



AGHS SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS BRANCH  
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6 April 2020

The General Manager  
Wingecarribee Shire Council  
Elizabeth Street  
Moss Vale 2577 NSW

Dear Ms Prendergast

I refer to recent decisions of Council in regard to the upgrade of Station Street Bowral.

I note that at the Meeting on 25 March 2020, Council received a report that recommended that it:

- endorse a new roundabout design at the intersection of Mittagong Road, Station Street and Bong Bong Street;
- agree to proceed with the removal of 8 pin oak trees from the western side of Station Street;
- confirm the inclusion of the construction of a 70-space public car park at Mittagong Station; and
- include funds for construction of this car park in the draft 2020/2021 Operational Plan and Budget.

I also note that at the Emergency Meeting on 27 March 2020, Council decided to adopt the recommendations on the 25 March.

Prior to the meeting on the 25<sup>th</sup>, all councillors received a letter from the Co-Chairs of the Australian Garden History Society as did you. It noted that the report before Council was inadequate advice, as it dismissed environmental, cultural heritage and social issues surrounding this proposal.

The Southern Highlands Branch of the Australian Garden History Society made a submission to the original proposal for the upgrade of Station Street in October 2017, noting concerns had been raised by members about the effect on trees and shrubs along the street. The submission noted that “the streetscape of the northern part of Station Street is unique in the Southern Highlands because of these plantings”. The Camellia hedge outside the station car park and the mature pin oak trees that form an important and welcoming canopy were specifically mentioned.

Since then research has brought to light the history and rarity of elements of this streetscape. The historical and aesthetic significance of the camellias and pin oak avenue—and rarity of

the Camellia hedge—have been recognised by both the Australian Garden History Society and the National Trust. Council has been kept informed of this research and would recognise that this unique entrance landscape of welcoming pin oaks and rare camellias cannot be replaced. Council is aware that this avenue was planted at the specific request of the community, and by the community, with the Bowral Council's sanction. It has been maintained ever since.

The entrance avenue effect requires trees at the entrance to Station Street, the decision to remove all trees from the western side of the avenue and only plant five in their place, and to plant these some distance along Station Street from the entrance, means that the welcoming avenue effect can never be recreated. The historical significance and visual contribution of this avenue planting will be diminished with the removal of these trees.

The report says nothing about the camellias. It is hoped that Council will engage with the community on recognising their heritage significance (e.g. a Planning Proposal to amend its Local Environmental Plan to list them as a local heritage item, along with the Station Street tree avenue).

It is further hoped Council will engage with the community on working out how to retain their significance, before the staged project design for this part of Station Street meets a critical point. We are sure there are other design options that offer a 'win:win' outcome.

In conclusion, please note that the Southern Highlands Branch strongly objects to the destruction of this iconic gateway avenue and does not accept that the replacement planting proposed can ever restore the extent, effect and drama of that avenue as a distinct entrance to Bowral.

Had the community been allowed the opportunity to provide input into the decision-making process for this major change to Station Street, options that could create a worthwhile entrance avenue could have been explored. However, the decision to proceed without allowing this means Bowral will lose its unique entrance, and an important reminder of part of its history. What it 'gains' will be a very ordinary suburban roundabout.

Yours sincerely

Lyn Barrett  
Chair

cc: All Wingecarribee Shire Councillors  
Heritage Advisory Committee WSC  
Wendy Tuckerman, State Member for Goulburn  
Nathaniel Smith, State Member for Wollondilly  
Stephen Jones, Federal Member for Whitlam  
The Hon. Shelley Hancock MP, Minister for Local Government  
NSW Ombudsman  
The Hon. Robert Stokes MP, Minister for Planning  
The Hon. Gladys Berejiklian MP, NSW Premier  
The Hon. Matthew Kean MP, Minister for Energy & Environment  
Carrol-Anne Nelson, Transport for NSW