

# *Camden Residents' Action Group*

*Incorporated*

*Camden – Still a Country Town*

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

**Face Book:** <https://www.facebook.com/CRAG-Camden-Residents-Action-Group-Inc-1805705173088888/>

PO Box 188  
Camden NSW 2570  
Email: [admin@crag.org.au](mailto:admin@crag.org.au)

Some Questions from the Community  
Potential sale of Rectory and glebe horse paddock  
St John's Camden Meeting  
11.30 am Sunday 2 July 2017

## **1. Why does the Church need a 400 seat worship centre?**

- A.** A Church is usually defined as a group of people and not a building or a piece of land. Building on this site will take years, be expensive, and because of constraints almost certainly not optimal.

**So why do you need to build on this Church site?**

- B.** The growth statistics published by the local council<sup>1</sup> up to 2036 for the Camden Parish area show population growing from 11968 in 2016 to 13393 in 2036, an increase of around 1425 about 12%.

The actual and projected growth statistics from 2011 to 2036 show that between 2011 and 2036, the population for Camden municipality indicate an average annual rate of increase of 5.57%, with most growth occurring in the northern greenfield areas. For Camden the rate is 0.42%, for Elderslie 1.85% and for Grasmere, Ellis Lane, Cawdor, Bickley Vale and Cobbitty Hill, an area also serviced by St Paul's and St Barnabas Churches the rate is 0.77%.

**Given the declining engagement of the community with the Anglican Church how can you justify a new building for such a low long-term projected population growth rate representing less than 1500 people over 20 years?**

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<sup>1</sup> <http://forecast.id.com.au/camden/population-summary>

- C. For the period 2016 to 2021 the projected population increases for areas near to St John's without an Anglican Church are Camden 250 and Elderslie 1437 = 1687

This approximates to 340 per annum forecasted increase in population in these areas.

Research findings from NCLS Research<sup>2</sup> show around 11% of the population in 2014 attended Church weekly, and a further 7% attend at least monthly. These percentages would be less today.

$(11\% \times 340) + (7\% \times 340 / 4) = 37 + 6 = 43$  approximate per annum increase in people's attendance at any denomination Church.

The latest 2016 census shows that 13.3% of Australians identify as Anglican<sup>3</sup>.

$13.3\% \times 43 = 6$  approx additional Anglicans attending services per annum over 5 years, or in 2021 an additional 30 Parishioners in total may be expected.

These calculations are only indicative of course, but they are sufficiently accurate to counter the argument that St John's needs the new worship centre to accommodate Parishioners from a large expected 227,000 increase in population.

At that rate the new worship centre may never be occupied to capacity or at least take many decades.

The cancellation of the 5 pm service at St John's provides some verification of this trend. As new Anglican churches are becoming more active, there is less need to travel, and the congregation at St John's is contracting as a result.

**Given the declining engagement of the community with the Anglican Church how can you justify the proposed new building?**

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<sup>2</sup> Powell, R. and Pepper, M., (2017). *Local Churches in Australia: Research Findings from NCLS Research*. 2016 NCLS Church Life Pack Seminar Presentation. NCLS Research: Sydney.  
[http://2016ncls.org.au/resources/downloads/Local%20Churches%20in%20Australia-Research%20Findings%20from%20NCLS%20Research\(2017\).pdf](http://2016ncls.org.au/resources/downloads/Local%20Churches%20in%20Australia-Research%20Findings%20from%20NCLS%20Research(2017).pdf)

<sup>3</sup> ABS

<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/2071.0~2016~Main%20Features~Religion%20Data%20Summary~25>

- D.** Church attendance rates have been declining for decades. Based on current best estimates, overall church attendance declined by around 13% over 20 years from 1991 to 2011. In 2011 the average size of churches in Australia was 121 people attending in a typical week and for the Anglican Church 55 people attending in a typical week<sup>4</sup>. It would be less today.

The 2016 census data indicates a decrease in attendance and a shift to other denominations.<sup>5</sup> It is possible that there will be a real and significant decrease in attendance at St John's over the next 20 years.

**How does this compare to your modelling? Are you sure an investment of \$6m in a building at the expense of the heritage of Camden is wise?**

- E.** The Sydney Diocese has placed a levy on parish revenue to fund 'greenfield' sites around Sydney.

**Is the Parish eligible for any of this money?**

**If not, does this mean the Diocese does not see St John's as a growth area?**

- F.** Is it true the Sydney Diocese has built or expanded Churches in the Camden area (Narellan, Oran Park, Harrington Park, Leppington, etc)?

