

14 June 2017

The Hon. Gladys Berejiklian MP  
GPO Box 5341  
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Dear Premier,

### **Re: Cammeraygal High School**

I am writing to you in your capacity as both the Premier and the Member for Willoughby, as many of your constituents live within the catchment area of Cammeraygal High School.

The Cammeraygal High School P&C **seeks your support on two issues:**

- As an immediate priority, we seek to optimise the recreational space available to students at the Cammeraygal Senior Campus, which is in the late stages of planning. We believe that an option to create a roof-top court on the proposed new hall has not been adequately explored.
- In the medium term, it is critical that additional public high school capacity is created on the lower north shore.

This letter sets out the context for, and details of, the support that we seek.

### **Current Cammeraygal High School Campus**

Cammeraygal High School opened its doors two and a half years ago, a welcome and much needed addition (along with Anzac Park Public School, which opened last year) to the suite of public schools on the lower north shore.

The Pacific Highway Campus was established to cater for up to 480 year 7-10 students, with a senior campus to follow – in other words, a school of some 700 students (120 per year).

Cammeraygal currently has approximately 370 students across years 7-9. Net new enrolments have increased steadily each year: 95; 110; and 165. Next year's year 7 cohort is understood to be around 160 without any out-of-area enrolments, and there are always additional children moving into the older year groups. It is likely the total student population will be close to 550 next year, well in excess of the 480 the school is designed to hold.

The junior campus is constrained by its small size, and is hemmed in by the Pacific Highway and established residential areas. It is worth noting that the *total* accessible outdoor space comprises:

- A multipurpose court located across a road;
- A half-court on a roof-top;
- An enclosed courtyard;
- A narrow area between buildings with painted handball courts; and
- An open area next to the Highway that is covered with artificial turf.

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The aggregate area of these spaces is approximately 2,000m<sup>2</sup>, or **less than 4m<sup>2</sup> per student**. If our children were chickens, their access to outdoor areas would fail the RSPCA maximum stocking density recommendations.

The campus also only has one indoor sports facility – a small basketball court that doubles as the school hall. The hall is not large enough to accommodate a whole school assembly or events such as presentation days, and there is no stage for performances.

### Population Growth

It hardly needs pointing out that the lower north shore is undergoing a massive transformation. New apartment buildings line the Pacific Highway; approximately 2,000 new apartments have development approval in North Sydney; and the full scope of the 'urban renewal' that will be driven by the Crows Nest and North Sydney Metro stations is not yet apparent, but will no doubt be substantial.

Old wisdom was that people living in apartments did not have children, but we sincerely hope that the new reality is now fully apparent. Many young families are simply unable to afford a house; and shifting cultural norms will see many children grow up in apartments.

The main feeder primary schools for Cammeraygal are North Sydney, Cammeray and Anzac Park. Collectively, their enrolments **increased 33% over the last 3 years**. The population bulge is already upon us, and it is only going to get worse.

We do not have access to detailed demographic information, but it would seem highly likely that (without any changes to the catchment area) Cammeraygal's enrolments will continue to grow to 200-250 per year over the next 5-10 years; a school of perhaps **1,400 students**, double that planned only a few short years ago.

This population growth is also impacting upon community sport and recreational facilities. One recent example to illustrate the point: we could not register all our basketball teams in the local competition due to insufficient court space<sup>1</sup>. Scheduling training and game time is a growing challenge for all community sporting groups. Coupled with the fact that our children are increasingly living in apartments and have limited space to run around at school, the long term public health consequences are potentially serious.

### Cammeraygal Senior Campus

Two years ago, it was announced that the West St Crows Nest TAFE building would be refurbished to create the Senior Campus. It is currently planned that years 10-12 be located at the West St site, with years 7-9 on the Pacific Hwy Campus, both with around 500 students (ie a total school size of 1,000).

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<sup>1</sup> The Cammeraygal P&C organises a wide range of extra-curricular sports (basketball, tennis, netball, soccer, futsal and cricket), leveraging community competitions and facilities.

The West St Campus is just under 1km from the Pacific Hwy Campus, which will pose several challenges for the operation of the school as a single entity, in particular in relation to timetabling/teacher resourcing. The new campus will (we trust) open at the start of the 2019 school year.

Plans for the redevelopment are well advanced, and a Development Application needs to be submitted in the near future. We believe the Department of Education (DoE) planning team has done a thorough and professional job in considering how the teaching and learning needs of the school can be supported through the design process, and have been creative in re-imagining the existing site as a contemporary senior high school.

However, the parent body is concerned that **the West St Campus will be just as constrained in its recreational space as the Pacific Hwy Campus:**

- Aggregate outdoor area is less than 2,000m<sup>2</sup> (once again less than 4m<sup>2</sup> per student); and
- Indoor facilities comprise one basketball court/hall. This will be larger than the junior campus hall (to facilitate HSC exams, performances etc), a recent enhancement to the plans for which we are grateful but which we frankly feel is only meeting a basic requirement.

The hall is a new structure, as it could not be accommodated within the envelope of the existing building. It is an essential addition – but it removes about 1,000m<sup>2</sup> of open space from the site.

### **Requested Support**

In light of the population pressures and limited facilities described above, the Cammeraygal P&C believes that everything possible should be done to create sport/recreational space at the new Senior Campus. Specifically, we propose that **the roof of the hall be turned into an outdoor sporting facility**, such as a basketball or multi-purpose court.

This is a 'once in a generation' opportunity: once the hall is built it would be very expensive to change the structure (it would have to be demolished and rebuilt).

The DoE project team is not supportive of this change, as it would involve an increase in the redevelopment budget. It has been dismissed as too expensive, but we have not been able to ascertain what the incremental cost would be.

### **We seek your support in:**

- Ensuring that the option of a roof-top court is properly explored and costed; and
- Ideally, increasing the school's redevelopment budget to accommodate the enhanced facility; or
- Exploring co-funding options to expand the budget via other means.

On this last point, the P&C has had positive preliminary conversations with North Sydney Council. Community access to the hall/roof-top court for out-of-school-hours sporting events would help to relieve pressure on other sports facilities, and is an attractive option for Council. Possible co-funding of the enhanced hall is scheduled for discussion at the upcoming June Council meeting.

We are very conscious that **time is short**. The Development Application will soon be lodged; those plans will not include a roof-top court. If feasible, amending plans will need to be developed, and funding agreed, within a couple of months. It is imperative that any changes be decided quickly so that

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construction **does not continue past the start of the school year in 2019**, when the first cohort of Cammeraygal students will commence their HSC journey.

### **Future Capacity Increases**

We further seek your support in ensuring that:

1. DoE school capacity plans are fully reflective of:
  - The pipeline of new developments underway, approved and inherent in 'master plans' (in particular those relating to the new Metro stations) for the lower north shore, and
  - The rapid societal shifts in the type of dwelling in which children grow up.
2. Options have been identified to either:
  - Build new public high school capacity on the lower north shore (including adequate recreational and sporting facilities), or
  - Redirect existing capacity utilised by out-of-area students to the children of local families.
3. Local communities receive adequate information about capacity plans. It is fair to say that we have been underwhelmed by the 'consultation' and communication processes surrounding the development of both the initial Cammeraygal campus and the Senior Campus.

We thank you in advance for your consideration of the matters we have raised, and would be happy to discuss them if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Elyse Sainty', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

**Elyse Sainty**  
**President**  
**Cammeraygal High School P&C Association**

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cc  
Kathy Melky, Principal Cammeraygal High School  
Sharon Sands, Director Public Schools