

## SUBMISSION TO THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS

# CSIRO SYDNEY CONSOLIDATION PROJECT

*Prepared by A Resident of Bradfield Road, Lindfield*

**3 September 2019**

As a resident of Bradfield Road, Lindfield, whose property adjoins Lane Cove National Park, I find it disturbing to read CSIRO's submission to the PWC.

The proposal involves moving CSIRO from its North Ryde site, which is on:

- a train line;
- at the on and off ramps to the M2 and M7 motorways;
- with direct access to Epping Highway;
- various regular bus services; and
- serviced apartments opposite the site,

to Bradfield Road, Lindfield, which has none of the above facilities or services.

The most concerning aspect of this proposal is its total disregard for its location in an isolated low-rise residential area with an extreme bushfire and evacuation risk as described below.

### **Bushfire and Evacuation Risks at Lindfield**

Residents to the south of CSIRO in Bradfield Road, Booraba Avenue, Guyong Street and Carramar Road, are surrounded 359 degrees by Lane Cove National Park. The remaining one degree is **that portion of Bradfield Road that passes CSIRO's site, being the only exit for these residents, the majority of whom are in the flame zone.**

The NSW Government has mapped and gazetted this area as a high bushfire and evacuation risk with Vegetation Category 1. Vegetation **Category 1** is considered to be the highest risk for bush fire. It is represented as red on the bush **fire prone land** map – **see Appendix 1**. The CSIRO site is located where the word "LINDFIELD" appears on this map.

The blue hatched area on the map signifies a SEPP 5 (State Environmental Planning Policy for Seniors and People with a Disability) **exclusion** zone. Moreover, residential property owners in these areas are not permitted to subdivide their land due to the high evacuation risk if population numbers were increased. It would therefore evidence reckless indifference for the Australian Government/CSIRO to ignore these laws and policies applying to residents by increasing its infrastructure and staff levels from 57 to 465 in such a high-risk

area. It demonstrates total disregard for the lives of residents needing to evacuate via a narrow egress past CSIRO.

Attached at **Appendix 2** is an image of the southern end of CSIRO during the wildfires that swept through this area in 1994 (a CSIRO building can be seen on the left). Residents only have a narrow window in which to evacuate and if the road is blocked to the north with CSIRO staff and the child-care centre being evacuated, then many could be burnt alive. The Government is reminded of the 173 lives that were lost in Victoria's Black Saturday bushfires in 2009, many of which were trying to evacuate.

**Appendix 3** shows the bushland vegetation lining one side of the southern end of Bradfield Road. In 1994 live embers way ahead of the fire front set this bushland alight as can be seen in Appendix 2. Day turns to night and visibility becomes non-existent.

**Appendices 4 and 5**, are images of residents' approach to CSIRO's entry, travelling north from the residential area in the south, on an average day. As can be seen, residents evacuating have no visibility of the CSIRO exit road nor the child-care centre driveways, the latter being directly opposite CSIRO's exit road. Residents will face babies and toddlers being evacuated from the child-care centre while at the same time staff will be evacuating from CSIRO at the same point in the road – a recipe for disaster.

While the fires were burning through our streets, there was only one fire truck into the area and that went into CSIRO. Post the fires, residents complaining about this were told that the Commonwealth's assets (CSIRO) took priority over the residents and their property.

**Appendix 6** is an image from the front page of the Sydney Morning Herald, 8 January 1994 under the heading "SYDNEY BURNS".

Subsequently, residents were adamant that their homes were lost because there was no water in the street mains due to CSIRO's draw on those mains. CSIRO denied this claiming that it had its own water supply in the form of a 60,000 litre (equivalent to an average domestic swimming pool) water storage tank for firefighting purposes but failed to reveal that this tank automatically drew water from the mains to refill itself whilst in use. In relation to the mains supply, Sydney Water advised that the street mains supply is via a 200 millimetre pipe up to the CSIRO entrance and at that point drops down to a 150 millimetre pipe to service the rest of the community to the south of CSIRO. CSIRO has five connections to the mains supply, being 150 millimetre (same size as the community mains), 80 millimetre, 35 millimetre, 30 millimetre and 25 millimetre pipes. Numerous media reports adverse to CSIRO followed those fires.

