Camden Residents' Action Group

Incorporated

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Media Release
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Are the Argyle Street works complete?

The Argyle Street works were reported as completed on 19 August 2016[1]. Did the Liberal members of the left factional, party-political Mayoral voting bloc inspect the Argyle Street "Upgrade" closely before declaring "ITS DONE" or rely on others to tell them?

The Argyle Street works are not complete as claimed.

1. They do not extend the length of Argyle Street, and not to the same point on the opposite footpaths, with the Hill Street side works extending further than the Capitol Arcade side.

2. The works have resulted in a hotchpotch of different materials along Argyle Street, including grey granite from South Australia, bricks, machine sawn sandstone and concrete and original hand cut sandstone. On any aesthetic measure, regardless of personal taste or heritage considerations, the works present as incomplete because they contradict the fundamental design principles of harmony and unity.

3. As depicted in the photo examples below, the first stage of the works (Section 1A), has unfilled gaps and the second stage of the works (Section 1B), has gaps near buildings, kerb edges filled with a black compound and an area of bricks not grouted correctly near Flight Centre. There is no black compound remaining in Section 1A, but there is in Section 1B. The poor workmanship is concerning and is no doubt partly a result of the work being hurried to be "completed" to meet the political deadline of the Council election.

[1] Daniel Zautsen, (19 August 2016) *Works to improve the Camden town centre's streetscape have been completed* Macarthur Chronicle Camden


1A
Gaps not filled as in 1B


1B
Small area of brick work
Gaps filled

3. Council has not replaced the plaque in honour of Shirley (Duffy) Winn on a bench seat that was near Flight Centre 1B.

What have the Argyle Street works achieved?

Heritage outcomes

Camden Residents' Action Group has been concerned about Council's expenditure of $5.95m on what many who have an understanding of the original 1836 design of the town and experience in heritage conservation would regard as insensitive changes to the heritage conservation area. An expenditure of this magnitude should have been carefully considered to ensure the integrity and conservation of the heritage town.

The Argyle Street works, undertaken without appropriate consultation with the residential and business communities and without input of unchallengeable heritage expertise, stand for all to see as a poor use of significant community resources. The paving of grey granite, a material that was not available in Camden in the nineteenth century, already shows marks and staining.

As one CRAG member reflected: there are two points of view:

1. "Infrastructure" and its maintenance are more important than iconic trees and our heritage;
2. The trees and our heritage are more important.

The Councillors of the party-political Mayoral voting bloc, for reasons only known to them or perhaps just in unpardonable ignorance of what they were dealing with, have taken the first view.

If they had consulted the community, many members of which have a long association with and understanding of the Camden Township and taken expert heritage advice they could have been informed and used our money wisely.

Trees and drainage

CRAG met with Council staff on 11 August to discuss concerns raised in our submissions of 27 July 2016 and 4 August 2016 about the health of the street trees and flooding of the Whiteman's building and Argyle Street from the Bloom's carpark, which upgrades to the drainage system have not yet addressed. The Council staff was helpful and happy to provide information and agreed to provide written documentation within two or three weeks to dispel any community concerns.

Photo source: Magnolia Bonnet *Careless regard for street trees could impact on their survival* August 19, 2016 The District Reporter

At the time of writing the documentation has not been received.

Health of the Street Trees:

In particular, we still await a professional arborist report on the likely impacts of the works on the trees over the coming months and years. The community does not know whether the street trees, that provide the characteristic leafy ambience so appreciated by the community and visitors, are irreversibly damaged by the incursion into their root zones.

Of concern also is that the Argyle Street irrigation system was turned off because an area was found to be very wet. It will not be connected and used until a lengthy evaluation has been undertaken.

Observationally the excess water comes from a spring or pipe leak near the NAB bank corner as the subsoil was seen to be very wet when the old road tarmac was removed and before new road was laid.

In the meantime, very unfortunately, the already stressed trees must rely on watering by truck.

