

Here is an unabridged version of the verbal presentation I made:

Thanks for giving me the opportunity to speak – I live, with my family, close to the proposed development under consideration.

With regard to the proposed Wahroonga Estate HIGH-RISE development, I will begin by outlining some of the issues we are pretty sure will come to pass as a result of this development going ahead, namely:

- INCREASED TRAFFIC CONGESTION (with knock-on effects extending across the Pacific Hwy from ADA Ave into Wahroonga village, along Commenarra Pkwy in both directions, including up Kissingpoint Rd)
- INCREASED TRAFFIC HINDERANCES – such as an extra set of traffic lights, barely 50m from the previously installed set, to allow high-rise residents to enter and exit
- STREET TREE REMOVAL
- INCREASED FIRE EVACUATION RISKS (due to restricted access)
- AN ALREADY SUB-OPTIMAL SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT BEING FURTHER COMPROMISED
- POOR SCHOOL DROP-OFF PLANNING
- INSUFFICIENT PLAYING FIELDS
- NOISE COMPLICATIONS
- OVER-CROWDING
- FURTHER RANDOM RETROFITTING OF SUBURBS WITH DEVELOPMENT.
- NO ALIGNMENT TO ANY COMPREHENSIVE MASTER PLAN
- CLOSED OPPORTUNITIES TO BETTER COMPLIMENT OUR SUBURB (e.g. govt could have potentially done an exchange deal to allow public transport accessible Thornleigh Station to be developed in exchange for playing fields).

However, there is so much more to this. Wahroonga Estate cannot be considered in suburban isolation.

We are not arguing the finer points of town planning here. My heartfelt perception is that the community, thus far, has been badly let down by SYSTEMIC FAILURES failures resulting from a BLUNT, UNSOPHISTICATED planning system, which extends across tiers of government, uncoordinated across council boundaries and across many government agencies, and utility easement and train corridor managers – a system that is so far off world best practice that it is often difficult to know where to even begin to object, or indeed offer suggestions. We are not even getting the basics right. The word AMATEUR springs to mind. We have a community which is punch-drunk trying to get sense out of the people paid, and paid well, to make sense on these matters. There is plenty of room for improvement. Crikey, these days we cannot even build intersections that allow people to turn left when the green arrow so indicates (along with other poorly designed lane combinations). Out west, we still see the indiscriminate bulldozing flat of formerly beautiful natural environments, and the grassroots building of a motley collection of cheek-by-jowl “mac-mansions”, as well as badly constructed high-rise apartments. We have had decades of poor mac-mansion architecture, and lack of vision. This is a SYDNEY-WIDE story, and quite possibly a state-wide story (judging by accounts from the likes of COORANBONG, which happens to be another Seventh Day Adventist debacle).

[Deviating on the subject of not even getting the basics right, by way of quick examples we find such “features” within Wahroonga and Turramurra such as: (a) No mirrors on the Howson Avenue/Commenarra Parkway intersection; (b) Poorly painted line demarcation on the ‘S’ bend of Cleveland going into Grosvenor Streets, (which again is an accident waiting to happen); & (c) Speed limits on quiet suburban roads that barely a car can fit down (e.g. Kiogle Street) that are equal to that of a major arterial road.]

It is my impression that Wahroonga residents are not necessarily anti-progress (so long as it is well thought out), or anti-developers. Developers will always be developers – some good some bad, and some very bad. In our particular case, we are unfortunate that we have secretive, controlling business cult, at least in leadership, masquerading as a religion, and driving this particular development, on donated land, to their best advantage, and whose intent largely flew under the radar for quite some time (despite them now pretending to be informative after the fact, via a well-honed media machine). It is worth noting that the community was largely sympathetic in concept to the further hospital and school development (on the assumption this latter was going to be well designed and thought out, of course). The Wahroonga Estate venture, having been conditionally sold to a Chinese consortium, appears to be targeting the overseas Chinese market, no doubt wishing to escape their overcrowded, dirty cities for a more pleasant standard of living in leafy green uncrowded suburbs - kind of ironic, given that the very aspects they are being attracted to, are being destroyed in the process.

So we have the developers, doing what developers do. However, it is the system of government, in their role as development proposal gate-keepers, that we ultimately hope to rely on to keep the developers honest – however, this is clearly not working. The Libs, as represented by our local MP, Alistair Henskens, have effectively rubber-stamped anything the Wahroonga Estate developers want to do, by washing their hands of the process. Labour started the rot, via Frank Sartor. And council defers to the state government. The Liberal Federal government are missing in action, although mumbled something just prior to the last election.

