All Things Assyrian

Battle of Assyrian School Looms in Australia

Posted 2009-01-14 16:27 GMT

Fairfield, Australia -- Residents of Horsley Park are considering challenging Fairfield Council's approval of an Assyrian secondary school.

Long-time Horsley Park resident Michelle Vella said she was still worried about the environmental impact and increased traffic the school will cause, despite the council dealing with these potential problems in the development application (DA) approval at the end of last year.

"A lot of people use the back roads of Horsley Park as short cuts, so it's not just the immediate residents who will be affected by higher traffic," Mrs Vella said.

"When I was a child here we always had green and gold bell frogs, but you don't see them any more.

"The school development will cut down even more trees, damaging the environment that we love here even more."

Mrs Vella's complaints echo the sentiments of more than 170 submissions received by the council in response to the DA for the 600-student Assyrian school last year.

Despite the opposition, the DA was approved, with councillors Zaya Toma, Sam Yusef, Anwar Khoshaba, Andrew Rohan, Nhan Tran and Lawrence White speaking in support of the motion, while Cr Frank Oliveri opposed it.

Councillors Khoshaba, Toma and Rohan declared non-significant, non-pecuniary interests as they are members of the Assyrian parish.

The school proposal was withdrawn and modified by the applicants in March 2006 and September 2007.

When the proposal went before the council's Independent Hearing Assessment Panel (IHAP) in November, traffic reports were submitted showing the roads could handle the increase and a septic system to be built by the school would negate the environmental impact as Horsley Park is not connected to the sewerage system.

Mrs Vella said a group of residents was now collating a submission to the Land and Environment Court to challenge the council's approval.

By Jenna Daroczy
Fairfield Champion