**Is it true these Churches are underutilised?**

**Is it true these Churches are drawing people away from St John's?**

- G.** There is a modern Anglican church at Narellan/Spring Farm, with significant spare capacity (7 minutes from St John's).

**Why not direct your overflow to this facility?**

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<sup>4</sup> Powell, R. and Pepper, M., (2017). *Local Churches in Australia: Research Findings from NCLS Research*. 2016 NCLS Church Life Pack Seminar Presentation. NCLS Research: Sydney.  
[http://2016ncls.org.au/resources/downloads/Local%20Churches%20in%20Australia-Research%20Findings%20from%20NCLS%20Research\(2017\).pdf](http://2016ncls.org.au/resources/downloads/Local%20Churches%20in%20Australia-Research%20Findings%20from%20NCLS%20Research(2017).pdf)

<sup>5</sup> ABS

<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/2071.0~2016~Main%20Features~Religion%20Data%20Summary~25>

H. You seem to be suggesting people will travel past their local church to attend St John's.

**Shouldn't you be encouraging people to attend their local church?**

I. **Why do you refer to St John's having a capacity of 120 seats? St John's own Conservation Management Plan details (page 22) some 34 pews, giving a capacity of close to 200?** (Some of the pews seem to be missing from more recent configurations.)

J. Rick Warren, a well known American pastor and author, strongly recommends a church not build, but use rented or other accommodation<sup>6</sup>.

**Why do you want to build?**

K. **What facilities, planned for the new building, are currently missing from St John's?**

L. Do you know the Church Growth statistics show the most significant problem of the established churches is the failure to retain the children of believers?

**Are you suggesting a building will solve this problem?**

**Have you asked any of these children why they do not attend your church?**

M. Last year Gary McIntosh spoke (at the request of the Diocese) of the 200 barrier<sup>7</sup>. His emphasis was on the need for new programmes reaching into the community and not buildings.

**Are you aware of his views?**

**Could you tell us why St John's emphasis is instead on buildings?**

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<sup>6</sup> Gladwell M. 2005 *The Cellular Church* The New Yorker <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2005/09/12/the-cellular-church> *When churches—in particular, the megachurches that became the engine of the evangelical movement, in the nineteen-seventies and eighties—began to adopt the cellular model, they found out the same thing. The small group was an extraordinary vehicle of commitment. It was personal and flexible. It cost nothing. It was convenient, and every worshipper was able to find a small group that precisely matched his or her interests. Today, at least forty million Americans are in a religiously based small group, and the growing ranks of small-group membership have caused a profound shift in the nature of the American religious experience.*

<sup>7</sup> <http://sydneyanglicans.net/news/expand-now-says-church-growth-expert>

**N. Why is the new centre is referred to as having 400 seats, but the Development Consent shows the proposed St John's Centre does not have 400 usable seats.**

The design shows six banks of seats (20, 25, 78, 75, 81, 70, 25) giving 374. These were pew-style seating, not individual seats. Probably 1/3 have difficult sight lines. A more accurate estimate would be 250-300 seats. Applying the 80% full rule reduces this to 200-240. (The capacity could be significantly less with individual seats)

**O. It is understood that the Diocese recommends off-street car parking at a rate of 1 car parking space per 2-3 seats of the capacity of the service area in the ministry centre.**

The development consent for the new building shows a ratio of 1 car parking space per 6 seats.

**Why does this not comply with the Diocese recommendations? Won't a lack of easy parking at St John's encourage new Parishioners to attend greenfield venues?**

**P. There is talk of more 'evangelical services' to attract more people. Are you talking about Bill Hybels' Willow Creek style services? <sup>8</sup>**

*If Yes*

Bill Hybels now considers they were a mistake, how are you can avoid the problems he identified?

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<sup>8</sup> Christianity Today *Willow Creek Repents? Why the most influential church in America now says "We made a mistake."* Based on findings from a multiple year qualitative study of the ministry.  
<http://www.christianitytoday.com/pastors/2007/october-online-only/willow-creek-repents.html>

## **2. Denial of Community Opposition**

- A.** In the press, there are repeated references to overwhelming support from the congregation for the sale.

