

DEAR PARENTS AND GUARDIANS OF ST CATHERINES SCHOOL

Local residents of the Charing Cross and Bronte Precinct areas wish to respond to the letter sent to you by the Headmistress of St Catherine's School. Dr Julie Townsend, concerning an article in the Sun Herald Newspaper (online and in print) September 27th 2015.

<http://www.smh.com.au/national/education/education-st-catherines-school-in-war-with-council-residents-over-69m-expansion-20150923-gjsz0e.html>

1. **Alleged misinformation:** The information given to the Sun Herald by residents was taken from the material submitted in St Catherine's DA from the website of the **NSW Department of Planning & Department.**

http://majorprojects.planning.nsw.gov.au/index.pl?action=view_job&job_id=6339

Figures were not invented by residents. Residents simply provided comment. Note that the journalist was solely responsible for presenting the information.

2. **Student Cap:** The most recent DA approved by Waverley Council for St Catherine's School was in 2011 (**DA140/2011**). The approval clearly stated as Condition of Consent that student numbers were not to exceed the then stated enrolment of **930 Students**. (Note this figure is higher than reported on the My School Website in 2011).

<http://www.myschool.edu.au/SchoolProfile/Index/85375/StCatherinesSchool/43995/2014>

From the **My School Website** it is quite clear that this cap has been exceeded. The school's justification for increased student numbers is that an increase in campus area has arisen through acquisition of more land. This is of no relevance to an existing DA condition of consent. **Waverley Council is now investigating this breach.**

3. **“Replacement” development:** The scale of the new development at a currently estimated cost of **\$63 million** is not simply a replacement of old facilities. The existing small outdoor pool is to be demolished. Its site and adjacent land will be excavated to become **a totally new complex incorporating a 7-day a week, 250 seat Aquatic Centre (with 3 pools) and a new 500 seat state of the art theatre and entertainment deck.**

4. **Congestion and safety:** Residents’ concerns about neighbourhood traffic problems and parking issues have generally been ignored. Residents and NSW police have requested drive through drop off & pick up facilities on site for student safety and to reduce congestion on the streets. The school response is that, “On this constrained site, a drive through will impact substantially on the built forms already in the school”, therefore the school finds that **“it is neither feasible nor desirable”** to incorporate this facility. **The NSW Police submission stated that “*approval should not be given without an on-site dropoff/pickup*”.** The school's own consultant, Lyle Marshall, recommended in December 2013 that traffic wardens manage drop off/pick up behaviour. These have failed to materialize and drop off/pick ups continue to cause havoc.

5. **Neighbourhood parking:** Waverley Council's request for the provision of a 200 space on site carpark is similarly not seen as important by the school. The response is
 - a) a suggested staggering of the opening hours for the Aquatic Centre, and
 - b) it will “reluctantly” not rent out the new 500 seat theatre to external parties, thereby allegedly decreasing the number of functions. But the school itself will undoubtedly want to hold night time events and parents will park in surrounding streets which are already at capacity. How can this work without displacing and disturbing residents? **The increase in onsite parking for this development is a mere 19 spaces.**

6. **DA conditions of consent:** the school has already been shown to be ignoring its cap on student numbers. How can it be trusted to manage parking and disturbance impacts on neighbours from these proposed new major facilities?

7. **Community consultation:** while the school's representatives have attended Charing Cross Precinct meetings, the evidence demonstrates a reluctance to take on practical community ideas. Congestion and parking have long been residents' issues, and solutions have been offered (a drop off & pickup drive through, and a 200 space on site carpark). **However these recommendations have been ignored.**

8. **Submissions:** 211 submissions were lodged with the NSW Department of Planning, 18 for and 193 against the proposed development. This would reflect an overwhelming level of disquiet about the proposal.

9. **Local community asset:** Despite the School asserting that this development “will also be an important asset to the “local community” the school is yet to demonstrate how it will **benefit** local residents. **On the contrary residents will be severely disadvantaged by intensification of use of the shiny new facilities including year-round out of hours activity at the pool complex, and operation of the 500 seat arts complex.**

Yours sincerely,

Danny Caretti – Co-Convener Charing Cross Village Precinct
Charing Cross Precinct
St Catherine’s Master Plan DA Sub Committee

Cathy Davitt - Secretary
Oppose St Catherine’s Expansion Group