



SOCIAL AND CULTURAL ASSESSMENT

Mount Carmel Subdivision

The Catholic Education Office (Diocese of Wollongong)
18 March 2022

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INTRODUCTION

Purpose of this report

This study has been prepared by Urbis Pty Ltd to accompany a planning proposal request (PPR) and concurrent development application (DA) for a site specific amendment to the Campbelltown Local Environmental Plan to enable the subdivision of two sites at Varroville.

The assessment examines the social and cultural contributions of the existing facilities, services and programs on the sites.

The proposal and background

The proposal is for the subdivision of two semi-rural lots into four (see Figures 1 and 2). This is intended to enable each of four existing and distinctive facilities to be situated on their own registered lots. The facilities are:

1. **Mount Carmel College** at 210 Spitfire Drive
2. **Our Lady of Mount Carmel Catholic Church** at 193 St Andrews Road
3. **Carmel of Mary and Joseph Monastery, currently known as 'Carmel House'**, at 345 St Andrews Road
4. **Mount Carmel Retreat Centre and Managers Residence Priory for the Discalced Carmelite Fathers** at 247 St Andrews Road.

Currently, the consolidated land holding of 143.3ha belongs to The Trustees of the Discalced Carmelite Fathers who built and manage the facilities at item 4 above. The other three facilities are operated by three separate entities, each of whom were given permission to build their respective facilities in the 1980s. The intent was to undertake subdivision and transfer of the three landholdings at a future stage, as proposed in this subdivision DA. The subdivision is not proposed to impact the operation of the four facilities.

Project objectives

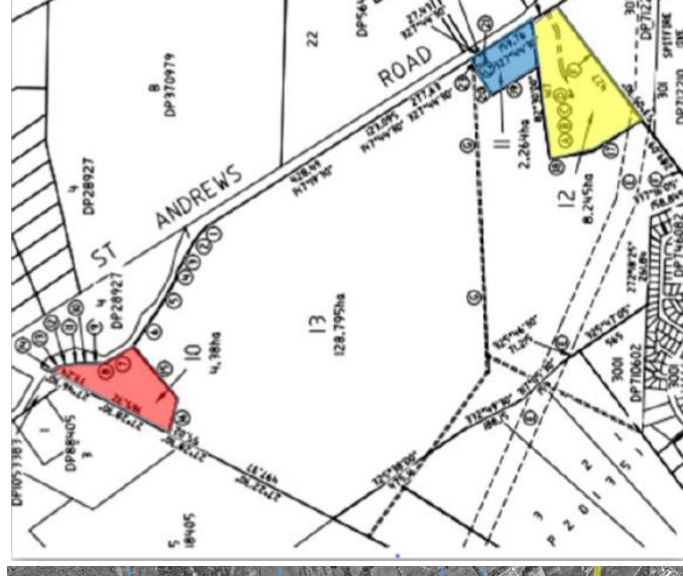
- 1 **Provide Mount Carmel College, Our Lady of Mount Carmel Catholic Church and Carmelite Monastery with their own legal titles**
- 2 **Give greater certainty to the existing facilities to continue to operate, including their various community outreach programs**
- 3 **Strengthen Mount Carmel Catholic College's ability to access funding pathways from the NSW Government**

