

Submission  
No 185

## **THE TRANSPORT NEEDS OF SYDNEY'S NORTH-WEST SECTOR**

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Wyeth Australia Submission :  
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Norwest Business Park – Access issues

### Introduction.

Wyeth Australia Pty Limited is located at 15-17 Solent Circuit in Norwest Business Park. We are one of the original businesses that have established our campus in this area. We have approximately 300 employees who are attending this campus daily. An additional number visit this campus each day as the head office for business conducted in Australia and New Zealand.

### The nature of the business on campus

As a pharmaceutical company the Norwest campus does not have a manufacturing facility. It does however; accommodate the head office functions of the business.

This includes:

- The Executive.
- Medical Affairs
- Clinical research
- Marketing
- Logistics
- Sales Administration,
- Financial Services
- Training
- Human Resources
- Corporate Affairs

Wyeth has a very high proportion of staff who is tertiary qualified professionals and involved in specialised and technical functions associated with the management of the business.

As a direct consequence the recruitment of this kind of personnel are selected on their technical skills and qualifications and hence are not necessarily employed from local employment opportunities but rather from all over the Sydney metropolitan area.

As such the staff, in general, will need to commute daily to the campus.

Attracting this kind of employee to Wyeth is based on the reputation of the company and the quality of the product portfolios Wyeth manages.

Significant factors within this mix are the working conditions that Wyeth can offer to what are highly sought after and skilled people.

### The demographics of the staff at Wyeth Norwest Business Park

A significant number of our staff live in locations that require a significant commute to the Norwest Campus.

It has been shown that 64% of the staff commuted for longer than 45 minutes each way per day.

In most cases this requires the use of an automobile, as there are few if any options to use public transport to access this office location.

The suggested option of using the rail and bus links to the area do not offer a viable option as it would add significant and unacceptable time to the commute required.

e.g. a staff member travelling from Bondi Junction would be required to:

Commute to the rail connection.

Rail to the city loop or Central rail stations.

Change trains to a rail option to Parramatta

Change to bus way commute from Parramatta to Baulkham Hills

Potentially change bus connections at Norwest Boulevard to access the closest stop to the Wyeth Campus.

Walk on foot from Norwest Boulevard to the campus site on Solent Circuit.

Estimated time for the commute: approx. 1 hr 50 minutes as an average with no delays.

Thus adding a significant length the working day based on the each way requirement of the commute.

The recent announcements by the NSW Government to no longer pursue the rail link directly into the Norwest district from the city does not offer any longer term relief to this situation.

Because of the nature of the work conducted by this business, a significant number of staff at Wyeth Norwest needs to be functionally mobile during the workday. They frequently need to meet with clients and providers who are located remotely to the Norwest Campus. (For example: medical practitioners) This component of the business can not be executed with the use of public transport and requires ready access to automobile transportation. This may be as a private vehicle or use of taxis.

The numbers of support staff on the campus is relatively small. A smaller number to live within the Shire and could potentially access the workplace through use of public

transport should it be rapid and efficient. Currently the experience would suggest that this is not the case.

### Access Issues.

The design and the growth of the Norwest Business Park area have posed a number of access issues that affect the staff at Wyeth Australia.

- Commute access to/from Norwest Business Park.

- i) Entry to Norwest from Old Windsor Road.

Our staff report significant delays to the access to Norwest Boulevard during the commute at peak points of the day.

The contributing factors to this include:

- The increased flow of traffic into the Norwest Business Park that is associated with the location of major residents such as Woolworths and ResMed.
- Congestion caused at the roundabout to Lexington Drive and to Elizabeth Macarthur Drive. Causing one point of delay to traffic traversing this point.
- A significant number of people who use Norwest Boulevard to access Windsor Road from the M7/2.during the morning peak and who are returning the same way in the afternoon peak but are meeting with commuters from the Woolworths and ResMed campus.
- The frequency of roundabouts along the Norwest Boulevard that need to accommodate constant entry and exit of vehicles from the adjacent dwellings and business houses. For example Westwood way provides one of the few major exits from the residential complex (Bella Vista).
- The Hillsong campus demands – daily commuter pressure that relates to the educational facility associated with this campus.
- The commercial pressure provided by entry and exit from the Shopping Complex

The direct result of these issues in the morning peak can be 15minute+ time required to traverse Norwest Boulevard to the Eastern entry to Solent Circuit. Similarly in the evening peak the delays are often the same if not longer as a concentrated exit of employees from the above stated business occurs. This is compounded by an increasing number of cars who use Norwest Boulevard as a direct access to the M7 from the Castle Hill and Baulkham Hills districts. It is frequently reported that our staff can take 20 minutes or more to return to the Old Windsor Road.