CSIRO's current bushfire assessment by RPS Consultancy recommends, *"Any proposed developments are to be linked to the existing mains pressure water supply and that suitable hydrants be clearly marked and provided for the purpose of bushfire protection."* With the passing of time, corporate memory has been lost and now, some 25 years later, the proposal is to increase the draw on the residents' water supply even further.

CSIRO's *Bushfire Constraints Assessment* conducted by RPS Consultancy demonstrates that the only assessments carried out were internal to CSIRO's boundaries. There was no assessment of CSIRO's impact on local residents during bushfire emergencies.

Today it is well recognised that fire intensities have increased globally, so it is reprehensible that the Commonwealth Government/CSIRO "bulldozes" itself into such a high-risk area without any regard for the lives of existing residents. Bulldozing being the operative word when CSIRO intends to flex its muscle by stating that as the Lindfield site is Commonwealth land it does not come under the planning control of Ku-ring-gai Council. See **Appendix 10** for the history of previous Commonwealth commitments to Ku-ring-gai Council.

Incredulously, the *Bushfire Constraints Assessment* dismissively states, "In the unlikely event of a serious bushfire.....". I have known of five bushfires that have traversed this area since the 1960's and experienced one extreme wildfire in 1994. As sure as night follows day, there will be more because that's the environment we live in!

The *Bushfire Constraints Assessment* goes on to say that it will be essential to ensure that adequate ingress/egress are afforded the development. To this end, CSIRO continues to propose an alternate exit road from the eastern side of its site down onto Lady Game Drive. This is a preposterous proposal as the road:

- would be traversing through bushland that could be burning (see Appendix 1);
- would be emerging onto a busy regional road that could be burning;
- would be an accident hotspot outside of bushfires and even more so if Lane Cove National Park was burning at either end of the road; and
- would require the removal of the footpath in front of the residential properties on the eastern side of Lady Game Drive.

It is important to note that Ku-ring-gai Council owns the land on the western side of Lady Game Drive between the CSIRO site and the road and has informed CSIRO that it has definitely ruled out this proposal.

The bushfire assessment also states that Special Fire Protection Principles means the occupants of the proposed development may be more vulnerable to bushfire attack and therefore may require greater protection as well as assisted evacuation. This part of the report demonstrates the priority given to CSIRO staff over residents' risks and needs.

CSIRO has profited from the sale of its northern half of its site after creating the new suburb of Lindfield Heights for residential – see **Appendix 7**. This increase in residents at the northern end of Bradfield Road further exacerbates the evacuation on the southern side.

## **Traffic & Transport**

1. Traffic counts for the Lindfield site and surrounds were undertaken in 2016 and are no longer relevant.

2. Photos of Delhi Road, North Ryde, taken from Google maps in 2016, are out of date and are prior to the extensive road works that have since been completed – see **Appendix 8** for 2019 photos of Delhi Road.

As can be seen from the photos, the CSIRO Delhi Road, North Ryde, site is far more superior and suitable for the numbers projected that are projected for the Lindfield site. The North Ryde site is on a rail line, located at the on and off ramps to the M2/M7 motorways, and all bus services on Epping Road. Delhi Road, Epping Road and the M2/M7 motorways are major roads compared to the residential streets surrounding the Lindfield site.

3. While the evacuation risk from streets around the Lindfield site has been addressed above, there is a further significant impact on the Moore Avenue, Fiddens Wharf Road and Lady Game Drive intersections from residents and a public school in West Killara that will also be evacuating through these intersections.

Residents in Albert Drive, Terrace Road, Blaxland Road, and Beaumont Road, West Killara, are all in the flame zone and suffered many losses in the 1994 fire. These streets only have two exits through the same intersections as the Bradfield Road et al residents. (De Burghs Road cannot be used because it emerges into bushland that could be burning). Refer **Appendix 9** for the outline of West Killara evacuation routes and the exacerbation of the Bradfield Road/Moore Avenue/Lady Game Drive intersections under emergency circumstances.

