

The following excerpt is from a letter sent to CAMS on 18.5.17

As residents impacted by the proposed Newcastle 500 Supercars race, we write to draw your attention to our concerns about the location of the event scheduled for November 2017. Whilst we appreciate that CAMS is primarily concerned with circuit design and driver safety, we are nonetheless of the view that CAMS has a duty of care to residents and other stakeholders when assessing and giving accreditation to the race. This includes the reputation of motorsports generally and the potential for brand damage if things go wrong.

We are of the view there are unacceptable risks to residents living in the race precinct. To date, we have seen no evidence to demonstrate race organisers have the expertise to safely host the event in this location. This is evident in the appalling consultation processes to date, the significant delays in construction, through to the lack of safety management plans and risk assessments that apparently are not yet developed.

The Newcastle 500 circuit sets a precedent, running through a high-density population precinct, with many residences and businesses only 3-5m from the circuit. Newcastle East is a Heritage Conservation Area with many state and locally listed buildings and monuments.

Our concerns and the risks we have identified include:

### **1. Noise**

**Noise modeling carried out by us for this circuit, and by others for similar circuits indicate the sound pressure levels at the nearest residential and commercial buildings will be 100dBA for in excess of 2 hours. This will see internal levels of approximately 90dBA. To limit the risk of hearing damage World Best Practice restricts daily exposure at these levels to 15 minutes and 2 hours 31 minutes respectively.**

Noise levels experienced inside residents' homes and workplaces in the circuit vicinity will be excessive and pose a very real threat to noise induced hearing damage. **The EPA can offer no protection** because it has been removed from the legislation controlling the event. Noise modeling from previous racing events is not applicable in this case, as the track is so close to homes and businesses.

<http://dangerousdecibels.org/education/information-center/decibel-exposure-time-guidelines/>

**A group of medical professionals and doctors have written to authorities voicing their deep concerns about the risk to the health and well-being of residents, particularly those inside and adjacent to the circuit or in the circuit vicinity. The Public Health Act has as one of its major tenets: the protection of the health and safety of the public is to be the paramount consideration in the exercise of functions under this Act (s 3, s 7, s 9 Public Health Act 2010).**

We are yet to receive a response from authorities that will dispel fears of hearing damage.

### **2. Health and Aged Care Facilities**

**A number of Public Housing complexes are located inside or near the circuit. Three of them cater for aged residents. Many have mental health issues exacerbated by stress, interruption to daily routine and excessive noise. Some of our elderly neighbors are suffering early and more advanced symptoms of dementia.**

**There is another public housing complex on the circuit, not specifically for aged residents. It houses approximately 50 elderly residents and a number of tenants with mental health issues. In fact, our small suburb has a higher-than-average number of people suffering from anxiety and mental health issues**

**The noise and crowds will be intolerable for those who have little awareness or understanding of the event. High levels of anxiety are already in evidence. Dementia sufferers or those with mental health problems will have extreme difficulty coping. Some will not cope.**

**As public housing tenants, they have specific rights in accordance with the requirements of s 13 Residential Tenancies Act 2010. These residents are entitled to quiet enjoyment of their residences without any interference with the reasonable peace, comfort or privacy of their use of their premises (s 50 Residential Tenancies Act 2010).**

**In the event of a real emergency, there will be no choice but to stop the race. There will be delays to accessing emergency care, which in some cases may be the difference between life and death.**

Some elderly tenants require daily assistance to live independently. Home care nursing, meals-on-wheels, grocery deliveries, ambulance call-outs, pharmaceutical deliveries, doctor visits, hospital transport services and taxis are just some of the services that visit these complexes on a daily basis. Large numbers rely on family visits for their social interaction. A large number have mobility issues.

These public housing complexes are trapped inside the race circuit. In addition to the racing noise, organisers claim there will be crowds of 50 000 to 70 000 Supercar fans each day. They will fill the narrow streets and lanes of our small heritage precinct. Staged entertainment has been suggested for the roadway directly in front of two of the public housing complexes.

*“There is clear evidence that excess noise has a negative impact on vulnerable people and their mental health. The V8 supercars are likely to increase stress, depressive symptoms and even suicidal ideation in people who have mental health problems and live nearby to the V8 supercar racetrack.” (Dr Nick Bendit, Chair Medical Staff Council (Mental Health), Hunter New England Health.)*

During the 3 days of racing, access will be via three temporary bridges. The bridges will be located some distance from the homes of elderly residents. Many will not be able to use these, and will be trapped.

