

INQUIRY INTO CROSS CITY TUNNEL

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Date Received:

Theme:

Summary



RACCOL

SCEGGS Darlinghurst

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From the Head of School

7th March, 2006

The Hon. Fred Nile, MLC,
Parliament House,
6 Macquarie Street,
SYDNEY. N.S.W. 2000.

Dear Reverend Nile,

**RE: THE RECENT CLOSURE OF BOURKE STREET SOUTH OF WILLIAM STREET AND THE
2002 CLOSURE OF ST. PETER'S STREET**

SCEGGS has worked with local residents and businesses over many years on a range of issues to do with our local area. We have together participated in a number of meetings recently with government authorities and various community consultations to ensure that our area is a safe, healthy and vibrant place to live and work.

There are a number of reasons that SCEGGS strongly supports the closure of Bourke Street south of William Street. We have raised these issues in these many forums. They relate to air quality; safety; a potential for increased disruption to the general public through increased traffic disruption in Bourke and William Streets and the threat of an increase in the level of street prostitution and associated activities in the immediate vicinity of the school.

AIR QUALITY

By way of background, the RTA had organised monitoring of local air quality on the SCEGGS site both prior to the opening of the Eastern Distributor and again following its completion to assess the resulting changes. Results of earlier tests carried out in 1996 showed relatively high levels of pollutants due to the heavy traffic on Bourke Street. When it was decided to place the ventilation stack for the Eastern Distributor close to the school, an examination of the likely changes to air quality was carried out. The EIS prepared for the Eastern Distributor in 1996 concluded that air quality around the SCEGGS site and its immediate surrounds would not deteriorate following the opening of the Eastern Distributor. The reason given was that, although there would be emissions from the ventilation stack, these emissions would be offset by diverting the existing extremely heavy traffic on Bourke Street through the Eastern Distributor. The school was comfortable with this report and subsequent testing following the completion of the Eastern Distributor.

The EIS for the Cross City Tunnel (page 23 of the EIS summary) indicated that there would be an increase in traffic volume in Bourke Street following the opening of the Cross City Tunnel. Given the combination of heavy surface traffic and the Eastern Distributor's

ventilation stack if Bourke Street was re-opened, the school was concerned about a potential serious impact on air quality in the immediate vicinity.

SAFETY AND INCREASED TRAFFIC ALONG BOURKE STREET

SCEGGS, of course, generates traffic twice a day as parents drop off and pick up their daughters. The school also has many students who are pedestrians or travel by public transport. We are therefore very concerned about traffic management in all the streets of East Sydney.

Planning for the construction of the replacement SCEGGS primary school on Bourke Street commenced during 1999 and the building was completed in 2003. During the planning stage South Sydney Council advised that it required alleviation of the existing situation where traffic was being grid-locked through Forbes Street, into Liverpool Street and often as far away as Kings Cross during certain times of the day. This gridlock was being created by having only one point to drop off and pick up students, that being in Forbes Street and resulted in a great deal of frustration to motorists, residents, police, council officers and SCEGGS itself. South Sydney Council requested the school to prepare a Traffic Management Plan that was completed by our traffic consultants in October 1999 and approved by South Sydney Council. The Traffic Management Plan included a second drop off and pick up point in Bourke Street. This is mainly used for children between the ages of 5 and 12. Utilising the second drop off point in Bourke Street has dramatically improved traffic flow during morning peak hour traffic and in the afternoon in the streets surrounding the school. Children also cross Bourke Street to gain entry to the school through the Bourke Street gates. SCEGGS has raised concerns about safety issues of conducting these activities should traffic volumes increase along Bourke Street if it were to re-open.

The school has also recently advised the RTA that it is concerned about the possibility of re-opening Bourke Street as the drop off and pick up area in Bourke Street has not been tested in conjunction with the upgraded William Street and its reduced number of carriageways. There are concerns that parents turning left from William Street into Bourke Street to drop off or pick up their primary aged children during peak hours could create a grid-lock situation in William Street of much greater proportions than that which existed when SCEGGS only had one drop off and pick up point for our students in Forbes Street. It is also possible that disruption to emergency vehicles and buses will also occur. The RTA has advised that it will discuss these matters further with the school.

INCREASE IN THE LEVEL OF STREET PROSTITUTION IN BOURKE STREET, FORBES STREET AND ST. PETER'S STREET

For many years, SCEGGS has worked with residents, police, various levels of government and representatives of SWOP in an attempt to find a solution to the problems created by street prostitution existing in the streets immediately surrounding the school.

There were periods of time in the past when, despite the efforts of the Kings Cross Police to combat the situation, the level of activity associated with street prostitution on the boundaries of SCEGGS increased to intolerable levels. Prostitutes ventured into the

alcoves of the school and children sometimes felt quite threatened and confronted. There were, on occasions, associated thefts of property belonging to students and their parents. The presence of students, parents and staff during the day did not present any impediment to the operations of the street workers and their pimps and incidents were being reported by students, staff and parents on a daily basis. Our neighbours were subjected to threats and violence that frequently resulted in street conflict.

Due to this situation, in 2002 approval was given for the closure of St. Peter's Street. As a result of this closure the transformation in Forbes Street and St. Peter's Street has been remarkable. A very safe and pleasant atmosphere has been created together with a greater sense of community between SCEGGS and our neighbours. The feeling of well-being experienced by our students as they move to and from the School and between our two sites has been greatly enhanced.

The school is very concerned about the impact that the potential re-opening of Bourke Street will have on the expansion of the number of street workers currently working outside our primary school in Bourke Street and in the streets immediately surrounding the school.

SCEGGS considers the matter of street prostitution and associated activities in our neighbourhood to be extremely serious. We are very concerned that support would be given to any situation encouraging the expansion of this illegal activity in a residential area and outside a girls' school.

Given the seriousness of the issues raised, I would be happy to come and discuss these matters with you, or alternatively to invite you here to see the issues first hand. Please let me know if you would be interested in this course of action.

Yours sincerely



Jenny Allum
Head of School