### **Car Parking**

The traffic and transport assessment that I recently viewed identified 81% of workers in the CSIRO Lindfield catchment as driving to work. With staff numbers at 600, CSIRO would require 486 car parking spaces (excluding visitor and fleet vehicles), but are only providing 443 spaces.

### **Community Consultation**

The community consultation was strategically timed during the 2018 Christmas school holidays and requests to the local Member of Parliament and the Minister to delay the consultation until after the holidays were ignored until February 2019. Consequently, the “Information Day” was only attended by a handful of residents.

There was no formal presentation of the overall proposal. Instead, residents wandered around to several tables which, in effect, made the limited information available quite

disjointed. Certainly, the majority of the information contained in CSIRO's proposal to the PWC was not available.

Attendees were never told about the "draft Lindfield Master Plan" which, according to the proposal to the PWC, states this Master Plan "*has also allocated sufficient land on the existing site to enable other government agencies and collaborators to provide purpose-designed facilities with the aim of broadening science opportunities to the benefit of CSIRO and the broader research industry*" [para. 82]. What little evidence has been put before the PWC is negated by this statement. This is nothing but development by stealth.

### **Site Contamination**

Some years ago, contamination assessments of the CSIRO site showed that the land is contaminated with asbestos, lead, arsenic, mercury and various other metals and carcinogens injurious to human health.

### **Other Comment**

Under the heading, "*Impact on the Local Community – Lindfield*", CSIRO states:

Detailed reviews of acoustics, traffic and transport, were undertaken on behalf of CSIRO as part of the development of the 2016 Lindfield Campus Master Plan. These reviews confirmed that the development proposed at Lindfield would have minimal impact on the local area in terms of acoustics, traffic and transport. [para. 129]

and,

The REF Report prepared in 2018 considered the potential impacts of the development on the adjacent residential area. This report found the impact on neighbouring residences will be minimal. [para. 130]

These studies did not adequately assess the impact on the local community in relation to traffic, transport, or bushfire emergencies. The studies mainly concentrated on CSIRO's internal boundaries.