THE TAIL IS REALLY WAGGING THE DOG.

The character of our suburbs are being totally changed, against our will, and there appears to be little we can do about it. My perception is that the Public bureaucracies (under their political masters) have become fat, complacent, clumsy, unreceptive and uncaring, devoid of passion and enthusiasm for doing things really well. Come to think of it, there are not many things we, as a society, are doing really well at the moment. The very fabric of DEMOCRACY is failing us. Under these frustrating circumstances, one can well see how CIVIL UNREST could be seen as a protest option by some (myself excluded, before I get arrested on terrorism charges) – for example, there would be nothing like a few empty, half-built buildings burning in the morning breeze, to focus minds.

Today, I would like to talk about a COMPREHENSIVE, well constructed “END-GAME” VISION for our suburbs - a vision that sets out where we ultimately want to stabilise at, or land at. **A master plan, if you like, that pleasantly integrates our built environment with the natural environment we have been gifted.**

Without vision driving strategic direction, there is no point in blindly continuing to accede to developers.

Any comprehensive end-game vision may (or should) include such considerations, just for starters, as:

- POPULATION DENSITY TARGETS
- GREEN SPACES RATIO's
- FIRE RISK MANAGEMENT
- WILDLIFE CORRIDORS (why can we not have a koala population living down the road, instead of relocating them whenever they are found. Overseas, we see fencing of busy roads and bridges and tunnels being created across these, to accommodate wildlife).
- SUFFICIENT PLAYING FIELDS – good exercise, and sport, is not only a healthy outlet, it keeps our children on the “straight-and-narrow”.
- FITNESS PARKS
- BUSINESS MIX
- HEIGHT RESTRICTIONS
- BUILT-ENVIRONMENT FOOTPRINT
- INTERCONNECTED PEDESTRIAN & CYCLE PATHS
- PEDESTRIAN & CYCLE OVERPASSES & UNDERPASSES CROSSING BUSY ROADS
- ROAD FENCING WHERE SENSIBLE, SO THAT TRAFFIC CAN RESUME SENSIBLE SPEEDS PAST SCHOOLS
- SPEED LIMITS – for example, you can barely get a single car down my street, congested with parking as it is, yet it has the same speed limit as an arterial road
- WELL-PLANNED CHILDREN DROP-OFF INGRESS INTO SCHOOLS
- PUBLIC TRANSPORT
- TRAFFIC FLOW & MANAGEMENT (with modern tools, we could toll, for example, all non-residents passing through our narrow roads)
- PARKING
- ALIEN VEGETATION & FERAL ANIMAL MANAGEMENT
- THEMED BUILDING & PLEASANT, VEGETATED TERRACE-STYLE DEVELOPMENT – things that other sophisticated cities now take for granted
- WATER, ENERGY & WASTE MANAGEMENT
- UNDERGROUND UTILITY TUNNELS (It seems, for example, that thick black communication lines just get lower and lower almost to touching height, and contract tree-cutting crews slash inconsequential low slung bushes to pieces. A single fire started by electricity lines could justify underground insertion.
- BUILDING RIGHT OVER TRAIN-STATIONS INSTEAD OF NEEDLESSLY DESECRATING LAND FAR FROM OPTIMUM PUBLIC TRANSPORT (a creative deal, for example, could have been done between the Adventist organisation and the government in a playing fields for over-station (Thornleigh) development rights exchange).

- NOISE (e.g. just for examples of how other jurisdictions are thinking, in Canada, leaf blowers noise output is curtailed, whereas in Germany, Sunday is declared a peaceful, no-noise day. Noisy building (jackhammers, etc) are given a time limit to be completed).
- ETC, ETC

In other words, LET's GET SMART & forward thinking.

Without all this in place, we really need to stop, and first develop such (i.e. a comprehensive, smart vision and strategy that meets community expectations, and remains open to refinement "at the edges"). Then we can make aligning decisions, rather than this Ad-hoc approach. It is pointless to keep on making decisions until this first stage is completed, other than that of "Doing Nothing" until it is!

So, in closing, I have two questions to (concerns regarding) the IPCN panel decision-makers upon whose fate our suburb depends, namely:

1. Do you have a COMPREHENSIVE END-GAME VISION, to ALIGN your decisions with?; &
2. Does this vision meet COMMUNITY EXPECTATIONS?

We don't want a bleak paved parking lot (metaphorical) to live in – we want a pleasant well thought out suburban environment in which to live, play, learn, love, bring-up families, and work from. That's all I have to say for now. THANK YOU.