Figure 1: Existing two lots and land uses



Source: Innova Capital

Figure 2: Proposed subdivision



Source: Innova Capital

THE SITE AND SURROUNDING CONTEXT

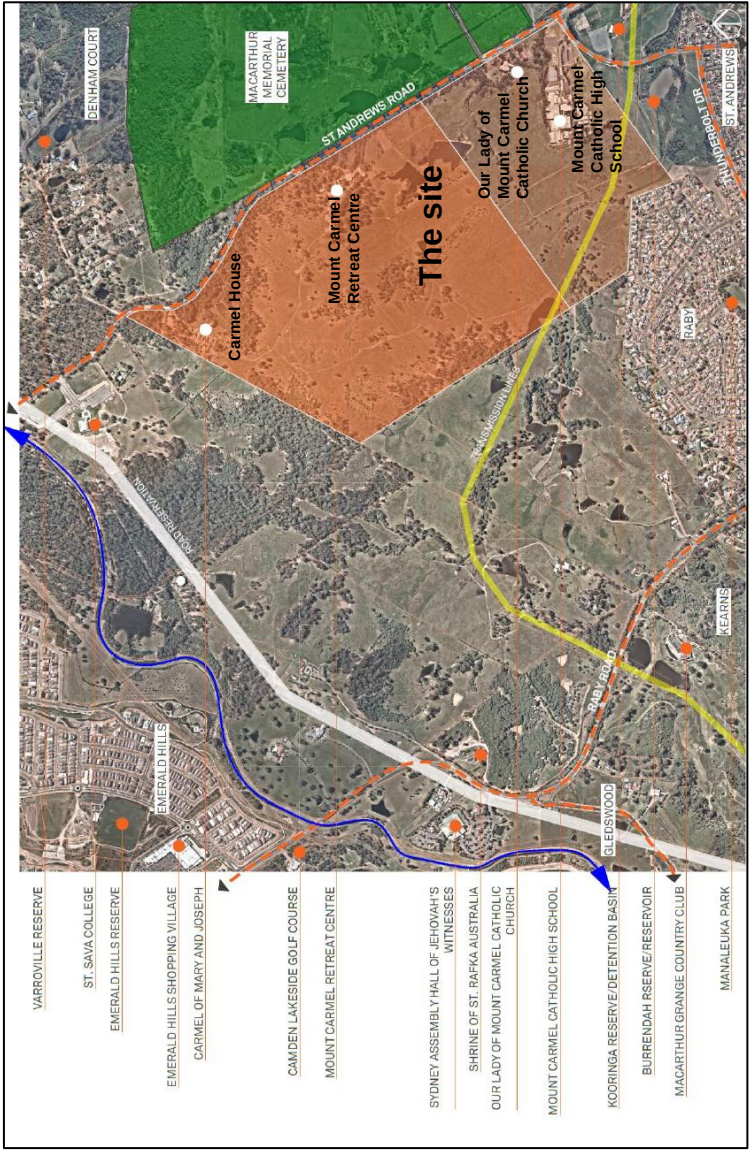
As noted the site consists of four facilities located across two lots of land of approximately 146ha in size. The site is located in the suburb of Varroville which sits within the local government area (LGA) of the City of Campbelltown. Varroville is a small, semi-rural residential suburb, part of the greater Macarthur region.

The four facilities are all located along the eastern side of St Andrews Road in a north-west to south-east direction (see Figure 1 on page 4). Carmel of Mary and Joseph Monastery is in the most north-western location, followed by Mount Carmel Retreat Centre approximately 900m south. A further 600 - 700m south from Mount Carmel Retreat Centre is Our Lady of Mount Carmel Catholic Church and Mount Carmel Catholic College. The church and college buildings are located in close proximity.

Neighbouring suburbs include Leppington to the north-west, Denham Court to the north-east, Ingleburn to the east, Raby and Kearns to the south and Gledswood Hills to the south-west. On the opposite side of St Andrews Road, adjacent the site, is the recently approved Macarthur Memorial Cemetery site, as well as the heritage listed Varroville House.

The site sits within the Scenic Hills, a rolling hillslope of historical pastoral land falling from the prominent ridge link at the eastern edge of the Cumberland Plan and extending to Mount Sugarloaf in the north. The Scenic Hills provide a backdrop to most of Campbelltown and is a prominent element viewed from many places in the City.

