



PRESERVING AUSTRALIA'S OLDEST GARDEN SUBURB

P.O. BOX 85, HUNTERS HILL, N.S.W. 2110

30 July 2009

The General Manager
Lane Cove Council

**SUBMISSION ON
PROPOSED SYDNEY UNIVERSITY ROWING CLUB FACILITY
CUNNINGHAMS REACH LANE COVE RIVER**

A site of more than local significance

The site at Cunninghams Reach has significance for the whole of Sydney not just Lane Cove. It contains a public park used by people from all over the metropolitan area and beyond. It is part of the Lane Cove River, which flows through a number of local government areas.

The site is directly opposite Boronia Park, which is a major bushland park in Sydney and contains a section of the Great North Walk. There are many aboriginal sites in the vicinity.

Cunninghams Reach makes a significant contribution to the character of this part of the Lane Cove River.

Notification of the proposal

In light of the wider significance of this site, Lane Cove Council has been remiss in its notification of the proposal. Hunters Hill Council and Hunters Hill residents in the immediate vicinity of the site were not officially notified of the proposal and were not included in the consultation process. Unofficially we have become aware of it only this week, which is well after the closing time for submissions.

The Hunters Hill Trust, which last year celebrated its 40th anniversary, has been involved in many battles for the protection of the heritage and character of Hunters Hill and its immediate surrounds. We have also been involved in a number of battles to keep public land in public ownership and use. Recently this involved the fight to keep the Defence Lands around the harbour in the public domain. This battle ended with a significant victory for the combined resident-action groups, with the creation of the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust.

Back in the 1970s a major battle was fought to prevent the extension of the freeway from the Figtree Bridge across the river to the western shores of the river in Boronia Park. This road would have been directly opposite Cunninghams Reach and would have destroyed the mangroves and bushland along much of the western shoreline of the river.

The Trust continues to maintain a deep concern for any development along the Lane Cove River.

Because we only became aware of this proposal in the last few days, we hope that Lane Cove Councillors will consider our submission.

The Hunters Hill Trust is opposed to this development application

We believe it will have a significant adverse impact on the river and its surrounds that is shared at this location between Hunters Hill and Lane Cove as itemised below.

a) The alienation of Public Land

- *The proposal involves the alienation of public parkland for a private use.*
- *The use of the alienated land will be restricted to a very small, elite group – the Sydney University Rowing Club. This is clearly not in the public interest.*

The retention of public land in public use should be one of the main tenets of proper governance for local councils. It is shameful that Lane Cove Council is even considering this proposal.

b) The destruction of parkland and bush

- *The bushland character of the site will be adversely affected through loss of trees, lawn and garden areas.*
- *The passive recreational use of the park will be adversely affected by increased usage, particularly by increases in vehicular traffic volume.*
- *Any building on this site will be an interruption to an almost continuous green belt that runs along the foreshores of both sides of the Lane Cove River from Figtree Bridge to Fullers Bridge.*
- *The proposal will have an adverse impact on Boronia Park, which is directly opposite.*
- *The bushland character of the site as experienced from the river and from Boronia Park will be adversely affected by the proposed rowing facility and its associated works*

Much of the bushland you now see along the river has been gained through the closure of many polluting activities that lined the river for most of the 20th century and the regeneration of those sites. These sites included the sand-dredging infrastructure at Kitty's Creek; the Council dump at Buffalo Creek, the sewerage station at the bottom of Barons Crescent, the Clifford Love factory at the Epping Road Bridge etc

Cunninghams Reach itself was won back from private use as part of a sand-washing facility some decades ago and landscaped by Lane Cove Council for a public park, which ironically included the removal of a boat ramp in order to address the adverse impact of boat trailer parking.

The park is now considered one of the jewels along the Lane Cover River both for its contribution to the unique bushland character of the river and for its use for passive recreation.

c) The impact of the building itself and associated works.

Even if it were considered appropriate to construct a public building in the public park at Cunninghams Reach, then this particular proposal would be entirely inappropriate for the following reasons:

- *Its bulk and scale are entirely inappropriate for the site.*

The scale of buildings along this part of the river is domestic. The proposed Sydney University rowing club facility is more than 57 metres long and, for much of the elevation that fronts the river, is more than 10 metres high, which is way beyond domestic scale. The attached photos (taken from just in front of the proposal) shows the heritage-listed former boatshed* across the river timber in Hunters Hill in the top photo and the same building with the Sydney University rowing club facility superimposed on it in the photo below.

- *By showing its back to the river, the building at ground floor level becomes a severe and unwelcoming structure*

This is epitomised by the location of a number of rainwater tanks along the northwestern façade so that the building seems to thumb its nose at the river.

- *The 3 metre wide access road will allow vehicles and trailers deep into the site.*

This is a further alienation of the site, both in the area taken up by the road and with the introduction of vehicles into what was previously an entirely pedestrian domain.

- *The destruction of existing landscaping for additional parking*

The proposal is for the creation of 6 additional car spaces in the existing car park in areas currently occupied by landscaping, which has been specifically designed to soften the car-parking area. The removal of this landscaping will turn the car park into an unrelieved and ugly asphalt tarmac.

- *The alienation of the general public's access to the site by denying them parking.*

There are 19 existing parking places on the site. The proposal adds 6 more spaces (at the expense of the landscaping) for a total of 25 places. This will leave just 1 additional place if only 3 eights' crews arrive at 5.30 in the morning for a training row. The coach will snap this up and so there will be no parking left for the general public. In reality the parking facilities are totally inadequate for the scale of this proposal and its anticipated usage, making the point very clearly that the proposal is way out of scale with the site.

- *The alienation of the public from the whole of the northern end of the site.*

While the proposal belatedly introduced a couple of facilities for public use, including public toilets, a fish cleaning table and the supposed access to the pontoon and ramp, the reality is that the public will not feel welcome in that part of the site north of the new access road, particularly when rowing boats are being moved up and down from the pontoon.

d) The “working harbour” justification for the proposal

The working harbour concept is all about retaining existing maritime facilities on the harbour foreshores rather than replacing them with high density housing, as is happening up and down the Parramatta River and elsewhere. Some supporters of this proposal have used this argument to justify their support for it.

The idea that replacing a beautiful little park, much used by picnickers, dog walkers, fisher folk, and baptism and wedding parties with a privately owned facility for a tiny, elite group of rowers is somehow part of “the working harbour” is entirely spurious.

Tony Coote
President of The Hunters Hill Trust

*My own house

See also the attached file SYDNEY UNI RCP SCALE COMPARISON.JPG