



Carmel of Mary and Joseph 345 St Andrews Road Varroville NSW 2565 Australia

☎ 02 9820 3048; fax 02 9820 3711 email: jkramer@carmelvarroville.org.au

Department of Planning and Environment
Attention: Growth, Design & Programmes
GPO Box 39
Sydney NSW 2001
community@planning.nsw.gov.au

13 December 2014

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: Draft Leppington Precinct Plan

I write on behalf of the Carmelite Nuns, Varroville and as a member of the Scenic Hills Association to express our opposition to an aspect of the Transport and Access Strategy associated with the Draft Leppington Precinct Plan. We object to the proposal to develop St Andrews Road as a four-lane sub-arterial road linking Camden Valley Way to Campbelltown Road and the F5 freeway.

The South West Growth Centre Structure Plan makes no reference to St Andrews Road and shows no extension eastward from Camden Valley Way to the F5 (M31) or to Campbelltown Road. How is it, then, that such a major structural proposal should appear in the Draft Leppington Precinct Plan as part of the South West Growth Centre? Even Campbelltown City Council seems to have been unaware of it. This is not the first time that a major development in the Camden Local Government Area (LGA) has lacked regard for the integrity of the Scenic Hills. It happened with the Emerald Hills development, which was only revised and re-exhibited after criticism from residents of the Scenic Hills within the Campbelltown LGA.

If this upgrade proceeds, there will be major impacts on the community, the Scenic Hills, local heritage and the Carmelite communities at St Andrews Road at Varroville.

Our fundamental concern is the absence in the Draft Plan of any justification for a third connection between Camden Valley Way and Campbelltown Road and the F5. At present, to the south, Raby Road provides a direct east-west connection between Camden Valley Way and Campbelltown Road and the F5 northbound. To the north, Denham Court Road connects Camden Valley Way and Campbelltown Road, with access via Williamson Road to the F5 in both directions. In 2010, the RTA (now RMS) proposed a major truck stop for the F5 at Varroville, which was rejected on the grounds that it was unsafe for vehicles to access the F5 at that site. Since there is now access to the

F5 from Raby Road in the south and Williamson Road and Brooks Road in the north, we question the justification and safety of a third access point in close proximity to these two intersections.

St Andrews Road is currently a two-lane local road within the Scenic Hills of Campbelltown LGA. For the past forty (40) years, Campbelltown Council has preserved the Scenic Hills as an environmental protection area because of its scenic beauty. There are several sensitive land uses on both sides of St Andrews Road at Varroville, all of which will be seriously adversely affected by the presence of a four-lane sub-arterial road. They include Our Lady of Mount Carmel parish church, the Mount Carmel Retreat Centre and priory, the Carmel of Mary and Joseph (Carmelite nuns' monastery) and Varro Ville House (state listed heritage house and associated heritage landscape).

Of these, the most serious negative impact will occur on the Mount Carmel Retreat Centre, conducted by the Discalced Carmelite friars for the past fifty (50) years. There is a residential centre for people seeking spiritual refreshment in a tranquil semi-rural setting for days or weeks at a time. The Retreat House is located close to St Andrews Road and was fully refurbished in 2012. The Centre is the main house of the Discalced Carmelite friars in Australia, and hosts visitors for regional meetings from around the country and the Asia-Pacific region as well as from the Anglo-Irish Province of the Carmelites, from Europe and from the Americas. If St Andrews Road becomes a four-lane sub-arterial road linking Camden Valley Way and the F5 freeway, there will be constant traffic, noise and lighting impacting upon the Retreat Centre. The most likely scenario is that the Centre will become unviable, since the conference and accommodation areas are all within approximately 40 metres of the current road corridor. The economic impact on the Carmelite friars will be devastating as visitors and retreatants seek suitable peaceful, quiet retreat and conference facilities elsewhere.

The Carmelite nuns will also experience permanent traffic noise, lighting and disruption to the tranquil environment we chose for our monastery and life of contemplative prayer twenty-five (25) years ago. Widening of St Andrews Road will seriously diminish the quality of the semi-rural environment which we and our visitors value highly.

Furthermore, there will undoubtedly be a negative impact on local heritage associated with State-listed Varro Ville House and its surrounding heritage landscape. It seems probable that land will be resumed from Varro Ville's original estate to accommodate the road widening, thereby compromising its landscape and the heritage dams built by explorer Charles Sturt, which are located close to the current road corridor. Varro Ville is one of the most significant heritage houses and landscapes in Campbelltown LGA. It should be quarantined from development and conserved for present and future generations.

Connecting St Andrews Road across the Sydney Water Channel (heritage listed) and widening it to four lanes will involve destruction of important stands of critically endangered Cumberland Plain Woodland, a loss that will be irrevocable. Loss of habitat will negatively impact on bird life and fauna, for which wildlife corridors are rapidly diminishing as a result of urban development along Camden Valley Way and Denham Court Road. Seeking biodiversity offsets elsewhere cannot in any way compensate for the permanent loss of flora and fauna in the Scenic Hills.

A four-lane sub-arterial road through the Scenic Hills at Varroville has the potential to spell the end of the Scenic Hills as an area of scenic beauty. As urban development increases apace, we believe that it is ever more important to conserve scenically beautiful green space for the quality of life and spiritual well-being of present and future residents.

In summary, we support Campbelltown City Council's concerns and ask to have the proposal to upgrade St Andrews Road to a four-lane sub-arterial road removed from the Draft Leppington Precinct Plan.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jocelyn Kramer". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial 'J'.

Sister Jocelyn Kramer OCD