- ii) Entry and Exit from Solent Circuit

With the significant and increasing volume of traffic that uses Norwest Boulevard as the through way between Old Windsor and Windsor Road the

entry and exit from Solent Circuit presents significant and increasing delays to our staff at peak periods.

The afternoon commute is particularly vexing with residents of the various businesses being significantly delayed in their exit from Solent Circuit for either direction along Norwest Boulevard.

We receive consistent reports that the exit from this street can take 10-15 minutes on a regular basis.

Primarily this is directly caused by the presence of a roundabout that consistently favours the traffic along Norwest Boulevard.

In addition should the Hillsong Church campus hold any event, the negative impact to the ability to exit Solent Circuit is significant. So troubled are the Hillsong management with this issue that they will often contact Wyeth and warn us when the peak exit from their site will occur so that we can inform our staff to exit before or after this occurs.

We anticipate the situation at the transit through this intersection to deteriorate in the immediate future for the following reasons:

- Completion of new business buildings along Solent Circuit and Burbank place. Thus increasing the volume on Solent Circuit.
- The increased function of new facilities on the Hillsong Campus (e.g. the Chapel)
- The opening of Fairview Road and the 5000 planned dwellings along the vicinity of this street.

Further into the future we have significant concerns about the impact from future developments including:

- The planned replacement of the Ice Rink with two new commercial buildings.
- Further commercial developments at either end of the Solent Circuit.
- The development of residential estates on the Northern side of Solent Circuit.
- The potential new thoroughfare through this new residential estate that provides vehicle access to Windsor Road and hence an alternative route for vehicles attempting to access the Norwest Park and the M7.
- Expansion of the Wyeth campus.

It would not be beyond reasonable expectations that if left unchanged the time to exit from Solent Circuit could be doubled at peak periods.

iii) Entry and exit from Windsor Road

As increasing numbers of vehicles access the M7, Norwest Business Park and Bella Vista, there is an increasing pressure and delay at the intersection between Norwest Boulevard and Windsor Road. In particular:

- Long and increasing morning delays when approaching from Baulkham Hills. Often commuters will join a queue that will often stretch to Victoria Avenue.
- It is to be noted that this frustration is already being manifested by vehicles attempting to exit Barina Downs Road in either direction.
- A number of vehicles are also using Barina Downs Road as a short cut to access Norwest Boulevard at the Greston roundabout. This is important to note when arguments are put forward that commuters won't find and use these kinds of shortcuts.
- We receive staff reports that it can take upwards of 6 changes of the lights at this intersection to enter Norwest Boulevard.

Traffic entering from the Showground Road and Kellyville direction is also experiencing increasing delays for the same reasons discussed.

It is claimed that the dual right hand turn is accommodating this traffic build up are not substantiated by the reports that commuters from this direction will wait up to 4 turns of the lights before entering Norwest Boulevard.

This is anticipated to deteriorate for reasons previously given for the Norwest Park and Bella Vista area generally.

We also suggest that the following will also contribute into the future:

- The planned new wing to the Crowne Plaza Hotel
- New business developments on Brookhollow Avenue and Columbia Ct.
- The continued development of the Kellyville and Castle Hill districts and hence increased traffic to and from the M7

iv) The impact of the Brickworks development

The development of this area has commenced and we are informed it will have similar proportions of commercial residents to that being experienced in Norwest Business Park currently.

We are concerned that this will further add pressure to the Old Northern Road and Norwest Boulevard transit.

In particular we expect this to increase the use of Elizabeth Macarthur Drive.

v) The developments on Lexington Drive and Old Windsor road

We are concerned with the already increases in commercial density along Lexington Drive and the proposed additional building to the Woolworths Head Office complex that further pressures will apply to Norwest Boulevard.

vi) New residential developments in the Bella Vista and Norwest areas

The plans for development of this area with respect to residential dwellings can but add to the traffic pressure on Norwest Boulevard. These include:

- Dwellings already appearing around Observatory Rise.
- New plans for medium to high density residences adjacent to Solent Circuit and along the Fairway Drive precinct. This includes apartment dwellings along Solent circuit itself.
- The expansion and linking of residences along either side of Edgewater Drive. The potential access from these areas to Solent circuit has been suggested.
- Dwelling developments along the boundary of the Golf Course from Fairway Dr to Norwest Boulevard.

For the above reasons we are concerned that as these issues continue to impact on and increase in the severity of the delays associated with the access to and from the Wyeth campus that commute times will increase. The consequence of these increases in commute times will be the reduction in the workplace satisfaction of our staff members. It is then likely that Wyeth will experience and increase in staff turnover. This will also increase pressure on our ability to attract the highly qualified and skilled staff members that are needed to successfully function as a pharmaceutical company.

This is particularly so as the additional distances being required to come to Norwest when compared to competitor companies in North or West Ryde are not inconsiderable.