Figure 3: The site and surrounding context



Source: Innova Capital

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

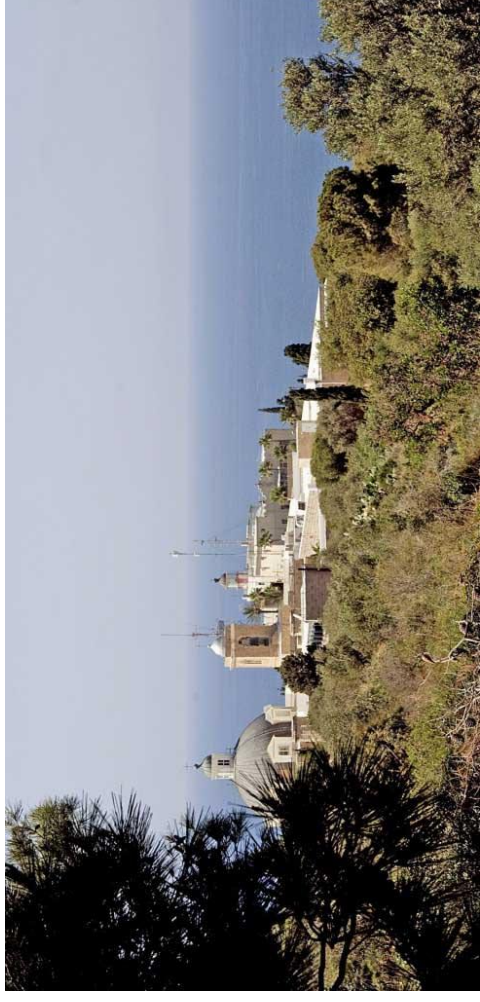
History of the Carmelite Order

All of the facilities on the site are of the Carmelite Order, a branch of Catholicism. The Order of Carmelites has its origins on Mount Carmel, in what was then known as Palestine and is now in Israel, and is believed to have started in the 12th century. The order started after pilgrims from Europe came together near the 'spring of Elijah' in one of the narrow valleys of Mount Carmel to live as Christian hermits. The pilgrims built a chapel which they dedicated to Mary, believed by the Carmelites and other Christians to be the Mother of Jesus, son of God. The Carmelites do not identify as having a founder, but are followers of the Prophet Elijah. This origin means Carmelites are strongly connected with Elijah and Mary. Throughout the 12th to 14th centuries the Carmelite Order moved from Palestine to Jerusalem and back to Europe. It was not until the French Revolution that the Carmelite Order was established⁴.

In the 1500s, a branch of the Carmelite Order was also established: the Discalced Carmelites, who are friars and nuns who dedicate themselves to a life of prayer. In 2020, throughout the world there were 1,310 religious priests and 386 parishes of the Order of Our Lady of Mount Carmel³.

In Australia, there are three male Discalced Carmelite communities: two in New South Wales, one in Western Australia⁴ and two female Discalced Carmelite communities in New South Wales.

Figure 4: Monastery in Mount Carmel, Israel



Source: The Catholic Travel Guide

Figure 5: Spring of Elijah



Source: Carmelite Monastery Ormiston

1. Carmelite Provincial Centre, History of the Carmelite Order, <https://www.carmelites.org.au/history/history-of-the-carmelite-order>.
2. Ibid.
3. Catholic Hierarchy, Order of Our Lady of Mt Carmel – Historical Summary, <http://www.catholic-hierarchy.org/dioceses/dqoca.html#hist>.
4. Carmelite Spirit, Communities, <https://carmelite.com/friars/>.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Our Lady of Mount Carmel Catholic Church

The Parish in Varroville was canonically established in the early 1980s and the Church building was constructed in the late 1990s. The Church has capacity for around 400 people. The Church is part of the Catholic Diocese of Wollongong and serves the Varroville, Raby, St Andrews and Bow Bowing communities.

Since its establishment more than 40 years ago, the Church has had an important role in the community. As is common for Catholic schools, the Church is located adjacent to Mount Carmel Catholic College and has an important role in establishing the religious values in school life. The Church acts as a de facto chaplain to the College, with smaller school gatherings still taking place at the Church.

The Church hall and part of its grounds are now also part licensed on weekdays to Bambi Kindergarten Community Preschool.

Figure 6: Our Lady of Mount Carmel Catholic Church



Source: Innova Capital

5. Mount Carmel Catholic College, About our College, <http://www.mcccadow.catholic.edu.au/index.php/our-college>.
6. Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Our Parish, <https://www.varroville.dow.org.au/our-parish/>.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Mount Carmel Catholic College

Mount Carmel Catholic College opened as a co-educational school in 1986 with 292 students across years 7 and 8. A search for a school site in the northern part of the Macarthur region started three years prior when a committee of parishioners from Ingleburn and Macquarie Fields came together with the intention of establishing a Catholic secondary school. A submission was put to the Bishop of Wollongong, who approved the development of the school.