**How can this be known before there is informed debate and without any vote?**

- B.** St Andrew's House reports receiving over 100 written objections to your sale ordinance. Many were from your congregation or former members of your congregation. It is accepted only 1 in 20 people take the time to write, so as a rough indication there are around 2000 people unhappy about your intended sale. On Facebook, 99% of the comments are opposed to your sale.

**How does St John's support its claim that there is only a handful of people who oppose the plans?**

- C.** On the internet, there are reports that congregation members have been deterred from lodging objections to the sale ordinances, admonished for stating their objections to the sale, and in one Sunday Services people with concerns about the sale were referred to as "haters".

**Are these reports accurate, and if so will the Wardens of St John's to refer the matter to the Archbishop as required by Church ordinances?**

### **3. Disregard of duties as custodians of significant Australian heritage**

- A. Around 2011 St John's gave a written commitment to the community to retain the Glebe and for the Reverend to live in the Rectory. The conditions of the development consent for your proposed centre record the commitment.

**Is the congregation aware of this commitment?**

**Will a variation to the consent conditions of the proposed centre be sought?**

- B. The Conservation Management Plan for St John's was last reviewed in 2010. According to that review the plan should be updated at least every 5 years.

**When will the plan be updated?**

- C. The Conservation Management Plan recommends the St John's Precinct be listed in the State Heritage Register.

**Why has St John's not acted on this recommendation and gained access to the funds available for listed buildings?**

- D. **Does St John's support the current nomination of the St John's Precinct for listing in the State Heritage Register?**

- E. Are the comments attributed to Rev Galea about Dr Clive Lucas, renowned heritage architect and President of the NSW National Trust correctly reported? (The comments are to the effect that Dr Lucas' statements are only his opinion, implying his study and expertise is valueless).

**If correct, does St John's stand by them, or will an apology be issued?**

- F. The survey circulated with the ordinance documents goes not match the records held by the Register General. What exactly is to be sold? It seems that a part of the St John's church property is to be sold which would contradict statements that there would be no change to the church property.

**Does the sale include part of St John's Church site?**

- G. Have you looked at the proposed change to Camden LEP (2010) around St Thomas Church? This shows what is likely to happen to St John's if your sale proceeds. Starts off ok, but gradual encroachment of commercial development around the site.

**Do you have any comments?**

**H.** The CMP states

*8.10.2 Use of The Rectory*

*(a) The preferred position is that the Rectory remain the residence of the Minister.*

*(b) If that is not possible then the uses are house for another clergy man, house for parish use, house, office for church, office for non church use, other domestic types of use.*

*Policy 33 Continue the existing historic use of the Rectory and adapt to modern Rectory standards.*

*2. This position is supported in a Camden Council letter from Kylie Powell (Page 2, Section 6) as a comment on the draft CMP. It reads “We firmly believe the Rectory should remain as such and as noted in the conservation plan”.*

*3. The St John's Church Precinct is Zone B2, Town Centre.  
“Residential Accommodation” is Prohibited.*

*4. In the Camden Council Heritage Information Part 10.*

*“Owners of heritage listed properties are required to seek development approval from Camden Council if they wish to make changes which affect the heritage significance of the place”.*

**Leasing of the Rectory is against the recommendations of the CMP and addendum and letter from Kylie Powell (Camden Council) and therefore arguably diminishes its “heritage significance”. It would also seem to be a breach of the development consent for the new St John’s Centre. Leasing of the Rectory is technically only possible since the passing of the Camden Trust Ordinance in May (any lease before this time would not be correctly authorised under Church rules).**

**How can you consider selling the Rectory?**

- I.** Technically, the Rectory includes a home office; not many churches maintain a separate office for their Rector.

**What is the cost to St John’s of the minister not operating his office from the Rectory?**

## 4. Finances, Maintenance costs and Grants

### A. Is the quoted \$6m required sale proceeds the gross or net amount?

Growth to fill a 400 seat centre will require more staff. After subtraction of the sale costs and purchase of replacement assets, the net amount remaining is small and would seem to be insufficient to fund the building and to employ additional staff for the forecast increase in congregation numbers to utilise the new worship centre.

It is understood that housing<sup>9</sup> must be provided and maintained for the Minister and housing provided for all full-time ministry staff. (An accommodation benefit may be agreed to be paid instead). The intention is to sell two houses, the Rectory and Alpha Road. Alpha Rd property was used as ministers housing in the past and would be now if other arrangements were not in place. Three houses are required for current staff levels.