### **Conclusion**

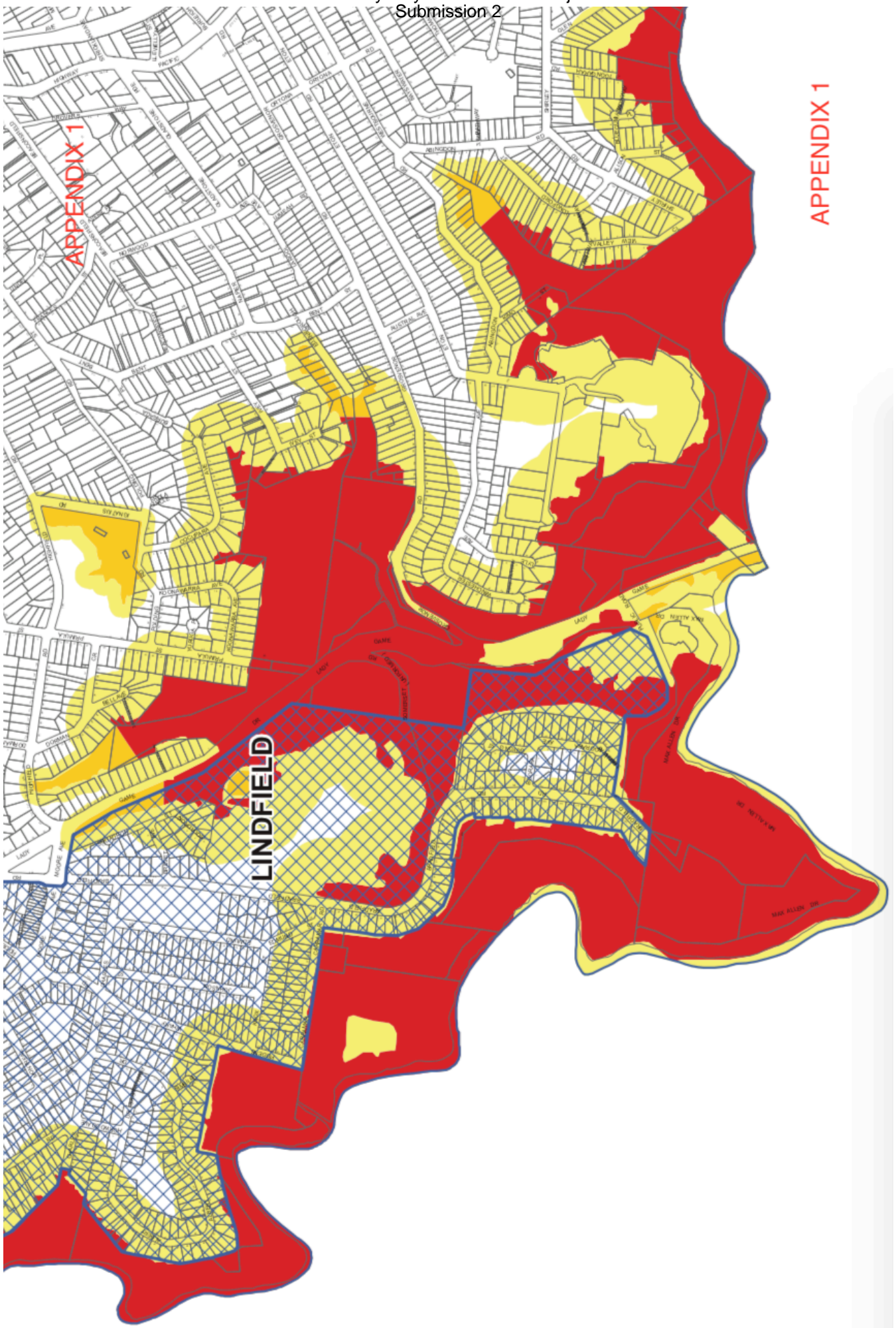
Unfortunately, this submission has been rushed as the writer was informed by the PWC that the closing date for submissions were closing on 30 August 2019, even though there was no closing date for submissions on its website, and a request for an extension of time has been ignored. The writer was only informed of the referral to the PWC a week earlier and was unable to view the background studies until a day ago.

The PWC is reminded of the highly dangerous decision to further develop the CSIRO Lindfield site and the implications for the Commonwealth Government in the event of lives being lost in the next bushfire.

CSIRO's North Ryde site is the most suitable site for its operations in terms of its appropriate industrial zoning, its proximity to major transport<sup>1</sup>, motorways and major roads. It should therefore retain its presence and development of the Delhi Road site.

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<sup>1</sup> CSIRO lobbied the NSW Government to get the rail station there and subsequently profited from this by realising a much higher profit from the sale of its land to private corporations.



APPENDIX 1

APPENDIX 1

APPENDIX 2



Fires rage into West Lindfield and black smoke pours from burning houses. *R. Jung*









APPENDIX 6 (a)



He said firefighters in the area  
had been ordered to save lives

The face of tragedy ... A resident of Guyong Street, Lindfield, distraught as his home is destroyed.

Pictures by JAMES ALCOCK

APPENDIX 6 (b)



An exhausted firefighter douses the smouldering remains of a house in Bradfield Road, Lindfield West, yesterday.