Negotiations began with the Carmelite Fathers to locate the school at the present site and a capital grant was allocated for works to begin in 1985. As is common for many Catholic schools, the school was established by the Marist Brothers and is remains a Marist educational community today.

The first principal of Mount Carmel High School was Brother Clarence Cunningham who remained principal until 1990. Brother Neville Solomon became the school's second principal from 1991 – 1996. Under his principalship, new buildings were constructed to provide better school amenities for students including the Champagnat Centre (main hall), main quadrangle and commercial kitchen facilities in a Hospitality and Food Technology Block. Brother Roger Burke became principal in 1997, with further building works undertaken under his principalship.

The departure of Brother Roger in 2001 was a significant event of the school's history as it ended the formal association with the Marist Brothers. This was the first time in the school's history that a layperson was appointed principal.

To respond to increasing demand, the school is currently looking at its facility improvement and expansion options. In order to access NSW Government funding to support this growth, it requires security of tenure over the site on which it is located. This need for legal title to support the growth of the school is one the key drivers of the application for subdivision.

Figure 7: Mount Carmel Catholic College grounds



Source: Innova Capital

HISTORIC CONTEXT

Mount Carmel Retreat Centre (including the Priory)

The Discalced Carmelite Friars moved to Varroville in 1965 to establish a novitiate for trainee priests. The Friars built the centre between 1966-1969 and used it as a place of residence and a retreat until 2012. The centre was then renovated and refurbished. A Priory was also constructed on site as a residence for the Friars. In 2019, the Carmelite Friars began a collaboration with Youth Mission Team (YMT) Australia to manage and operate the Mount Carmel Retreat Centre⁷ on their behalf.

When the Friars moved to Varroville their intention was to provide a retreat centre that allowed priests to be in touch with the land. This is still an important element of the operation of the retreat today, with the site providing the Friars and retreat guests with access to a rural setting in Sydney.

Figure 8: Guests at Mount Carmel Retreat Centre



Source: Mt Carmel Retreat Centre

Carmel House

The Carmelite convent was established in 1987 after the merger of convents in Dulwich Hill and Parkes⁸. It was the former monastery for Discalced Carmelite Nuns, and now used as a monastery by another Catholic Order.

Currently the Monastery is known as 'Carmel House' and houses nuns from the Missionaries of God's Love Sisters (MGL Sisters).

