

1st April 2019

To the independent Planning Council (IPC) – Varroville cemetery

Dear IPC,

My name is Maddy, and I am a 13 year old girl, who lives a modern city lifestyle. My life is pretty simple: school, homework, sport, repeat day in, day out. My Nan's farm is a form of retreat for me, from the busy modern world. Please let me explain why.

When I was 2 years old my Pa died. I know that may seem like a while ago, but little did I know how much I would need him in the next 11 years of my life. My Pa, lived with my Nan in the beautiful Scenic Hills in Varroville, where my Nan lives still today.

Their home holds great memories of family gatherings, holidays, week-ends and just relaxing with family in general. I love going to my Nan's farm where I feel I can connect with nature.

A cemetery would make my Nan's farm into a sense of torture for me. Every time I would drive up that road the constant reminder of the most amazing Pa, I lost too soon would overwhelm me, with the sight of a cemetery so close. I would feel dread ever going back to visit Nan again.

Being a young child, I know that one of the things that scares me the most is death, and I know lots of young kids also worry about it too! Having a park in a cemetery is the most insane idea I have ever heard since a friend suggesting that we should eat bath bombs... Having young children in any environment like that is disgraceful. Do you want to traumatise them? A cemetery is a pretty confronting place for adults, let alone children. For many children it is a terrifying scary place (and I say this as a teenager). I know death is part of life, but do I need to be constantly reminded while we go about trying to live our lives to the fullest. Cemeteries are not a place where children like to go, let alone go for picnics or walks as it has been suggested by the people wanting to build it.

It is not the environment for children to be. Yes, we know people die one day but do we need to be subjected to this as children, to be reminded of people who have died. I cannot even remotely imagine visiting my Pa, in his resting place, because it would just be so overwhelming sad, and scary being amongst so many dead people.

I have talked to my younger brother about this and there is no way we would want Mum and Dad to take us to a cemetery to visit relatives, and then the idea of going for a walk, picnic or to maybe kick a football around is just plain wrong... We would not want to visit in the first place, no matter how pretty you try to landscape it, it will always be a scary terrifying place to visit, let alone think we would want to go for walks, or have a picnic there – no way! Maybe the owners should be talking to children and teenagers about how they feel about cemeteries. I think you will find they feel terrified and that goes for many adults too. My Mum does not even like to visit cemeteries because it is a reminder of great sadness.

In the Scenic Hills there is a lot of free space, free from property developers but they see it as a dream. A place to make money. But the thing that makes the Scenic Hills iconic, breathtaking, relaxing, stunning and nearly indescribable in true beauty is its silence. The stillness and peacefulness of the bush, yet it is close to other areas by car. It is like a hidden treasure close to the chaos of suburban/city living.

The concept of all these beautiful rolling hills, valleys and forests is that there is no-one else around. That there is nothing else and you could be a million miles away. Away from school and business. A place to truly relax and enjoy nature at its best. It's serene there.

This is why so many Nuns and churches have decided to reside in the area. There is a Retreat where people can come and stay to get away from the troubles and business of life. To get away from development. Away from neighbours and noise. A place where they can think clearly and get to know themselves, to be quiet. Even if it is just for a day, or a week. They learn to appreciate nature, and the peace and quiet.

This environment gives the Nuns and the Priests a place to reflect on Christian values. It also helps those seeking quietness to reflect this. To explore externally the beautiful and pristine Scenic Hills, but also internally mend themselves. Nature helps to do this. To quieten the mind, and to re-energise them positively.

This lifestyle for people who live here, and for those who visit the Retreat and Nuns etc., will lose this positive side as they will be confronted with a cemetery; death. It is like a food chain, if one thing changes, for example a cemetery is built, it could kill off part of the food chain and this beautiful once peaceful place into a replica of the chaos of the world around it. I know the retreat, and just being in the Scenic Hill at Varroville, helps many people. This retreat has saved people from killing themselves.

How can people who are struggling with their life be able to go to the retreat and seeing a cemetery, full of death, across the road offer hope for them. It could make them feel worse and decide to take their own life because it may become too overwhelming for them.

The Scenic Hills in Varroville is a place of peace and hope. There is a lot of history from the olden days here too, with Varroville House, but I don't feel I need to talk about that as you should know the importance of the history and that if a cemetery is built that history is lost forever. Any person knows that. You would have to be stupid not to know this, more stupid to ignore it.

We are taught we need to protect our environment, but yet we are not protecting our very important cultural heritage of Varroville, that I cannot comprehend.

I pray you do not approve this cemetery. Approving it will affect my life dramatically. It will affect people who seek help in the Retreat. It will affect my Nan, my family and other people who live in the area. It will really affect the Nuns and Priests too. Also the people who own Varroville House will be affected terribly. How scary and awful to think they will look out of their windows and look onto headstones, or crypts instead of beautiful rolling hills just filled with nature how it is meant to be!

Landscaping the area to suit the cemetery is changing the natural landscape. It is not protecting it, nor preserving it. It will be changing it forever! The reason for building a cemetery should be to

benefit the residents, and the immediate surrounding area, and residents should be in support of it which is not the case with this. It should not be built just because people from other parts of Sydney may need more burial space.

It seems to me this is like an item that needs to be ticked of a 'to do' list and ignoring what people in the area want, and also ignoring the history of this area. That this seems to be a poor decision as these things have not been well planned for ahead of time. A cemetery needs to be in a place that is easily accessible for people, and the Scenic Hills is not close to a train station, and is not close to bus stops. It is a long walk from Spitfire Drive. I know, as I have walked this road many times and it is tiring for me as a young teenager.

It is extremely disappointing that this area has been selected. It is very sad that no-one seems to be listening to people that they do not want this here in this very beautiful scenic area which is a retreat for many people, me included.

Ask yourself, is this the right decision.

Do you really need to build this cemetery here. There must be a million other more suitable locations with FLAT land not in the actual Scenic Hills. A place that is more easily accessible for people, and one that will not ruin our cultural history, or our beautiful Scenic Hills. Do you really want to ruin this area for my family, the Nuns, priests and other people who live here.

I will not want to go to visit my Nan, and Auntie anymore because every time I go past there it will remind me of death. I will no longer be able to walk with my Auntie along this road and stop to talk to the cows and admire the lovely views, which is something I really enjoy doing. Every school holidays I like to go and spend time there as it is a sanctuary for me. If this cemetery is built it will just be a reminder of death and despair. I will no longer be able to walk my favourite walk. The views will be of gravestones. There will be ugly carparks and roads all throughout this beautiful area. It has made me cry many times when I think about this.

PLEASE DO NOT BUILD THIS CEMETERY. Please leave the area as it is. The Scenic Hills in Varroville need to be protected from development now, and in the future. I would like to be able to take my children here one day to show where I spent my time as a child, and teenager in holidays etc.

Maddy Webb

████████████████████

████████████████████