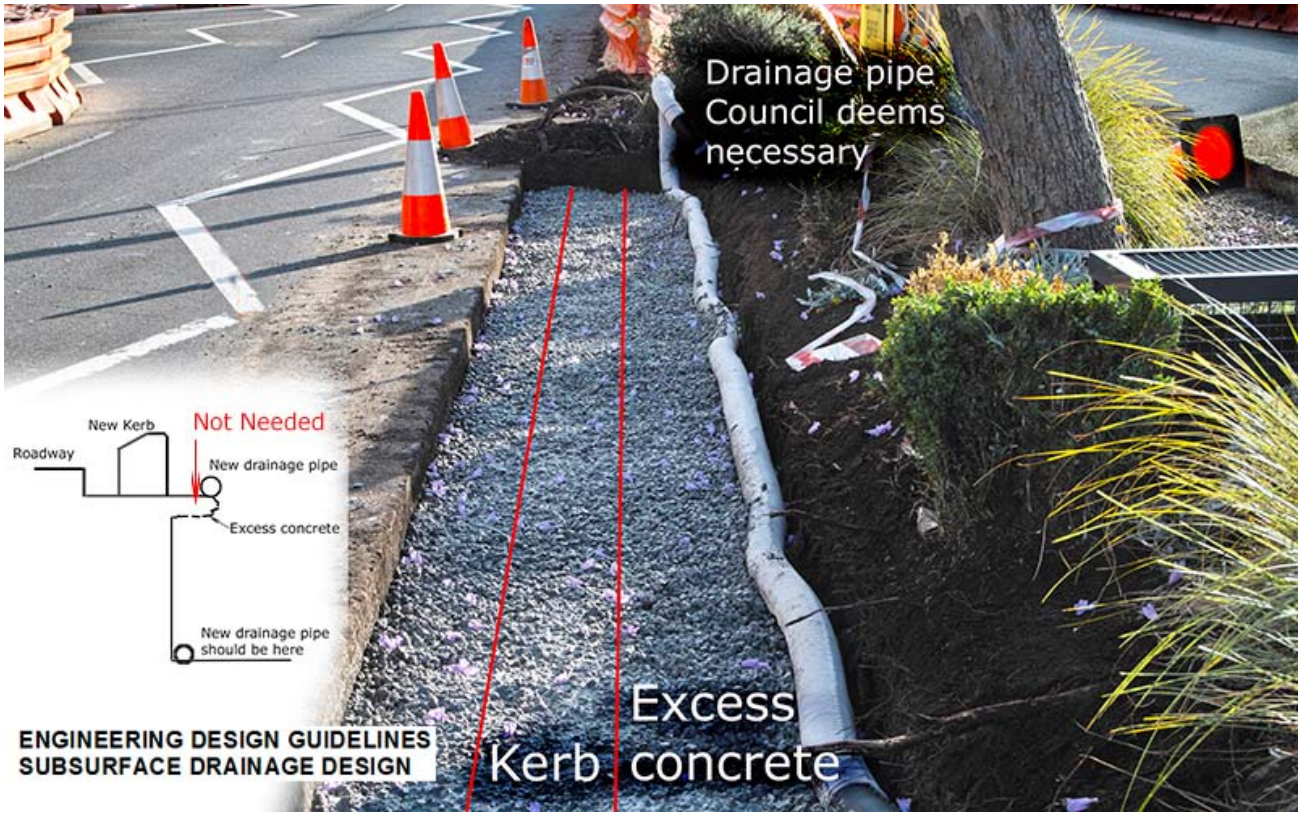
Our understanding is that there are real potential impacts on the health of the trees, but it is a wait and see exercise for Council, although there will be a post construction review. By the time it is clear whether the trees will suffer or indeed survive the works, the ruling bloc in Council, who are responsible for the contentious works, may not be available to answer for it.

Drainage:

Recent rain events have shown drainage remains a problem in Argyle Street. Council staff indicated that the problems of flooding of the laneway through from the Bloom's carpark to Argyle Street and of the Whiteman's building have not been solved by the Argyle Street works, but should be addressed by subsequent works when funds become available and certainly not before 2020. It is true that any drainage improvements that did take place during the Argyle Street works may contribute to a better outcome in the future. However as improved drainage was cited by the Mayoral voting bloc as a major reason for undertaking the works it seems the community has to an extent been misled into thinking that Argyle Street problems would be solved when the works were "completed".

Although CRAG is sure that Council staff and engineers are on top of the drainage problem, we await reports on the drainage works as it remains unclear to community members with engineering backgrounds as to how the drainage is being improved. The photo below shows a community member's

understanding of the works approach, how there is what seems to be excess concrete and how the drainage should be arranged to move excess water away.



Voting Blocs are bad news

The Liberal Party is keen to continue with the voting bloc, strategically placing candidates and their groups of candidates throughout the wards. Some of these groups designate themselves as INDEPENDENT.

For a summary of the background and history of candidates see CRAG's website at https://www.crag.org.au/who-will-you-vote-for-in-the-2016-council-election/

BEWARE of how you vote, and look for candidates that are not affiliated in any way with the ruling bloc if you care about democracy and believe you are entitled to a voice.

The Liberal Party campaign flyer makes the following claims that CRAG disputes:

Really? Opposes High Rise in the Camden Town Centre: this is double speak and a play on what is meant by

"high rise".

- Why has this voting bloc dedicated spending our money on a consultant to investigate changing the height limit in the Heritage Conservation area of the old town???
- Why has the voting bloc approved a decked car park in the heritage conservation area, to be designed to take additional decks?

Really? Oppose bad developments: what about the extraordinary Milk Depot proposal in a flood way that was promoted as so wonderful for a heritage listed building and the heritage conservation area?

Really? Continued Strong Financial Management:

- the money spent on works in the heritage conservation area has been unwisely invested:
  - the works have devalued our heritage which the economy of the Camden township relies on
  - the works have been poorly managed, with work having to be redone, resulting in greater expenditure than necessary
- the money is spent but the works show poor workmanship
- the decked car park estimated to cost $3.6m which the voting bloc has approved, is not supported by recommendations of consultants' studies, paid for by ratepayers. Other much cheaper options, ones that do not compromise heritage value, exist but these options have not been considered by the bloc.

Really? Resident Concerns: The bloc claims that it will continue to be your voice on Council, support strong consultation and represent your views. Where is the evidence that it has represented you? There is much evidence to the contrary.

For expositions of the undemocratic, non-consultative behaviour of this bloc over its term and to find out who they and their affiliates are see

- The Bloc at http://camdencommunitynsw.weebly.com/
- CRAG's website at https://www.crag.org.au/chronicle-of-councils-faction-2012-to-2016/

for a timeline of Councils interactions with the community, from 2012 to 2016, including the unexplained sacking of the General Manager in 2012, the reclassification of the Town Farm from community land to operational land despite the recommendations of the public hearing, the refusal to take notice of the business community and residents about changes to the heritage conservation area.

A voting bloc of any persuasion is bad news. Please vote to restore out democratic voice and only vote at the Council election on 10 September 2016 for those who are NOT affiliated in any way with the current bloc.