



Queens Park Precinct Executive Committee
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Commissioners Duncan and Pilton

The Queens Park Precinct was set up over 30 years ago under the auspices of Waverley Council. The Committee convenes regular public meetings to discuss issues of interest in the Precinct.

Since Moriah College was allocated the former Eastern Suburbs Hospital site in the mid-1980s and moved from Bellevue Hill, its impact has been a major focus for residents, especially as it has continued to move other sections of the school to the site and expand well beyond what was originally promised.

A number of our residents lived here well before the school was assigned this site by the NSW Government. Many others moved here before the junior school was added, which vastly increased the numbers of students and staff.

The Committee is very disappointed in the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment's Assessment Report for the Moriah College Redevelopment Project (SSD-10352) as it does not appear to consider many of the issues raised by the Committee in its previous submissions and the local community in the large number of individual submissions, especially the impact on local residential streets and laneways.

Report lacks any analysis of public submissions

In the Assessment Report, the Department did not provide any analysis of the public submissions but merely total numbers. We believe that this was a major omission.

There were 143 individual submissions objecting to the proposal and covering a range of issues. 92% were from Queens Park and the others from the two adjoining suburbs.

Of the 168 submissions in support, 94% were NOT from Queens Park and most provided a short single statement in support.

Report omits long history of school's growth against assurances given to residents

In endorsing the proposed increase in student and staff numbers, the Assessment Report did not appear to consider the long history of the school's growth and development against all assurances of limited numbers.

Every few years since arriving, the school has significantly increased its student and staff numbers generating ever increasing traffic and parking issues with associated noise and general activity. Each time, the residents were given assurances of no further increases to student numbers, only to be let down time and time again.

In 1984 when the school first moved to the Queens Park site, residents were assured that student numbers would never exceed 610.

In 1993, the school sought to expand by 350 students with a new maximum enrolment of 960. In October 2004, the Minister approved an addition of 24 new classrooms and an additional 720 students when the College took over the adjoining DOCS site and moved its junior school from Rose Bay.

This brought the total number of students allowed to 1,680, almost three times the limit that residents were promised when the school was located in our precinct.

In November 2017, the Waverley Local Planning Panel approved the establishment of the Early Learning Centre with the condition that the total student number not exceed 1,680, including no more than 80 Early Learning Centre students.

The community believes that this latest proposal with a claim for a further 17% increase in student numbers, including an increase to 130 in the Early Learning Centre and despite the school's previous agreement to the conditions, is totally unreasonable, especially in light of so many previous promises of student numbers being limited.

We believe that ignoring these significant events in the Assessment Report suggests a dismissive attitude towards residents.

Report omits impact on local streets and laneways

If an increase in student and staff numbers is approved, it would cause further traffic impacts on already congested roads, local streets and laneways.

The school is located directly on York Rd, a primary north-south route, and when it is not moving freely, a substantial portion of north-south traffic passes through our north-south oriented local streets, especially Newland St but also Alt St, Denison St and even Cuthbert St and now increasingly, the narrow laneways that link these streets.

They are carrying much heavier volumes of traffic than local streets should or did before the school was located here.

It was very disappointing to read in the Assessment Report that any impact on local streets could be managed through **developing** a Local Area Management Plan to minimise the impact on local streets. Even the *Bitzios Peer Review* provided with the Report barely mentions these streets and laneways.

This was done in the 1980s when the school first moved to the site. The community, Council and College developed our LATM then and calming measures were installed.

Increasing volumes of traffic and parent and student behaviour in cars cannot be mitigated by road calming measures.

Traffic assessments provided in the proposal were only undertaken on York Rd, Baronga Ave and Queens Park Rd and in particular, the intersections, although the peer review did look at the Newland St, Queens Park Rd intersection.

When the junior school moved to the site and the school provided an internal drop-off and pick-up loop, residents were sceptical about whether parents would use it. While many do, there are still many who do not.

Instead, they park in local streets, sometimes in No Stopping zones, and sometimes double park to drop off and wait for students. Every time the school numbers expand, the situation worsens.

While the new proposal plans to have a new internal loop for senior student drop-offs, getting parents to use it is another issue.

Any further expansion of the College would just add to the already difficult traffic and parking situation.

Report's support for proposed traffic changes lacks detailed analysis

When our LATM was developed, the principles underpinning it were that

- north-south traffic on the regional road (York Rd) remain the priority road and no impediments be placed on York Rd that might divert cars through local streets and
- each north-south local street be subject to similar calming measures so that traffic is not diverted from one to another.

