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NEW SOUTH WALES JEWISH BOARD OF DEPUTIES

The Representative Organisation of NSW Jewry

ועד הקהילה היהודית בנ. ס.ו.

President: Lesli Berger

Chief Executive Officer: Vic Alhadeff



Thursday, 8 March 2018

Prof Mary O'Kane, AC
Chair, Independent Planning Commission
Level 3, 201 Elizabeth Street
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Sir/Madam,

Varroville: Proposed listing on State Heritage Register. AO 92 /18 SHR 00737

On behalf of the NSW Jewish community we write in support of the Catholic Metropolitan Cemeteries Trust's development proposal to establish a new cemetery and parklands at 176 St Andrews Rd, Varroville.

By way of introduction, the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies is the official elected representative roof-body of the Jewish Community in New South Wales, with 62 major communal organisations as its constituents. It is recognised by the NSW State Government, its agencies, the media and other ethnic and religious groups as the representative body of the Jewish Community and speaks on its behalf on all matters affecting the status, welfare and interests of New South Wales Jewry.

The provision of adequate burial grounds is an issue of pressing concern for our community. Whilst increased life expectancy and the increase in cremation has relieved pressure that was first identified in the 1960s, as you may be aware, our faith (like the Orthodox, Muslims, and Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islanders and Pacific Islanders) forbids cremation, and requires permanent/perpetual burial.

On present estimates, absent approval of this development application, by approximately 2024, there will be no available graves available for sale for Jewish burial at any of the cemeteries where land is currently consecrated for Jewish burial.

We have been shown plans for the new memorial park and can see that Catholic Cemeteries & Crematoria are committed to protecting the beauty, serenity and heritage of the area and providing this essential infrastructure service for all denominations in south west Sydney, as well as community parklands. They also have a plan to preserve and indeed conserve the important heritage aspects of the site.

We also have reviewed documents on your website, and observe that in their presentation to the Heritage Council Urbis has sought specific site exemptions to allow the cemetery to proceed, and have created the offsets required by the Conservation Management Plan.

Unfortunately, the alternative put forward by the Office of Environment and Heritage goes well beyond that which is needed for heritage conservation, would very substantially diminish the available land for burial for our community and would place an unreasonable burden on the development application.

We support the minimum curtilage area proposed in the Conservation Management Plan endorsed by the JRPP and referred to in the LEP for Campbelltown, whilst acknowledging that any approval will contain some conditions. It protects the homestead outbuildings, dams, remnant vineyards and original driveway, and important historic value of Varroville House.¹ The curtilage matter should be considered only after the Development Application is assessed by the IPC.

Further:

- the construction of a multi-faith cemetery is the most sympathetic proposal available to the community to retain the significant history of the property;
- we expect that there will be no visual impact on views to and from the property, as the monumentalisation is minimal and low height and sympathetically incorporated into the landscape; and
- recreational space for the community covering around one-third of the site, is included in the proposal. This will include historical walks and interpretations commemorating the rich Aboriginal and European history of the site, and an art and sculpture walk,, an interpretation of the property.

The NSW Government has played a historic role in allocating land for burial purposes, and this has served the people of Sydney well. The last public cemetery established by the Government was the Frenchs Forest cemetery in 1937. The need for a major multi-faith cemetery that will serve for the rest of the present century is a most pressing one, and an appropriate balance with heritage concerns can be achieved by adopting that curtilage area proposed in the Conservation Management Plan endorsed by the JRPP and referred to in the LEP for Campbelltown. (Refer policy 11 figure 50 on page 123).

That necessary balance cannot be achieved by adopting the alternative proposed by the Office of Environment and Heritage.

We respectfully submit that:

- the alternative curtilage proposal put forward by the Office of Environment and Heritage be rejected; and
- the Catholic Metropolitan Cemeteries Trust's development proposal be approved including (i) specific site exemptions to allow the cemetery to proceed, (ii) the offsets required by the Conservation Management Plan, and (iii) subject only to workable conditions that do not materially diminish the burial space proposed.

Yours sincerely,



Lesli Berger

President

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See: policy 11 figure 50 on page 123 of the CMP minimum curtilage.