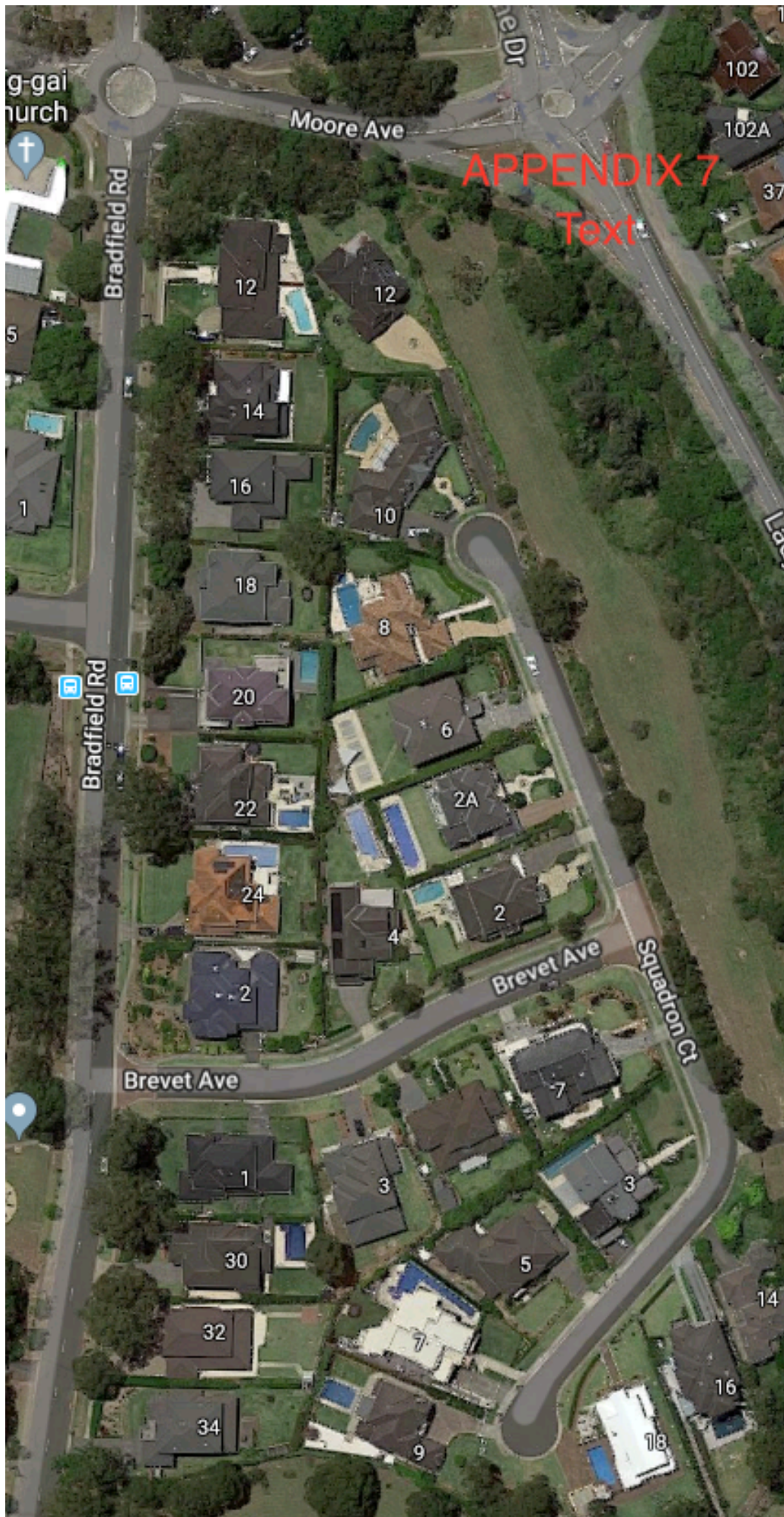
Snatching a break ... Police officers in Booraba Avenue, Lindfield West, showing the strain of hours of non-stop duty.

10	Opera H'se.....Spectrum 11	<b>CLASSIFIED INDEX</b> Section number in <b>bold</b>	Auctions general... <b>2</b> 29	Holiday Resorts... <b>4</b> 72	<b>ROAD TOLL</b>	This year 11
8-9	Comics.....31		Boating..... <b>4</b> 71	Machinery..... <b>3</b> 54		Last year 10
.21	Sport.....36		Business for sale... <b>2</b> 26	Motor Market..... <b>4</b> 57	<b>PHONE</b>	Editorial 282 2822
m 6	Television.....Spectrum 18		Com Properties... <b>2</b> 24	Personal Notices <b>3</b> 56		Classifieds 282 1122
.16	Title Deeds.....37		Entertainment..... <b>7</b> 11A	Real Estate..... <b>3</b> 37		General 282 2833
m 6	News Review.....14		Employment..... <b>7</b> 20A	Travel Guide..... <b>4</b> 71		Fax 282 1640
.17	World News.....9-13		Herald Trader..... <b>3</b> 53	Full Index..... <b>3</b> 56		

Central Coast: Kariong to Woyong. Situation critical. Hawkesbury River to outskirts. Newcast  
unstable. Mangrove Mountain, central Kuhnura.  
Sydney: Lane Cove National Park.  
Property loss Turrumura, Epping, Pymble,  
Marfield and Killara.  
Mill Creek, north of...