Figure 9: Aerial view of Carmel House



Source: Google maps

7. Mt Carmel Retreat Centre, About Us, <https://mtcarmel.com.au/about-us>.

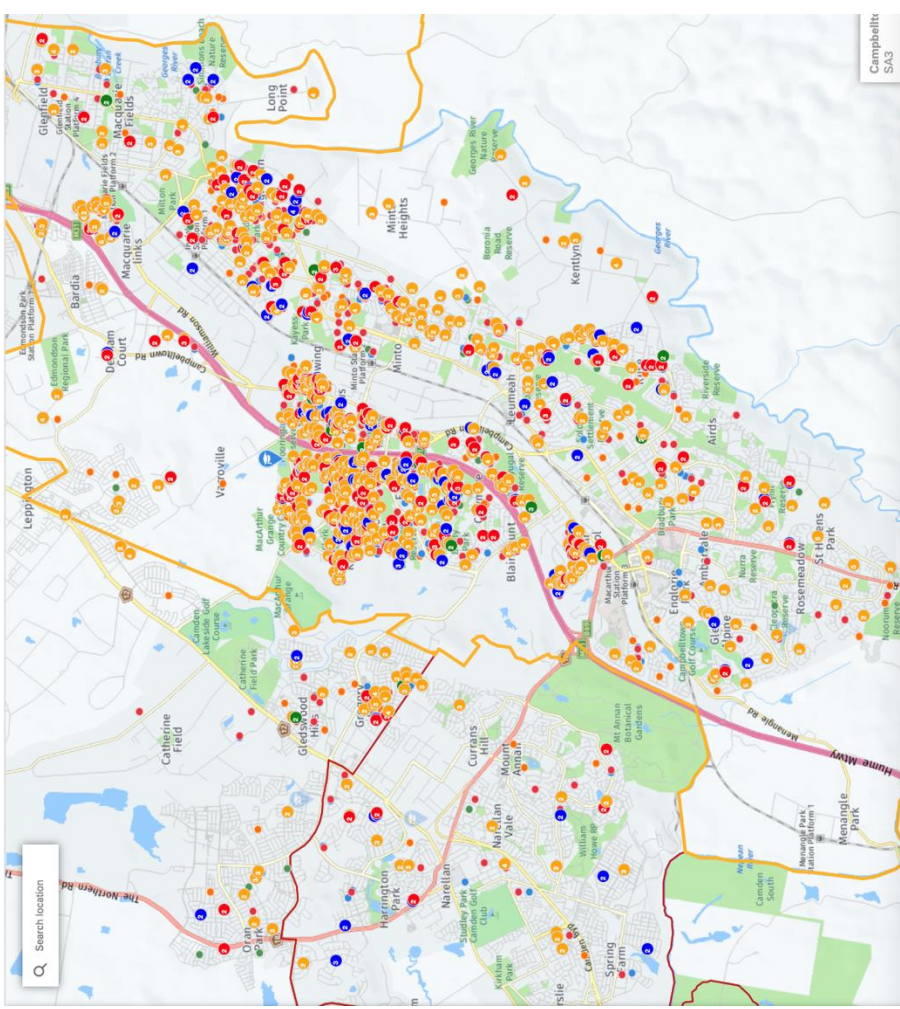
8. Dictionary of Sydney, Carmel of Mary and Joseph Varroville, https://dictionaryofsydney.org/building/carmel_of_mary_and_joseph_varroville.

Figure 10: Place of residence of students enrolled at Mount Carmel Catholic College 2016 – 2020.

A map of the Macquarie Creek area, showing various locations marked with colored circles and numbers. The locations include Macquarie Creek, Macquarie Creek 2, Macquarie Creek 3, Macquarie Creek 4, Macquarie Creek 5, Macquarie Creek 6, Macquarie Creek 7, Macquarie Creek 8, Macquarie Creek 9, Macquarie Creek 10, Macquarie Creek 11, Macquarie Creek 12, Macquarie Creek 13, Macquarie Creek 14, Macquarie Creek 15, Macquarie Creek 16, Macquarie Creek 17, Macquarie Creek 18, Macquarie Creek 19, Macquarie Creek 20, Macquarie Creek 21, Macquarie Creek 22, Macquarie Creek 23, Macquarie Creek 24, Macquarie Creek 25, Macquarie Creek 26, Macquarie Creek 27, Macquarie Creek 28, Macquarie Creek 29, Macquarie Creek 30, Macquarie Creek 31, Macquarie Creek 32, Macquarie Creek 33, Macquarie Creek 34, Macquarie Creek 35, Macquarie Creek 36, Macquarie Creek 37, Macquarie Creek 38, Macquarie Creek 39, Macquarie Creek 40, Macquarie Creek 41, Macquarie Creek 42, Macquarie Creek 43, Macquarie Creek 44, Macquarie Creek 45, Macquarie Creek 46, Macquarie Creek 47, Macquarie Creek 48, Macquarie Creek 49, Macquarie Creek 50, Macquarie Creek 51, Macquarie Creek 52, Macquarie Creek 53, Macquarie Creek 54, Macquarie Creek 55, Macquarie Creek 56, Macquarie Creek 57, Macquarie Creek 58, Macquarie Creek 59, Macquarie Creek 60, Macquarie Creek 61, Macquarie Creek 62, Macquarie Creek 63, Macquarie Creek 64, Macquarie Creek 65, Macquarie Creek 66, Macquarie Creek 67, Macquarie Creek 68, Macquarie Creek 69, Macquarie Creek 70, Macquarie Creek 71, Macquarie Creek 72, Macquarie Creek 73, Macquarie Creek 74, Macquarie Creek 75, Macquarie Creek 76, Macquarie Creek 77, Macquarie Creek 78, Macquarie Creek 79, Macquarie Creek 80, Macquarie Creek 81, Macquarie Creek 82, Macquarie Creek 83, Macquarie Creek 84, Macquarie Creek 85, Macquarie Creek 86, Macquarie Creek 87, Macquarie Creek 88, Macquarie Creek 89, Macquarie Creek 90, Macquarie Creek 91, Macquarie Creek 92, Macquarie Creek 93, Macquarie Creek 94, Macquarie Creek 95, Macquarie Creek 96, Macquarie Creek 97, Macquarie Creek 98, Macquarie Creek 99, Macquarie Creek 100.