The suggestion to upgrade the two intersections and installing a York Rd pedestrian crossing, as nominated in the proposal and supported in the *Assessment Report*, doesn't consider the impact that these altered conditions place on the traffic through our precinct.

We strongly support the need for more detailed analysis of the intersection at York Rd and Queens Park Rd, as proposed in the *Assessment Report* and Bitzios Peer Review.

We believe that the morning queue in Queens Park Rd could be easily alleviated today by removing the threshold that prevents a separate lane forming to turn left into York Rd.

Currently all traffic shares a single lane and is constrained by those turning right. This was suggested to Council last year.

Apart from the heavy congestion in the morning peak hour, this intersection operates safely throughout the rest of the day and night.

The Precinct Committee is extremely disappointed that, after approaching the Council a number of times requesting discussions about the College's proposed traffic changes prior to any consideration by the Waverley Traffic Committee, this did not take place even though the Precinct Committee has normally been included in any such discussions since the 1980s.

Currently buses are under-utilised by the school

This was noted in section 3.1.2 of the Bitzios Peer Review and the issue has been discussed at Moriah Community Consultative Committee (MCCC) meetings over the years.

It seems clear that a very good way to relieve congestion around the school would be to have an efficient set of bus services widely used by the students.

The school mentions its public transport policy and does have buses available yet at the same time provides the excuse that it cannot compel parents to make their children use the bus services provided. This excuse simply means that the bus strategy is inadequate and the school is providing a more convenient alternative for pickup and drop off for parents using their private vehicles.

Interestingly, the traffic reports provided show that almost twice as many students do use the buses in the afternoon as in the morning. We would like the school to have a strategy that will actually encourage students to use buses to the extent that it makes a positive difference to the congestion issue especially in the morning.

School generated private traffic can be measured easily enough by looking at traffic counts and velocities during school holidays as well as during term time. The difference is the school's impact on our neighbourhood. This has not been done as far as we are aware.

Report minimises scale and impact of the proposed development

While there has been a minimal reduction in height since the initial plans that we saw, the proposed buildings, especially along Baronga Ave, remain far too large and intrusive for the site.

It is in a sensitive environment, located between Centennial Park and Queens Park and adjoining the Queens Park Heritage Conservation Area.

The site was originally part of historic Centennial Park and therefore public parkland.

The proposal massively exceeds the height limit of 8.5m and has only minimal setbacks from Baronga Ave which is directly opposite Queens Park.

This huge structure is not the least bit compatible with its location and will be visually jarring when viewed from Queens Park and Baronga Ave, as the many photomontages confirm.

We doubt many local residents or visitors to the area would agree with the Assessment Report's declaration that:

"the visual impact of the Stage 1 building is acceptable as it would not obstruct any significant or important views or have an unacceptable impact on views from the surrounding residential and public domain areas. Further, landscaping and new tree plantings would partially screen views of the Stage 1 building from within Queens Park".

In summary, we believe that the Assessment Report does not adequately address most of the concerns of the Precinct and its residents and should be revised with consideration of these, namely

1. The additional student places should not be permitted and the 1,680 student limit set as a condition by the Waverley Local Planning Panel in 2017 be maintained.
2. While the community acknowledges that there may be a need for upgrading and replacing some classrooms, we believe that any development should be modest in scale, lower in height and set back from Baronga Ave so as not to intrude or impact on the Park and surrounding leafy environment.
3. Further analysis by traffic engineers of any proposed changes to current traffic arrangements should be undertaken and then discussed with the community prior to any firm decisions being made for possible implementation.
4. Permission for any development at all should be contingent on the school proving that it is successfully mitigating the traffic impact by whatever measures it can, including increased use of buses. The key metrics for such a process should be set and managed on an ongoing basis by an independent and reputable authority and include bi-annual reports to and consultation with both Council and Queens Park Residents.

The Assessment Report doesn't acknowledge just how tolerant the community has been over the years considering the ever expanding school numbers that are at odds with multiple reassurances to the contrary.

The community's voice is well illustrated by the large number of submissions from local residents opposing its proposal.

Such a large and intrusive development in this location and an expansion in school numbers is an unreasonable imposition on our community and also those who treasure our parklands.

Peter Cohen and Simon Swifte
Co-convenors