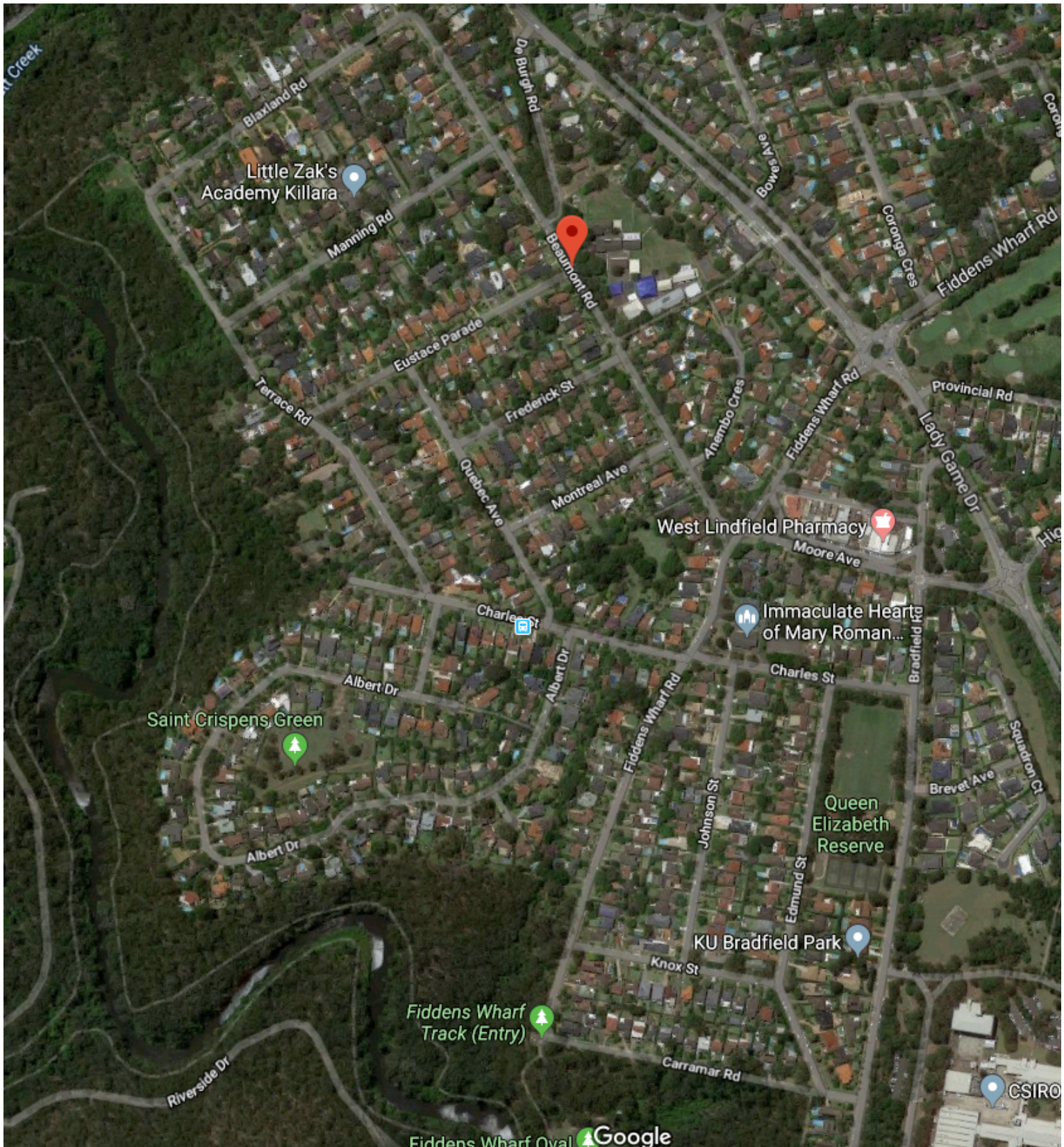
344 in Sydney  
8-025 122  
HOTLINE: (02) 332 9344