A map of the St Helens Park area. The map shows a road network with a bus stop marked by a red dot. The bus stop is located on a road that runs parallel to the park boundary. The park is labeled 'St Helens Park' and is surrounded by residential areas. The map also shows a river or canal running along the bottom edge.

Source: Catholic Education Office, Diocese of Wollongong



Source: Catholic Education Office, Diocese of Wollongong

SERVICE CONTEXT

Our Lady of Mount Carmel Catholic Church service overview

Church services

Mount Carmel Catholic Church plays an important role serving as the local parish. The public service schedule is:

- 9:00am mass Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Saturday
- 9:30am mass Sunday
- 7:30pm mass Thursday
- 6:00pm vigil Saturday
- 5:00pm mass Sunday.

Social and cultural outreach

The Church contributes to social and cultural outreach in the Varroville and Macarthur region through several parish ministries. This includes:

- Hosting St Vincent De Paul conference with attendance beyond the local parish boundaries
- Facilitating and providing Catechists holding classes in the local public primary schools
- Supporting people in the local community who are preparing for various sacraments in the Church from infant baptism, reconciliation and first communion, confirmation and marriage preparation
- Facilitating parish members to reach out to the sick in their homes or hospitals as needed
- Inviting the local communities into the Church to share their talents such as music ministry, gospel reading, Eucharistic distribution, hospitality support services, premises cleaning and tending to the grounds and overall appearance of the premises
- Organising and host social gatherings.

Bambi Kindergarten preschool

As noted on page 7, part of the church grounds are licensed to Bambi Kindergarten Community Preschool. The preschool provides care for children aged 4-6, prioritising children who are in the year before school. Preschool for 4-6 year olds is offered four days a week. Wednesdays are dedicated 'preparation days' for children aged 3 years. If places permit, children aged 4-6 can pick up an additional day of preschool on Wednesdays.

As a community preschool, Bambi Kindergarten is part of the Start Strong Fee Preschool program. This supports families by providing free preschool for 600 hours in the two years before school, or roughly two days per week. Information provided by Bambi Kindergarten online indicates limited places available for 2022.

Carmel House service overview

Carmel House is a monastery for nuns from the MGL Sisters, a relatively new group of consecrated women who commit to a life exclusively of prayer. The MGL Sisters also have a 'Spiritual Association' for lay people who wish to participate in prayer. They also offer 'come and see' weeks for women who are interested in experiencing the way of life of the Sisters. A particular focus of the MGL Sisters is their outreach in the community, not necessarily with people who are religious. Programs run by the Sisters include youth, high school and prison ministries. The Sisters also work with Indigenous people and provide outreach to people living in social housing.

Figure 11: Bambi Kindergarten children



Source: Bambi Kindergarten

SOCIAL BASELINE

This section provides an overview of the current and future demographic profile and population projections for Varroville and the City of Campbelltown LGA using data from the 2016 ABS Census sourced from Profile id. While the 2016 Census data dates from five years ago, it remains the most recent population data source until the release of the 2021 Census data in June 2022.

As a suburb, Varroville has a very small resident population of 113 people. This assessment will therefore use the area defined by Council as 'rural residential', which includes Varroville as well as other rural residential areas in The City of Campbelltown LGA. Key demographic characteristics of the rural residential area are provided below and adjacent.

