



Steven Chaytor



Your local Member of State Parliament

18 November 2005

The Hon. Jan Burnswoods MLC
Chair, Legislative Council Standing Committee on Social Issues
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Jan Burnswoods,

Please find attached my submission to the **Inquiry into public disturbances at Macquarie Fields.**

Yours sincerely,

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Member for Macquarie Fields

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Legislative Council Standing Committee on Social Issues

Inquiry into public disturbances at Macquarie Fields

Steven Chaytor MP, Member for Macquarie Fields

I was elected to the NSW Legislative Assembly representing the electorate of Macquarie Fields on 17 September 2005. I understand the NSW Government has made a comprehensive submission to the Committee.

Background

The trigger to the riots in the nights of late February this year was a one-minute police car chase just before 11pm on Friday, 25 February 2005. Two plain-clothes officers in an unmarked police car pursued a stolen late-model Holden Commodore on Eucalyptus Drive, Macquarie Fields. Two passengers in the stolen car, Matthew Robertson aged 19 and Dyllan Rayward aged 17, died instantly when the stolen car crashed. The driver of the stolen car fled the scene. Anger escalated into several evenings of rioting and civil disobedience in the public housing estate of Macquarie Fields. Rumour and resentment spread in equal measure.

Several days later the driver of the stolen car, Jesse Kelly, was arrested in local bushland. Jesse Kelly faces two charges of manslaughter and maliciously inflicting grievous bodily harm, affray and threat/cause injury to prevent information to police. Over 50 of the alleged Macquarie Fields rioters face a range of charges including riot, affray, assault of police, throwing an explosive device and committing an act of cruelty on an animal. These matters are to be determined by the criminal justice system.

The riots in Macquarie Fields earlier this year highlighted circumstances to Sydney that locals have known for many years. A combination of the character of the individuals involved and the social background of pockets of the local community formed the basis to the riots. There has been no evidence of criminal misconduct or neglect by the police. Two men involved in the riots through the throwing of rocks and metal palings at police, and verbally

threatening police, have recently been sentenced to one year in prison. The sentence sends a strong message to the community that such behaviour is not tolerated.

Demographics

It is important for the Committee to consider the background to daily life in parts of Macquarie Fields. Census income data reveals that Macquarie Fields has a greater proportion, and an increasing trend, of low-income households compared to Campbelltown and Sydney averages. Census education data reveals that Macquarie Fields has a lower average skill and education base compared to Campbelltown and Sydney averages. Macquarie Fields has a relative higher share of students that leave school at an early level (Year 10 or less) and a lower level of students completing Year 12. Unemployment is higher, with a lower percentage of the Macquarie Fields population engaged in or seeking work, compared to the Campbelltown and Sydney averages. Macquarie Fields has a higher share of production workers, transport workers and labourers and a lower share of associate professionals. The area has a larger share of one-parent families compared to Campbelltown. Macquarie Fields has a considerably lower share of homeowners and a higher share of renters, including public housing tenants.

Planning Reform

There is wide public and professional acceptance that past planning decisions have contributed to social disadvantage in parts of Macquarie Fields. The planning design of large public housing estates based on Radburn principles has contributed to social problems and physical deterioration. There should now be equally wide public and professional acceptance that only by implementing good planning decisions will this trend be reversed and provide future benefit to the Macquarie Fields community.

Glenquarie Town Centre

We are all products of our built and social environment. The re-development of the Glenquarie Town Centre must be at the forefront of concepts to improve the built and social environment in the area. The Glenquarie Town Centre is the central place for economic and social interchange for private homeowners and renters of private and public housing in the

Macquarie Fields and Glenfield area. An aerial shot of the precinct is provided in Attachment A. The Glenquarie Town Centre is a place to shop, meet and access government services. Revitalisation of the Glenquarie precinct could substantially improve the quality of daily life for many people. An increase in business activity in the area has the potential to improve much-needed local employment opportunities. Young people in Macquarie Fields must see more ahead in their future than unemployment, welfare benefits and public housing.

