

West Schofields Precinct

BDEG Submission 24 September 2018

lodged electronically via Planning website

I lodge this submission on behalf of the members of Blacktown & District Environment Group Inc.

Sadly, the decision of Biodiversity Certification of the Sydney Growth Centres was one of expediency for development with insufficient regard for protection of the flora and fauna of the Cumberland Plain of Sydney. The decision was based primarily on desktop consideration of inadequately verified physical assessment of the land involved.

The working out of promised conservation through biodiversity certification has proven to be significantly less of a conservation outcome than is sustainable. So-called targets for offsetting viz. Priority Conservation Lands have subsequently been zoned for development by the government both State and Local Government. Areas rich in EPBC Act and TSC *cum* BC Act listed species not picked up in the desktop have been destroyed or are proposed for destruction.

Don't ever consider yourselves environmentally sensitive. You are agents of environment destroying developers and nothing more. You may say in your mind that such a comment warrants punitive action against the wishes of the writer but that same writer knows your mind – you were never going to recommend/approve a decent conservation outcomes in the first place so I am comfortable with pointing out this truth anyway.

Now you in government are advancing the bulldozers into areas of sensitivity with the West Schofields Precinct Plan. What worth is it for us to raise the flora and fauna issues deriving from what is proposed when the Biodiversity Certification of the area is set in stone.

To see, last week, a pair of Kangaroos standing in seeming perplexity in a bulldozed area of the once well vegetated area of the former Schofields Airfield and now approved Schofields Precinct was a pathetic thing to see. Around the Kangaroos were the piles of once vegetation inhabiting the site and foraging for fauna. Now it is bare earth.

That said we shall address only the odious redacting of text within the Aboriginal Heritage Assessment accompanying the proposed Precinct Plan. That blacking out of text which may refer to the existence of a known 'Burial Ground of the Blacks' adjacent to the elbow of Angus Road presents as an exercise of blacking out memory of the Aboriginal ancestors who walked the land, lived and finally rested in the earth before Europeans stepped onto the shore of this land.

We can only conclude that deception and blacking out occurred because we have not been informed of any government sponsored gathering together of Aboriginal groups of the Cumberland Plain to give assurance that what was known to the government about the “Burial Ground of the Blacks” was going to be given the highest respect and preservation. No, to our knowledge, this did not take place. Instead, the government sponsored the blacking out of text from the Aboriginal Heritage Assessment which may have drawn attention to the significance of this cultural heritage site.

The 1842 map of Windsor by J Musgrave is held in government repository. That map identifies the “Burial Ground of the Blacks” and an overlay of the area with present day maps shows the site as being on both sides of Angus Road, Schofields at the elbow of that road.

In 2015 the government was made aware of the existence of the site in a report commissioned by the government with Archaeological Heritage & Management Solutions (Alan Williams *et al*) and that report remarks “*It is considered unlikely that any development in the vicinity of the site would be feasible, and a large buffer would likely be required. The identification of this site is a critical issue to any future planning of the West Schofields precinct.*”

In the West Schofields Precinct Plan on exhibition no such regard is given to the site. Instead deference to development interests is paramount.

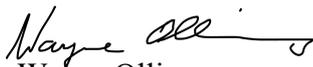
Nothing in the exhibited documents attempts to confirm by geoscience or other suitable method the physical existence of burials nor is any mention made of a large buffer to protect the site.

We note a small area zoned RE (1) but that is not at the location of the burial site according to a precise overlay of the map nor is it big enough to adequately ensure protection of all potential burials at the “Burial Ground of the Blacks” and (as per AHMS report) provide a “*large buffer*”.

Are you people in Planning so enslaved to serving the 'cargo cult' of development dollars that you have lost all sensitivity to what it is to be a human being with morality and spiritual attachment to other humans past, present and future? Would you dare to venture bulldozing Rookwood Cemetery to build houses, commercial and industrial development? If not, why do you abuse the remains and resting place of the ancestors of today's Aboriginals and thereby insult present day descendants and other sensitive humans not of Aboriginal heritage?

What has been exhibited is a cover-up, a blacking out of what poses as an inconvenience to a generation of Planners and government enchained to development interests and so bereft of fibre to lift yourselves out of the moral morass you inhabit.

Your first call should have been to bring together Aboriginal groups and work through how the government was going to sensitively confirm the location of the “Burial Ground of the Blacks” and ensure ample protection, respectful recognition and a buffer from surrounding development.



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