- The Entry and Exit to Wyeth Campus

Currently the divided road along Solent Circuit and the lack of access to the Wyeth Entrance from the North side of Solent Circuit forces Wyeth employees to enter from the Easterly direction and exit by the Western end of the road.

This further restricts the access to the campus.

We are aware however that the entry to our site is planned for change with the entry of a road providing access to new residences discussed earlier to meet with Solent Circuit opposite to the Wyeth drive way.

Our concerns with this include:

- i) The increased traffic pressure causing inconvenience and issues associated with the entry and exit of our staff from the campus.
- ii) The access of visitors and providers to the campus could also be compromised.
- iii) Should the road be ultimately linked to Windsor Road that this will become an ultimate short cut for more commuters who wish to avoid the Norwest intersection issues previously discussed. The consequence of this would be increased traffic on Solent Circuit and greater access risks associated with the Wyeth campus.
- iv) A significant stricture to the width of Solent Circuit with increased numbers of residents parking vehicles along the street.

- The transparency associated with decisions that are being made.

During the last two years a number of attempts to gain clarity about the intentions of the Baulkham Hills Shire Council have been made.

Our intentions with these contacts is to work with the Council to seek ways forward that provide solutions to our issues but also assist to meet the other demands being put on the council as this area develops and grows.

We have repeatedly tried to engage (often through the state and federal political representatives to seek some clarity about the upcoming developments regarding the Solent Circuit area. Indeed seek ways that the Council and Wyeth may work together to ensure better access to the site and provide information to our staff regarding the developments.

In addition we have sought information about the progress of the following a) The suggested installation of traffic lights at both ends of Solent Circuit, b) the progress regarding the two new roads that are to enter Solent Circuit and c) The time lines for the residential developments on the Northern side of Solent Circuit.

We have also met with Council to discuss the current impact that road changes, new business and residential developments and through traffic on Norwest Boulevard is having on the commute times for our staff. I am sure you would agree that this is already unacceptable situation and little direct prospect for improvement.

This need not be the case and Wyeth would like to seek dialogue to find ways forward.

For example it was suggested to Council that the heavy trucks exiting from the work site on the Northern side need not exit at the Hillsong end of Solent Circuit but could commute to the Norwest Boulevard exit opposite Deutsche Bank. Thus if entering from Hillsong end of Solent and travelling only on one of the tracks of road, most office staff in the buildings along the Solent Circuit would be less impacted by this heavy traffic.

This was ignored. The response from Baulkham Hills Shire was that they had already made arrangements and doubted they could be changed even though it was acknowledged to be a sound suggestion. We can only interpret this to be an unwillingness to work toward a positive outcome for as many as possible and that agreements with the developers are unmovable.



We have already highlighted are real concerns about the rapid and significant increase in the amount of traffic entering and traversing the Norwest Boulevard area. The figures we were shown for traffic activity at the Solent/Norwest Boulevard are horribly out of date. It was indicated that no new surveys would occur unless there was road changes such as those planned for the Brickworks area.

The plans for the number of employees in this business area is now well in excess to the original estimates by a factor of 20-40,000 individuals and yet no revision of access and traffic appear to be forthcoming.

Norwest Boulevard has become an access road to the M7 from the Castle Hill/Baulkham Hills areas. A need to remove the current roundabout system (of which there are 5 along the short strip) could be removed in favour of traffic signals. It has been agreed that this will improve flow and side access to the areas that are adjacent to the Boulevard. However at the same time it was suggested that the funding for these signals would need to come from local resources as there is no prospect for increased investment by state funds into this area.

We are also concerned that we are being told that traffic lights for Norwest Boulevard are between 3 and 10 years away given the current plans and that if WE want to change the circumstance we could find \$1Million to make it happen.

Finally in our meetings with members of Council the Planning authorities we were provided with some suggestions as to could be done in assistance. This included:

- Encouraging our staff to use public transport
- Funding changes to our entry point (\$60-80,000)
- Have staff come and go from the campus at other than peak times
- or
- Move the business

None of these are in any practical nor are they in anyway providing improved partnership and relations with the Shire to find ways forward with this issue.

Ultimately should there be no changes and we do experience the negative impacts we may well be forced to consider our tenure at this location. This would indeed be unfortunate given the solid citizenship reputation and contribution that Wyeth makes in the area.

### Recommendations

- Bring together the various local interests to work collectively toward solutions. Wyeth can offer to be the host point for such an initiative.
- To look toward some short term investments to improve the traffic movement along Norwest Boulevard.

- Traffic signals at Lexington Dr and Norwest Boulevard, synchronised to the lights on Old Windsor Road.
- Traffic signals at the Hillsong Church end of Solent Circuit
- Traffic signals at Brookhollow and Norwest Boulevard.
- An opening of the access to both sides of Solent Circuit by current and new commercial ventures.
- Better access to the M7 in both directions.

#### Contact Information

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