



24 March 2022

The General Manager
Port Stephens Council
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Objection: DA 2022-97 for St Michael's School 12 Sproule St Nelson Bay

Alterations and additions to existing educational establishment (St Michael's School, Nelson Bay) including refurbishment of grounds and buildings, removal of existing demountable buildings, new centre based child care and school based child care facilities, new admin building, new car park, subdivision, landscaping, fencing and associated civil works.

Introduction

The Tomaree Ratepayers and Residents Association Inc (TRRA) represents the community on a range of issues which affects the Tomaree Peninsula in Port Stephens LGA, including planning and development, economic development, cultural infrastructure and resources, the built and natural environment, tourism and other grass roots issues.

TRRA has no objection in principle to this development, with the design, layout and landscaping seeming acceptable. We note that while 15 mature trees will be lost, there will be significant new planting. The areas of landscaping and of impermeable surface appear to be favourable, relative to the standards.

Traffic, Parking and Noise Concerns

However, we are aware of concerns about the traffic, parking and noise implications of the development for the immediate neighbours and for those living on the residential streets used for access.

There appears to be a shortfall of 8 parking spaces off Sproule St from the applicable standard for the proposed new building (Block J) housing both a new pre-school childcare centre and a pre/after school care facility and church use. To compensate, an additional 8 spaces are to be provided in the lower staff car park off Wahgunyah Rd.



While Sunday church services will not coincide with use of the educational/child care operations, at least most funerals will do so. We understand that for these events there is already significant parking demand exceeding on-site capacity and 'overspilling' into surrounding residential streets. The assessment needs to carefully evaluate the adequacy of the proposed on-site parking on weekdays when church events coincide with educational/childcare operations.

The new uses in Block J will clearly lead to a significant increase in traffic in the morning and afternoon/evening, and if enrolments in the school itself rise to the approved limit, this will also increase drop-off and pick-up traffic. The traffic report claims that predicted traffic volumes will be within the capacity of the access roads – we submit that the assessment needs to carefully evaluate this claim, taking into account the residential character of the approach roads, with little 'through traffic'.

Local residents report that currently most pedestrians along Sproule St tend to use the road rather than the footpaths, we submit that a closer look is required at the condition of the footpaths and the effect that increased traffic will have not only on pedestrians but cyclists.

The noise implications may be significant. Drop-off and pick-up traffic will be present much earlier (from 6.30 am) and later (to 6pm) compared to normal school hours operations. There will be both increased traffic noise along all approach roads, and increased noise from young children and their parents embarking and debarking from vehicles, which will affect those neighbours in close proximity to the road entrances and car parks off both Sproule St and Wahgunyah Rd. We submit that the assessment needs to carefully evaluate the impact of extra noise from the development on the neighbours and local community.

Infrastructure Contributions

TRRA does object to the requested reduction in Infrastructure Contributions for the childcare centre. We can see no good justification for Council to grant the reduction foregoing significant revenue that is needed to help pay for local public works and services over any other supplier of childcare. We understand that a similar request from St Phillips College for contribution reductions in the past may have been rejected, and Council should be consistent in requiring full contributions to be paid.

Subdivision

The proposed subdivision is not straightforward, involving a strata subdivision of Block J – the pre/after school care centre on the lower level forming part of a lot also including the school and church, with the upper level pre-school child care centre, and associated parking, as a separate lot.

We don't fully understand the reasons for this complex arrangement and submit that the assessment should carefully consider the implications, including any regulatory differences or changes to rate income.

Conclusion

We submit that the assessment needs to carefully evaluate the impact of extra noise and traffic from the development on the neighbours and local community, along with possible financial implications from the subdivision and Infrastructure contributions.

We have no objection to this submission being published in full and unredacted

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