To advance the prospect of revitalisation, I have written on 31 October 2005 to the General Manager of Campbelltown Council, Mr Paul Tosi, encouraging Council to enter into partnership with the State Government to begin a masterplan process to revitalise Glenquarie Town Centre. A Project Control Group should be established and chaired by Campbelltown Council. The Project Control Group should set a timeframe for the start and completion of a masterplan process that involves extensive community consultation. An application should be made by the Project Control Group to the Department of Planning for planning reform funds to assist in the Glenquarie revitalisation process. I would welcome the opportunity to be a member of the Group in my role as the local member of State Parliament.

The masterplan process should embody the leading principles of Smart Growth and work in cooperation with Landcom and the Department of Housing. The masterplan should incorporate strategies to improve the public amenity through improved footpaths, landscaping and lighting. The masterplan should incorporate leading design principles that reduce crime and promote safer communities. The underground pedestrian passes in the area no longer form part of the pedestrian network. The underground passes are dark and unsafe areas that facilitate anti-social behaviour. They should be closed.

The Glenquarie precinct incorporates significant public infrastructure including the Macquarie Fields TAFE, Ambulance Station, Fire Station, Police Station, Public Library, Neighbourhood Centre, Senior Citizens Centre and James Meehan High School. The quality and useability of open space in the area should be assessed. Macquarie Creek runs through the precinct and is an important parcel of open space that is in urgent need of enhancement. Retail in the precinct consists of the Glenquarie Shopping Centre and the retail strip along Harold Street. The State Government and Campbelltown Council are significant landowners in the precinct.

The proposed Smart Growth masterplan should consider the inclusion of private multi-dwelling housing in parts of the Glenquarie precinct to encourage residential and business growth. This would assist the important objective of increasing the proportion of private housing in the area. The masterplan must include the public housing townhouses situated alongside Harold Street that urgently need redevelopment. A large area of unused open space surrounds the worst public housing in Macquarie Fields, located at the rear of the Salvation Army Centre and Peppermint Crescent through to Eucalyptus Drive. This area presents a significant opportunity to redevelop the land, incorporating private housing, similar to the successful model used at the Campbellfield Estate inside the Minto public housing estate.

The Macquarie Fields Community has previously proposed and petitioned for a skatepark to increase recreational options for young people in the area. The skatepark should be included as part of the masterplan. This would enhance the existing recreational options in the area, which consists of tennis courts, a youth centre and ageing basketball courts. The skatepark has strong community support and could be located on the corner of Victoria Road and Harold Street. The skatepark proposal has significant merit and would follow the success of Campbelltown Council's skatepark at Leumeah, which has worked innovatively with local community groups to improve recreational options in the city.

Camp Impact

As government and non-government agencies review and enhance programs in Macquarie Fields following the riots, the Committee should consider the positive impact of the Camp Impact program. The program involves police intensively working with young people at risk of developing anti-social behaviour and encourages them to stay at school and realise that a life of crime is not a life worth living.

Image

The Macquarie Fields community constantly raises with me their disappointment about the negative image attached to the suburb. The negative image is untrue and undeserved. I hope the Committee keeps this in mind during its deliberations. The riots earlier this year were infrequent and unacceptable behaviour. Significantly more people in Macquarie Fields live in private housing than public housing. Significantly more people are working than are

unemployed. Significantly more people are studying than those not attending school or training. Significantly more people obey the law and respect police than participate in acts of civil disobedience. Significantly more people in Macquarie Fields are building a brighter future. Young people attending a job interview should not be disadvantaged from wider Sydney misperceptions because they went to a school in Macquarie Fields or have a Macquarie Fields address listed in their resume. A positive image of Macquarie Fields needs fostering and I encourage committee members to consider this during their deliberations.