The rural residential area is likely to experience significant population growth over the next 20 years. The City of Campbelltown LGA is also likely to experience significant population growth in the next 20 years including school aged children. The number of people aged 5-17 is forecast to grow from 32,380 in 2021 to 35,886 by 2026 (+11%) and to 50,045 by 2041 (+54%).



Rural Residential Area
2,452 people in 2021
+ **1,089%**
29,161 people in 2041



City of Campbelltown
176,151 people in 2021
+ **55%**
272,303 people in 2041



City of Campbelltown
5-17 year olds
45,973 in 2021
+ **54%**
70,438 in 2041

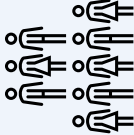
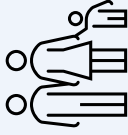


Rural Residential
773 dwellings in 2021
+ **1,042%**
8,828 dwellings in 2041



City of Campbelltown
62,760 dwellings in 2016
+ **56%**
97,918 dwellings in 2041

Table 1: Demographics characteristics of the Rural Residential area

	Small population In 2021, there were 2,452 people living in Rural Residential area, representing less than 2% of the 176,151 people living in the Campbelltown LGA.
	High proportion of people of Christian faith The majority of residents identify as being of Christian faith (69%), most of whom identify as being Catholic (29%) or Anglican (24%). Christianity is also the dominant religion in Campbelltown LGA (57%).
	Increasing cultural and linguistic diversity While most residents were born in Australia (64%) and only speak English at home (68%), between 2011 and 2016 the number of people who spoke a language other than English at home increased by 50%.
	High proportion of family households The average persons per household was 2.81. Family households (39%) were the dominant household type, as they are in the Campbelltown LGA (54%).
	Ageing population The Rural Residential area had a higher proportion of persons aged 60 or older (39%) and lower proportion of persons aged between 0 and 17 (19%), compared with 17% and 26% respectively for Campbelltown LGA.

KEY POLICY AND DOCUMENT REVIEW

This section provides a summary of the strategic context for the planning and provision of social infrastructure and open space, based on a review of relevant state and local government strategies and plans.

Table 2: Key policy and document review table

Key policy & documents	Key points
Western City District Plan Greater Sydney Commission (2018)	- Campbelltown – Macarthur is set to become Greater Sydney's newest health and education hub, as part of the Western Economic Corridor, highlighting opportunities to protect and grow core health and education activity. Key objectives and actions of relevance to this proposal include: - Maintain or enhance the values of the Metropolitan Rural Area using place-based planning to deliver targeted environmental, social and economic outcomes. - Scenic and cultural landscapes and ridgelines are protected; specifically the Scenic Hills, Mulgoa Valley and the escarpments of the Blue Mountains. - Environmental, social and economic values in rural areas are protected and enhanced.
Campbelltown Local Strategic Planning Statement (LSPS) Campbelltown City Council (2020)	Key actions of the LSPS include: - Identify and promote the conservation of environmental heritage and sensitive areas including the Georges River Corridor Landscape, Scenic Hills and Wedderburn. - Investigate the possibility of connecting the Western Sydney Parklands to include the Scenic Hills, the Australian Botanic Garden and open space areas along the Nepean River. - Investigate opportunities for agri-tourism and related pursuits in the Scenic Hills.
Community Strategic Plan 2019-2027 (CSP) Campbelltown City Council (2019)	Key strategies of the CSP include: - Ensure that Campbelltown is an inclusive city. - Forster a creative community that celebrates arts and culture. - Ensure that service provision supports the community to achieve and meets their needs. - Support and advocate for infrastructure solutions that meet the needs of the City and which pay an economic and liveability dividend. - Responsibly manage growth and development, with respect for the environment, heritage and character of our city.
Introduction of the Visual and Landscape Analysis of Campbelltown's Scenic Hills and East Edge Scenic Protection Lands Report Paul Davies Pty Ltd and Geoffrey Britton (2011)	For Scenic Hills, the study found: - The integrity of the cultural landscape depends not only on the aesthetic qualities of views over the landscape but also the retention of rural land uses throughout the area. - One land use that has a strong precedent in the landscape is the education and religious centres, including Mount Carmel Catholic College, Our Lady of Mount Carmel Catholic Church and the Carmelite retreat and priory.

