

Camden Residents' Action Group

Incorporated

Camden – Still a Country Town

12 March 2017

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To Whom it May Concern,

Re: St John's Church Precinct Camden NSW

We, Camden Residents' Action Group, write to express our strong support for the nomination of the St John's Church Precinct in Camden for State Heritage Listing. This listing is being sought at this particular time because the Church is considering an ordinance to allow a potential sale to developers of key elements of the Precinct: St John's Rectory and the horse paddock between the Rectory and Church.

It is very clear from our contacts with community members, including long-standing Parishioners, that the Church property is believed (even if a peppercorn "sale" is registered) to have been entrusted by the Macarthur family to the Church for the people of Camden in perpetuity, just as many other significant assets such as Macarthur Park and Onslow Park, were entrusted to the Camden municipality. This Precinct is greatly valued by the community, is intrinsic to Camden's sense of place and has strong connections to the founding Macarthur family.

Members of the Macarthur family are concerned about the possibility of a sale and have been in contact with our group and the National Trust. The NSW National Trust¹ has responded to family historian Annette Macarthur-Onslow stating that the Precinct is listed by the National Trust, that it is monitoring the sale process and that it advocates State listing to better protect the entire site.

Such a sale would of course also be in direct contravention of the Greater Sydney Commission's draft plan for Camden town and its landscapes published in November 2016 which features

¹ The National Trust of Australia (NSW) *St John's Anglican Church Camden* 30 January 2017

Camden and St John's Church on its cover page. The Greater Sydney Commission² states as a priority that the heritage values of Camden town centre must be protected.

Heritage architects, Clive Lucas, Stapleton and Partners (2004)³, supported by NBRS and Partners (2010)⁴, have assessed the Precinct as highly significant and set out conservation policies. There is no doubt from the expert assessments undertaken using the seven heritage criteria, that the Church, the Rectory, their setting and views and vistas are of rare and exceptional heritage significance⁵.

An important precedent⁶ was set in 1996 by the Land and Environment Court which judged against development, not within the Precinct as currently foreshadowed by the Church, but in the vicinity of the Precinct. The Honourable Chief Justice M L Pearlman AM, stated:

"It is abundantly clear that the Camden Township represents a particularly significant and sensitive heritage site in which conservation, involving reuse of buildings or land, must necessarily be approached with considerable care."

There is also ample evidence of the significance of the Precinct in the Register of the National Estate¹ in the Australian Heritage Database⁷.

State Heritage Listing would assist in protecting against developer approaches, as has recently occurred, to purchase parts of the Precinct and we trust that, given the incontrovertible evidence of its significance in the fabric and story of Australia that its listing can be speedily achieved.

Yours sincerely,

Glenda Davis

President

² Greater Sydney Commission *Draft South West District Plan* published 21 November 2016 p. 115

³ Clive Lucas, Stapleton and Partners *St John's Anglican Church Precinct, Menangle Road, Camden CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT PLAN March 2004*

⁴ NBRS and Partners *CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT PLAN ADDENDUM 2010 St John's Anglican Church Precinct, Menangle Road, Camden 15 December 2010*

⁵ Clive Lucas, Stapleton and Partners *op. cit.* pp. 49-57

⁶ Land and Environment Court (1996) *Gledhill Constructions Pty Limited V. The Council of Camden NSWLEC 120 (19 April 1996)* Available at: <http://www.austlii.edu.au/cgi-bin/sinodisp/au/cases/nsw/NSWLEC/1996/120.html?stem=0&synonyms=0&query=1996%20gledhill%20camden>

⁷ Australian Government *Department of Environment and Heritage* Available at: <http://www.environment.gov.au/cgi-bin/ahdb/search.pl> and as shown in Endnote of Listings on the (non-statutory) Register of the National Estate (Details of items can be accessed by clicking on Item name).

i Listings in Register of National Estate

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| John the Evangelist Anglican Church Menangle Rd | Camden, NSW, Australia | (Registered) Register of the National Estate (Non-statutory archive) |
| St Johns Anglican Church Group Menangle Rd | Camden, NSW, Australia | (Registered) Register of the National Estate (Non-statutory archive) |
| St Johns Hill and John Street Conservation Area | Camden, NSW, Australia | (Registered) Register of the National Estate (Non-statutory archive) |
| St Johns Rectory and Stables Menangle Rd | Camden, NSW, Australia | (Registered) Register of the National Estate (Non-statutory archive) |