

SUBMISSION BY COLLEEN ABELA TO THE WEST SCHOFIELDS DRAFT MASTERPLAN.

25th September, 2018.

Firstly, I would like to express my concern that my husband and I were not notified of the West Schofields Draft Masterplan going on exhibition. This is a serious failing on behalf of the NSW Department of Planning, and while I do not think it was done deliberately, it could have meant that we were unable to see or comment on the Draft Masterplan. I came across the information accidentally, and I wonder how many other affected owners are still unaware of the proposal.

I also have concerns about the ban on any new homes being built in the 1 in 100 chance per year flood zone. Of course, there should not be housing development in these zones, but a landowner should be allowed to build a house if he/she is prepared to take the risk. I assume they will have existing use rights, but this penalises anyone who has not yet built on their land/ wants to knock down and rebuild, and further devalues this land.

My husband and I are happy with the proposed zoning of Medium Density of our land at 31 South St, (now Schofields Road) Schofields. The siting of the proposed Shopping Centre is sensible, being on the top of the hill along a major road, and our land is within 300 metres of this centre. There needs to be some Medium Density in this precinct, given its proximity to the commercial development within Marsden Park. Our land is well sited on the shoulder of a hill, along a major road, with easy transport links to all facilities. Despite it being marked as partly affected by the PMF, I would challenge the Department of Planning (DoP) to prove that there is a 1 in 100,000 chance of my land being inundated. Even if this was "proven", there should not be restrictions on housing above a 1 in 1,000 flood event. I don't envisage that the DoP will punish me for my outspokenness, (although I have already had one of my neighbours ask that very question), so I expect to see this Medium Density zoning retained on our land in the Final Plan.

Finally, we have grave concerns about the fairness and accuracy of the restrictions put on properties which fall under the PMF level. These decisions have far-reaching ramifications which could create political anger across the state. I have outlined these concerns below.

Lack of accuracy of the PMF mapping

- The disclaimers on Blacktown City Council's flood maps purporting to show the extent of the PMF, state that these are not accurate- they "should be regarded as an indicative guide only", and that AHD measurements need to be done.
- Can you show me the AHD measurements which have been done on all the land in the West Schofields, Marsden Park North and Vineyard Precincts?
- Obviously these PMF maps are not accurate- why is the DoP causing heartache and financial loss to hundreds of landowners in the West Schofields and surrounding precincts?
- According to the SES, the PMF has between a 1 in 10,000 and a one in 10 million chance of occurring each year- how can you claim the map to be accurate when you can't even get the probability accurate? (1 in 100,000 is just the accepted "guesstimate")
- Having lived at 31 South St for 20 years, and in the district for another 18 years since, I can assure you that if the front of that land flooded, so would most of Sydney!
- If we listen to former Australian of the Year and Climate Change advocate, Tim Flannery, Sydney will never again have enough rain to fill the dams, so why bother with the PMF?

Unnecessary Restrictions put on land unlikely to be affected

- While no one disputes the fact that housing developments should not be allowed in land under the 1 in 100 flood level, it is ridiculous to lump all land between the 1 in 100 and 1 in 100,000 flood level with the same restrictions.
- Minister for Western Sydney, Stuart Ayres, talked to Ray Hadley on 2 GB last week about the need to raise Warragamba Dam wall. The Minister spoke about the need to plan for a “catastrophic 1 in 1,000 flood.” Why would we need to place restrictions on buildings because of a flood which is 100 times less likely to occur than this flood?
- It is overkill to limit the number of dwellings which can be built under the PMF. There would be ample warning of such an event, given the extreme conditions which would need to be in place at the same time when the Probable Maximum Precipitation occurred, and therefore plenty of time to evacuate people who may be affected. (The numbers of Arks being built might also be a dead giveaway!)
- Why limit the number of dwellings under the PMF? It would be much more sensible to limit the number of dwellings say under the 1 in 1,000 flood level. All of the people under the PMF line in West Schofields are within 10 minutes’ drive of higher ground or safe haven.
- It is also ridiculous to put tougher building restrictions on all properties below the PMF. (One of the more ridiculous is the ban on carpet on the ground floor of homes. I would be happy to take the 1 in 100,000 risk and simply replace the carpet in my home if it was inundated!)
- The government has to plan safe evacuations for residents in a flood plain- but not for a flood of biblical proportions which might only have a 1 in 10 million chance of happening!