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CONTRIBUTION OF THE SITE

This assessment has examined the social and cultural contributions of the existing facilities and their services and programs to the local, district and metropolitan communities. In particular, it has examined the social and cultural contributions of Mount Carmel College, Varroville Catholic Church and Carmel House Monastery, as the concurrent subdivision DA attached to the PPR relates particularly to these facilities. The assessment has also considered the history of the Mount Carmel Retreat Centre, which will retain a land title in excess of 100ha. It was included in this Assessment, to provide a holistic understanding of how the four facilities would be legally co-located going forward.

The assessment finds that each of the four facilities provide important social and cultural contributions to the local Varroville, wider Macarthur and metropolitan communities. There are three key social and cultural contributions the facilities make:

1. Connecting to the Carmelite religion, history and culture

The four facilities provide a significant representation of and connection to the Carmelite Order's origins in Sydney and Australia. As introduced on page 6, today only a very small number of Carmelite communities exist nationally. The school, church and retreat centre remain actively connected to the Carmelite faith. While the Carmel of Mary and Joseph Monastery, is now operated by the MGL Sisters as Carmel House, the monastery also retains strong historic connections with the Carmelite faith.

The continued operation of these facilities and opportunities for Catholics and non-Catholics to engage with various services and programs keeps the history of the Carmelite religion in Varroville and in Sydney alive.

2. Providing key education infrastructure in a growing area

Mount Carmel Catholic College and Our Lady of Mount Carmel Catholic Church support the provision of key social infrastructure: education and childcare. As discussed on page 9 Mount Carmel Catholic College provides high school education to around 1,100 Catholic and non-Catholic students in the local and wider suburbs in Campbelltown and Camden LGAs. The school appears to have reached maximum capacity and has a waitlist for most year groups, demonstrating its need in the community. As indicated on page 11, projections for Campbelltown LGA show significant housing and population growth in the next 20 years, including in school aged children. Education infrastructure is critical social infrastructure needed to support this growth and opportunities exist to source state government funding to enable this. The pressure on school capacity as a result of the increasing population in the Macarthur region is a known issue being reported in

the media and a concern of the Campbelltown MP⁹. Our Lady of Mount Carmel Catholic College is intrinsically linked to the school as its parish. It also supports the provision of childcare – another key social infrastructure type. Under the Start Strong program, Bambi Kindergarten provides two days of free education for four and five year olds (prioritising children aged 4) and is well sought after by the local community.

3. Providing religious and non-religious services and outreach

For many centuries, churches and other centres of faith have been an important aspect of social life, fostering community connections and providing outreach in the local community. Local planning still places importance on retaining places that have social value and deliver positive social outcomes.

Our Lady of Mount Carmel Catholic Church and Carmel House play this role through their structured prayer services for their Church community and outreach and ministry services to non-Catholic communities such as at hospitals and prisons. Through their contribution to religious and non-religious communities, the aim is to foster community wellbeing and connection, which is integral to a healthy and functional social life.

Mount Carmel Catholic College provides inclusive education opportunities for people of all religious affiliations and cultural backgrounds. This includes supporting Indigenous students, recent student migrants and students of non-Catholic backgrounds. Access to inclusive education opportunities, such as those offered by Mount Carmel Catholic College, enhances community awareness, education and acceptance around different cultural and religious backgrounds.

The Mount Carmel Retreat Centre is also a spiritual and inclusive place for Catholics and non-Catholics. Retreats are available for a wide user group including schools, churches, corporate and other groups.

The proposed subdivision will support and enable the ongoing operation and investment of the four facilities provided on the site and achieve the project objectives of:

- Providing Mount Carmel College, Our Lady of Mount Carmel Catholic Church and Carmelite Monastery with their own legal titles
- Giving greater certainty to the existing facilities to continue to operate, including their various community outreach programs
- Strengthening Mount Carmel Catholic College's ability to access funding pathways from the NSW Government.

9. Macarthur Advertiser, Local News, <https://www.macarthuradvertiser.com.au/story/7628552/campbelltown-mp-concerned-macarthur-schools-will-burst-at-the-seams/>.