It is also understood that recommended staffing levels are about one minister per 120 congregation members. A 400 seat centre with two services would require a doubling of staff roughly, but conservatively say 5 staff would require housing. Recent sales in Forrest Crescent/Alpha Road indicate property prices of between \$900, 000 and \$1,200,000. Currently further out there is a property in Mt Hunter with an asking price of \$795,000 and one in Harrington Park for around \$750,000.

The following very rough calculation indicates that the decision proceeds may not be sufficient to fund the new building and remain viable. The lowest property prices have been applied and the net figure is in the vicinity of \$1,000,000.

If housing is rented rather than purchased the question becomes one of funding from regular revenue stream and how that revenue stream could be achieved. If the Rectory is sold and funds channelled into a new worship centre the current income stream from the Rectory that presumably offsets rental costs of alternate accommodation that the Church provides will need to be replaced by Parishioners or found somehow. If the glebe horse paddock is sold it is conceivable that the income stream from weddings of \$1200 per wedding, popular because of the beautiful venue with heritage buildings, open green surroundings and available parking on site, could dwindle.

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<sup>9</sup> Guidelines for the Remuneration of Parish Ministry Staff for 2017  
<https://www.sds.asn.au/sites/default/files/churchwardens%20and%20parish%20councillors/00.%20Remuneration%20Guidelines%20attachments/1.%20REMUNERATIONGuidelines2017.pdf>

A conservative rough calculation as below shows a net figure of \$925,000 if 5 staff require housing.

Sale proceeds gross		\$	6,000,000
Costs of sale			
Commission say 3%	\$	180,000	
Diocese large asset levy 15%	\$	900,000	
Mortgage discharge Alpha Road	\$	245,000	<u>\$ 1,325,000</u>
Sale proceeds net			\$ 4,675,000
Replacement cost of Rectory housing	\$	750,000	
Replacement cost of Alpha Road house	\$	750,000	
Cost of providing housing for 3 staff to serve increased congregation	\$	2,250,000	<u>\$ 3,750,000</u>
Decision proceeds net			<u>\$ 925,000</u>

**Is a sale price of \$6m sufficient to build and maintain the new building and its ministry into the future, or what is the assessed risk of this sale decision creating intractable problems into the future?**

- B.** Previously it was intended to raise funds for the building, and use currently owned properties for housing. Now it seems the Church land is to be sold for the building and funds raised to provide housing. Therefore it seems the congregation will still be asked to supply significant funds.

**Has this been explained to the congregation?**

**How will the extra money needed be raised?**

**Will housing costs be transferred onto future congregations?**

- C. Your accounts show income from weddings, funerals and rent to be significantly more than amounts spent on maintenance. This suggests income generated from the heritage buildings subsidises staffing and running costs. In the press, you are reported as saying the congregation cannot be expected to pay for maintenance.

**How can this be true, when income generated by the assets exceeds the cost of maintenance?**

- D. Would you clarify the cost and nature of the maintenance issues? There are many statements in the press about the cost of maintaining heritage buildings. However, Church accounts show no provision for repairs or deferred maintenance and do not indicate any necessary long term provision for maintenance of the heritage buildings.<sup>10</sup>

Even the accounts lodged with the ACNC<sup>11</sup> (Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission) show no provisions, yet are required by law to conform to the Australian Accounting Standards and in St John's case use accrual accounting.

**Are the accounts lodged with the ACNC correct or incorrect?**

- E. In the press, there are reports maintenance grants are not large enough to do significant work. Yet, a quick search shows donations and grants exceeding \$250,000 in the last 10 years.

**Which is correct?**

- F. Is St John's eligible for tax-deductible donations for maintenance through the National Trust?<sup>12</sup>

**Why is this facility not being used?**

- G. Grants are available to fund restoration and maintenance costs. At the AGM it was reported St John's made no grant applications in 2016.

**Why?**

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<sup>10</sup> <http://www.stjohnscamden.info/Resources/Accounts2016.html>;

<https://www.acnc.gov.au/RN52B75Q?ID=DF76F44F-67BA-409E-907F-D007D294C6A4&noleft=1>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.acnc.gov.au/RN52B75Q?ID=DF76F44F-67BA-409E-907F-D007D294C6A4&noleft=1>

<sup>12</sup> National Trust NSW <https://www.nationaltrust.org.au/services/tax-deductible-appeals/>

*Since 1995, the National Trust has managed over \$38 million in tax deductible appeals, which have supported the conservation of churches, cemeteries, clubs and monuments.*