

Camden Residents' Action Group

Incorporated

Camden – Still a Country Town

Website: <http://www.crag.org.au/>

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7 March 2017

Mr. Robert Wicks
The Secretary of the Standing Committee
Anglican Church Diocese of Sydney
PO Box Q190
QVB POST OFFICE NSW 1230

Dear Mr Wicks,

Re: Sale Ordinance St John's Camden

Along with many other interested parties, the Camden Residents' Action Group Inc (CRAG) forwarded a submission on behalf of the community about the potential Sale Ordinance for the Rectory and horse paddock at St John's Camden. We thank you for your acknowledgement of our submission on 19 December 2016.

CRAG's submission highlighted many troubling aspects of the proposed sale, outlined statutory impediments to development by a purchaser and the substantial objections that would be raised by the community against any proposed development that impacted on their much loved community precinct, its setting and vistas. As a community organization CRAG is contacted, both formally and informally, by many who have expressed an interest in this matter as to the status and timing of the ordinance process and the chances of its approval. 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 Camden Council.

Camden town, almost certainly the only Australian town planned in the pre-gold-rush period which survives in its original layout was marked out by the high-minded Macarthur brothers with the help of Surveyor-General Thomas Mitchell in 1836. St John's Church precinct was designed to be the private town's apex and focus, using aesthetic vistas from all directions to enhance its social and moral symbolism. As you would know the precinct is assessed to be of rare significance at the local,

state and national levels. As well being of national significance the Church, Rectory and Stables, cemetery, setting of the church, the horse paddock and views to and from the Rectory are relatively ranked to be of great significance as a tool to planning at the State level.

The iconic status of St John's, and the strong attachment in the general community to the Church and its precinct, is a tribute to the inspired visionary planners and designers who conceived of Camden Township. The widespread sentiment, that St John's is an asset which 'belongs' to the whole community, cannot be denied and should not be dismissed. This attachment is to be valued. Most appropriately regarded as a reflection of a, perhaps once common but now seldom found, bond between the work-a-day and spiritual life of a community, it must be cherished and preserved all the more as a rare thing. This is undoubtedly reflected in the great popularity of the Church and Precinct as the chosen site for the conduct of important rites of passage, by parishioners and the broader community alike.

Questions are asked about why the Church would consider seeking this Ordinance, as there would seem no satisfactory explanation. Parishioners state that they do not understand the reasons behind a potential sale of what makes St John's so special, and consider a sale would alienate members of the congregation and general community and shrink the Church family of St John's. Parishioners maintain that a new building, if shown to be needed, could be funded through normal means, and so retain the cherished precinct. Since lodging our submission it has also been indicated to us that a sale could invalidate the Development Application for the new building currently on Council's books by contravening the Conservation Management Plan (partially funded by the NSW Heritage Office) and other planning requirements addressed in the application.

Although we know from the Church bulletin of 5 March that submissions have been summarised and are now with the Camden parish for review, to date we have been unable to respond helpfully to the very considerable concern, uncertainty and even anxiety being expressed. We would be grateful for any further information you can provide that we can relay back to our own members, and other interested persons and groups, regarding the progress of the ordinance and if possible the reasons why the Ordinance is being sought.

Thank you for your consideration.

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,

Glenda Davis

President
Camden Residents' Action Group Inc.