Setting a dangerous precedent

- Putting these restrictions on land presumed to be under the PMF in West Schofields and surrounding precincts, sets a dangerous precedent for the other tens of thousands of properties throughout Sydney and the rest of NSW who are also under the PMF line.
- If these restrictions are also put on all existing houses and future development in the Warragamba flood plain supposedly inundated by a PMF- all of Windsor, Richmond, Penrith, Bligh Park, McGraths Hill, Pitt Town and Emu Plains; substantial parts of Penrith, Jamisontown and Regentville; 50% of Riverstone, Marsden Park, North Richmond and Wilberforce and all of the rural lands on the floodplain, *it makes for an awful lot of angry voters in Liberal held seats.*
- These “notations on planning documents” are likely to devalue property, and increase insurance premiums and building costs.
- If these notations and restrictions are accepted, I will advise ALL landowners in NSW to contact their local council to see if their land was classed as “Flood Affected” because they are considered to have a 1 in 100,000 chance of flooding. There would then be tens of thousands of angry voters in this state who were unaware their homes are “flood affected”.
- By decreasing the number of homes able to be built under the PMF, the Government has immediately devalued the properties, and as a consequence, devalued the land which will be bought by government entities and council for schools, parks, etc. Funny how this has been done in an area where much land has been zoned for passive and active parkland.
- It appears to many people that land supposedly affected by the PMF has become the new “Green Zones”- a way to provide green space at the expense of landowners.

What are the reasons behind these proposals?

- Is there a major problem with the safety of Warragamba Dam? Why else would such restrictions be put on land so unlikely to be inundated by flood?
- Some cynics claim that these measures are purposely done to devalue properties, as Blacktown Council has to buy great swathes of land for parks, given that there are many more parks zoned for this precinct as the Department of Planning failed to provide enough passive and active parklands in surrounding precincts.
- Other cynics see the land being bought up cheaply by developers, who then lobby to have sanity prevail, the restrictions are lifted, and hey presto, the developers make a fortune.
- I would like to think that these proposed notations and restrictions on land supposedly under the PMF, have been done in good faith, but without considering all the possible negative impacts and implications.

Please let sanity prevail, and lift these restrictions off the majority of properties under the PMF

- I have no problem with emergency services, schools, aged care homes, hospitals, etc, not being allowed under the PMF.
- There is no need for notations to be put on planning documents to stop this happening- Councils simply need to check their flood maps, and the applicants have probably already done so.
- Do not set a precedent and open the floodgates (pun intended) to unnecessary building and insurance costs and land devaluation throughout the state.
- These proposals limit the amount of available housing land close to all amenities.
- These proposals are politically costly for very little community gain.
- A PMF in the Hawkesbury is very unlikely. Under one scenario, there would need to be considerable rainfall in the Warragamba catchment and in the floodplain, so that the ground was saturated, the dams full, and the creeks swollen. Then the ENTIRE 9,000 square kilometres of the Warragamba catchment (from Lithgow to Canberra, and from Gunning to Bowral), would soon after, need to receive almost its entire annual rainfall of 770 mms (30 inches) in less than 3 days!!! (And probably king tides at the same time.)
- There are currently ample flood evacuation routes and measures in place.
- If you are going to plan and put restrictions in for this, why not also make all buildings in NSW earthquake-proof, and all buildings within 500 metres of the coast, built to withstand a tsunami! Surely the likelihood of these are less than 1 in ten million, or even 1 in 100,000.

I draw your attention to the attached media release from former Planning Minister Frank Sartor in 2007. Look back at the anger created when only 5,500 properties in Blacktown City Council area were affected, and then magnify that by at least a hundred across the state.

Yours faithfully,

Colleen Abela.

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Local Woman of the Year, Riverstone Electorate, NSW Woman of the Year Awards, 2012.