APPENDIX 8



# APPENDIX 9 - West Killara





## APPENDIX 10

### HISTORY OF SITE

To understand the point of view of the residents it is necessary to appreciate the history of this site which has been in dispute now for over 50 years. The information contained herein was compiled from minutes and correspondence in Ku-ring-gai Council's own archives.

Prior to World War II some expensive homes had been built close to the site, e.g. Fiddens Wharf Road. The site itself consisted of approx 80 acres. Council owned 56 acres and private landholders owned the remainder. On 29th November 1938 Council resolved the land should be dealt with as follows:

1. 8 1/4 acres for park and recreation areas;
2. 14 1/2 acres to be dedicated to Lane Cove National Park Trust;
3. 33 acres for residential allotments and new roads.

Unfortunately prior to Council carrying out this resolution war broke out and the Commonwealth sought use of the site for an RAAF Initial Training Camp.

Council's letter of 17th January 1940 addressed to the Director of General Works, Canberra states:

"With regard to Council's land at Bradfield, this will be made available free of charge to the Commonwealth Government for the duration of the war for use for depot purposes, subject to the area being reinstated when no longer required for this purpose".

On 22 November 1943 the Department of the Interior informs Council of its intention to resume the land and states that as the Commonwealth had expended monies on services and huts on the land, it was necessary to resume the land to protect the Commonwealth's expenditure.

Council objected to this resumption and responded in the following way:

1. That it would depreciate the value of the surrounding residential area;
2. It is too close to the city, which is extending rapidly;
3. It seriously interferes with the satisfactory town planning of this part of the municipality;
4. Land owners are also protesting;
5. It absorbs a valuable park area and isolates the adjoining land owned by Council;
6. As a result of this resumption there would be no room for expansion of the area acquired without encroaching on the Lane Cove Park Trust.

Just 2 months later in January 1944, the Minister for Air stated the Commonwealth were no longer interested in resuming the land and no further action to acquire the land would be taken. Council was later informed that by this time the matter had progressed to such a stage that acquisition action could not be withdrawn.

Council was finally compensated to the tune of 3,500 pounds in 1948, being the equivalent value of 1 residential block of land at the time.

After the war, due to a housing shortage, the huts were used by the Housing Commission and later as a migrant hostel for the post war immigration programme.

Meanwhile building development continued in the environs of the site, predominantly, indeed almost exclusively, on the same lines as before the war, that is expensive homes. It was believed at the time that when the war time emergency and its aftermath ended, the huts would be demolished and the site would revert to its natural use as residential land.

However, the community and Council continued for many years to fight off unacceptable Commonwealth proposals for the land such as a dump for the PMG, a film studio, a night spoil depot etc. The list goes on, and as Mr Harry Turner, the then Federal Member for Bradfield, stated in his letter to Sir William McMahon at the time: "it had now become apparent that, no matter how land had come to be acquired by the Commonwealth to cope with a passing war time emergency, and no matter what might be the essential residential character of the district, the Commonwealth was determined to use the land for any purpose, industrial or otherwise, that would suit its convenience".

It was at this stage that CSIRO approached Ku-ring-gai Council with a proposal for a Standards Laboratory. Although many still believed that the land should revert to residential use, and no other, this proposal was accepted by the Council as a compromise, since CSIRO explained its buildings would only occupy 10% of the site and the remaining 72 acres would be left as open parkland. The then Council accepted CSIRO on this basis as it not only ensured all the open space area we enjoy today but would prevent any other undesirable use of the land by the Commonwealth.

Mr Harry Turner ended his letter to Sir William McMahon in 1960 by stating "A broader Commonwealth interest is involved in not riding roughshod over the legitimate interests of worthy citizens who are entitled to the preservation of their just rights. Local residents are in my view entitled to assert their rights and expect them to be sustained by the Government".