

Item 11.8**Notices of Motion****NSW Government Transparency and Financial Accountability Relating to Fort Street Public School on Observatory Hill**

By Councillor Scott

It is resolved that:

- (A) Council strongly supports NSW Government investment in public education;
- (B) Council note:
 - (i) the NSW Government is currently undertaking a re-development of Fort Street Public school, situated on Observatory Hill;
 - (ii) Observatory Hill is one of Australia's most historic sites, being the site of the first windmill in 1796, Fort Phillip in 1800, a signal station to communicate with ships from 1825, and the Colony's second hospital, built in 1825, which in 1848 was converted into the Fort Street Model School;
 - (iii) the first observatory, built in Sydney in 1788 as the southern hemisphere was regarded as an important site for astronomical observations, has also housed a time ball which signalled the time to ships in the harbour each day;
 - (iv) due to increasing light and pollution the Observatory closed in 1982 and is now a museum;
 - (v) there is a lack of transparency surrounding the NSW Government's \$68 million budget for the NSW Government's modification of Fort Street Public School;
 - (vi) there has been inadequate consultation with the Millers Point community regarding the proposed modifications to the school;
 - (vii) on 20 May 2021, Heritage NSW advised the NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment that the proposed modification to the school does not comply with the Conservation Management Plan;
 - (viii) that the proposal will make the school the dominant building at Observatory Hill which is a sub-optimal heritage outcome;
 - (ix) that the proposal will have an additional visual impact on the views and vistas of Observatory Hill as well as impacting the visual and historical relationship between the National Trust Centre (former school building) and the 1940s school building at the site;
 - (x) that NSW National Trust has already written to the Budget Estimate Committee to object to the change and the excessive expenditure;

- (xi) that these proposed modifications are not in accordance with heritage principles and that they will not comply with the building the Department of Education Conservation Management Plan;
- (xii) that this is a major modification and is going through the State Significant Development (SSD) Process, However, School Infrastructure NSW has only put this on display for public comment for 14 days, even though the NSW State Design Review Panel requirement is 28 days;
- (xiii) that Ethos Urban undertook a visual impact assessment using the meteorology roofline for its low-level view impairment assessment. Many residential and commercial buildings located on Kent Street have harbour bridge views that are below the nominated reduced level, yet there was a failure to acknowledge this in the report. Increasing the stair lobby and lift overrun by 310 and 610 millimetres, respectively, only furthers the damage done to Observatory Hill's skyline and the view loss by local residents, businesses, community and tourists;
- (xiv) that the original design was for a low-line build that adhered to the Conservation Management Plan and appears to complement the historical values of Observatory Hill;
- (xv) that Mod-1 included a height increase of the building which received backlash from the community, however, was approved regardless.
- (xvi) that again, Mod-2 is encroaching on building height (Building J) due to design issues that stemmed from a clear failure to adequately plan for accessibility, services and building integration;
- (xvii) the issue of protected view has been identified in the City of Sydney's Central Sydney Planning Strategy for 2016-2036;
- (xviii) that NSW has a mechanism within the planning legislation to protect sightlines;
- (xix) it is important that the public education continues to be supported and developed within our city. However, this development must take into account the existing heritage of the city that is significant to its character and history;
- (xx) that the City's most recent submission on the Fort Street School redevelopment is for Mod 2 (SSD 10340 MOD 2), which was provided to the Department of Planning and Environment on 7 December 2022;
- (xxi) the City will be recommending that the height increase to the stair and lobby roof in Building J be minimised as much as possible, noting the constraints of the servicing requirements. The City also recommend that the heritage mitigations in the Heritage Impact Study be followed; and
- (xxii) the City has made the following submissions on Fort Street Public School in the past:
 - (a) original SSD – advice provided on 7 May 2020;
 - (b) Mod-1 – advice provided on 17 May 2021 and on 19 August 2021;

- (C) the Lord Mayor be requested to write to the below ministers to support the City's submission and advocate for evidenced-based heritage outcomes for Observatory Hill and advocate for all current, planned, and potential future modifications to Fort Street Public School to deliver those outcomes;
- (i) Minister for Environment and Heritage and Shadow Minister for Heritage;
 - (ii) Minister for Education and Shadow Minister for Education; and
 - (iii) Minister for Planning and Shadow Minister for Planning and Public Spaces.

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