

LORETO SCHOOL REDEVELOPMENT SSD 8996

(Concept Proposal and Stage 1)

Independent Planning Commission Meeting 24/9/21

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

As a resident of MPA since 1976 I have seen many submissions of DAs by Loreto and numerous amendments by them to the conditions set in these DAs.

In this current DA I am deeply concerned about the lessening of pedestrian safety in both MPA and OR, and especially at the MPA intersection where no study regarding pedestrian safety seems to have been undertaken as there is no marked crossing there.

Frank will further elaborate on some of the points that I raise.

I and my neighbours have witnessed several serious accidents in MPA including

- one involving a 7 year old boy hit by a car on his way home from school,**
- several vehicular accidents of cars turning right from MPA into the Barry Wing carpark which is dangerously situated at the crest of the hill and a bend in the road**

At the intersection itself, it is not only fatalities that should be looked at, but serious accidents that have impacted on people's lives. We residents are aware of at least one fatality at the intersection in 2015, but I would like to draw your attention to two other accidents which have had significant effects on those involved.

The first was in October 2012. A nurse from the Adventist Village, turning into our street, was involved in a serious accident for which she was hospitalised. I recollect that there was some uncertainty as to whether she would physically be able to return to the same heavy work.

The second case was of an elderly gentleman who was very active as a resident in the Adventist Village. He lived independently and, together with neighbours and Loreto, represented the Village in the quest for a signalised intersection. Not only did he attend numerous meetings about this but wrote to politicians and councillors. This is a quote from his letter to the Premier, Barry O'Farrell, in 2012: “Weask that the situation at the intersection as it stands today be allowed to speak for itself and that the traffic engineers approach the problem with the objective of providing a safe intersection for the whole of the MPA community.”

Two years later, in 2014, this gentleman suffered severe injuries in an horrific accident at the intersection. After months of hospitalization, he was unable to look after himself and sadly had to move to high care.

He is not recorded as a fatality statistic but I am quite sure this accident led to his untimely death shortly after.

Since we moved here in 1976 the volume of cars using our street and the intersection has increased manifold yet NO pedestrian safeguards have been installed at this dangerous intersection.

We have all experienced “near misses” at the intersection, especially of children who, in a panic that they will never be able to cross to the other side, either run out or ride their bicycles out between cars waiting to exit the street. When turning left from PHR into MPA, you have no vision of pedestrians until you are just about to turn because of the high brick fence at the corner.

The pedestrians who cross MPA at the intersection include both primary and secondary children from Loreto, Normanhurst Public School, Normanhurst Boys High, Turramurra High (who catch the bus outside Loreto’s main gates) and other school children going to and from the station. This intersection is also the crossing point for parents walking their children to school, sometimes with strollers and other small children tagging along, commuters and residents, including the elderly.

Let me illustrate the problem by telling you what I experienced at the intersection on 11 May 2020. This was the first day of the return to face to face learning in NSW schools after a lockdown period. Throughout NSW, students

were able to attend school only one day per week, so student numbers on any one day were expected to be relatively small, about 20% of the total.

On that day, Loreto trialled an afternoon pickup of students where parents would enter the grounds via OR, pick up their waiting child on the school oval, and then exit via MPA with strict orders to make a left turn only into PHR. Remember school numbers were small as only 20% were allowed to attend per day.

A staff member acted as a marshal at the MPA intersection. He, the neighbours in attendance and, I'm sure, the school parents, were horrified at the ensuing chaos.

A left hand turn only at the intersection was stipulated by Loreto. The line of cars waiting to exit MPA stretched for approximately 600 metres along MPA.

PHOTO 1 (looking south from PHR)

The timing of school pickup overlaps with the changeover time for staff at the Adventist Retirement Village whose only access is via our street. Cars of both the residents of our street and the Village staff were unable to progress south as the street is restricted to one lane of moving traffic when cars are parked.

PHOTO 2 (looking south from PHR)

On this day there was definitely no room to pull over to allow anyone through so cars were banked up to enter the street from PHR.

The whole thing quickly degenerated into a very dangerous situation for the pedestrians trying to cross MPA – these were mainly local schoolchildren trying to make their way home. If it were not for the help of neighbours and the school marshal, I don't know what would have happened.

Between phone calls to the school outlining the dire situation, the marshal put himself in danger by trying to control traffic both in PHR and MPA so that cars could exit, and we neighbours tried to safely cross the children by holding their hands and taking them across the road every time we were able to make a gap between vehicles both exiting and entering the street.

The cars were so close together trying to exit the street, that young children would not have been seen nor would parents with strollers, children on a bike or our resident schoolchild in a wheelchair have been able to move between the vehicles if we had not been there to separate the cars and help people across.

David Greenwood has already spoken about the difficulties with wheelchair access and I would like to add to this.

The Road Safety Audit on 21/10/19 for the ELC found that, at the MPA intersection: “the kerb ramps at both corners are poorly aligned and direct pedestrians towards PHR”. It also found that this was dangerous for both vision-impaired and mobility-impaired pedestrians, saying “mobility-impaired pedestrians may be affected, especially if using a wheeled device, since there is a natural tendency to roll down or up the ramp in a perpendicular trajectory to the ramp”.

This trial of Loreto’s traffic flow was obviously an unmitigated disaster, and was never repeated until now.

For, in this development the school proposes to:

- bring half the school drop off and pick up traffic via the MPA intersection, plus all staff and all Yr 12 students who drive
- on current school numbers that would equate to approximately three times the traffic produced on May 11 2020, let alone with the increase in student and staff numbers being sought
- Loreto argues for a Green Travel Plan but, according to their flyer issued to residents, this was already in effect before May 2020
- the times of drop off and pick up will overlap with Adventist staff changeovers, peak times for school children and young families crossing at the intersection and has already been acknowledged by Loreto to overlap with traffic generated by the ELC (a separate DA application).

ALL this traffic is being poured onto a road which is totally lacking in pedestrian safety and exits onto a major arterial road (the A28) at an intersection which is already highly dangerous but has no pedestrian crossing or traffic lights.

We all want the best education for our children and to have it provided in a safe environment.

As a social worker and a former teacher I recognise that education encompasses not only academic achievement but social responsibility. It is our duty as adults, be it as parents, teachers or school board members, to make our children socially aware and responsive to their community's needs.

PHOTO 3

In fact, Loreto promotes itself as acting responsibly as their advertising slogan shows

“We do what’s right, not what’s easy”