructure planning as other vital facilities, such as schools, hospitals and roads. Long term forecasting and planning with sound early demarcation of a variety of viable areas for such facilities should be an integral and necessary part of the due diligence of all city planning and population development. Such projects as cemeteries should not be relegated mere after thoughts left to find their way into the harmony of good planning by whatever means vested interests choose as expedient. Too often we have seen how mass and momentum, often unwittingly, destroy the delicate microclimates of human emotional and mental health and wellbeing. Within the context of wise planning, spot rezoning should simply never be allowed.

For these reasons the Carmelite Friars continue to oppose the development

Father Paul Maunder

3 April 2019