The local general medical practice was advised to close, as patients will not be able to access the premises. Incoming services like Meals on Wheels and Home Nursing require vehicular access: there is none.

To date, residents have not received specific information about emergency procedures in the case of: a fire, a crash, a resident emergency or an injury. Given site difficulties, and the large residential population an emergency management plan should have been developed by now, giving residents adequate time to review it.

### **3. Proximity to people’s homes**

Many bedrooms and living rooms are only 3-5m from the circuit. Overhead balconies (some enclosed as bedrooms) are closer! No previous Supercar event has allowed racing cars so close to people’s homes.

### **4. Children**

**There are more than 100 children under 12 living in, on and around the circuit. Some have specific health, welfare and well-being issues. Children are particularly vulnerable to damaging effects of loud noise. Several have conditions that require ongoing medical treatment. Conditions include asthma, epilepsy allergies and hearing problems. All require access to outside play and fresh air.**

Most of the homes are terrace houses or apartments. They have small or no backyards. These children utilise the nearby streets, parks and playgrounds for their daily activities. Those areas will be inaccessible to families during the race period. During the six-month construction phase access will be increasingly limited. Many children and elderly residents have pets unused to the noise and activity associated with motor racing. This will cause anxiety for both the owners and their pets. A Supercars representative has conceded that parents should ‘relocate’ their families during the event ‘for a holiday’. (Murray Hodges, Supercars information session at Fort Scratchley 28/3/17.) Relocation is not possible for many residents due to age, disability, choice, finances and family dynamics. They will have no option but to endure exposure. Regardless, people should not be forced from their homes.

## 6. Heritage

**Newcastle East is a Heritage Conservation Area with many state and locally listed buildings and monuments. The housing stock consists of mostly 120-year old terraces, many constructed with sandstock or convict bricks, lime mortar, and usually of a high-maintenance nature.**

The circuit will be built over the Coal River Precinct, a large area of land that includes landmarks such as Nobbys, Macquarie Pier, the southern headland (Colliers Point/Signal Hill and Flagstaff Hill) including Fort Scratchley, the convict lumber yard and adjoining foreshore. Coal River was a combination of Aboriginal and immigrant settlements and is an example of the two cultures sharing their knowledge and collaborating. It is the birthplace of Australia's coal mining industry and marks the site of the discovery of coal, and the first modern coal mining undertaken in the Southern Hemisphere. Coal River is emblematic of the shift from punishment to profit, and from convict society to civil society. It is currently awaiting Heritage Listing at National level.

## 8. Compatibility with the current use of the location

**The Newcastle East peninsula is a recreational destination for all Novocastrians, and used primarily for passive recreation activities. A high-speed race here is counter-intuitive to the spirit and zoning of the precinct. The extended bump-in and bump-out period (now extended to 12 weeks each year) restricts the use of this precinct as a recreational area for Newcastle.**

It comprises ocean pools, breakwalls, large and small parks, several city beaches, Newcastle's only dog beach, historic Fort Scratchley, the Nobbys lighthouse and the Bathers Way.

The area is used every day, year-round by thousands of people (walkers, families, bike riders, swimmers, surfers, play groups, community gardeners, volunteer Landcare groups, café patrons, hang gliders, heritage, educational groups, tourists and backpackers, fishermen and women, dog owners, office workers, fitness groups, elderly residents and clients of the many small businesses in the area).

The race circuit will form a barricade between the peninsula and the rest of Newcastle, significantly limiting access. It will be physically/visually unpleasant once the barriers are installed in the mooted 12 weeks before and 4 weeks after the race.

## 9. Community division

**As a community we are not opposed to the race – only the location. We are not NIMBY's – we think car races should occur on purpose built racetracks, not in residential areas. Since voicing our concerns, our neighbourhood has been exposed to personal threats, threats of property damage, vandalism, burn-outs and risky driving until late at night, and extreme vitriol on social media.**

**Police say they are 'monitoring' the situation.**

Letters to the paper or on Facebook sites urging for the relocation of the race generate hate comments, calls for violence and retribution, and personal attacks from Supercars fans. Residents are afraid that these people will be in close proximity to their homes during the event and will make good their threats. Police and security will not be able to monitor race fans at all times throughout every day. '

## 10. Access

**Newcastle East, a peninsula, will be enclosed by or adjacent to the circuit (in excess of 3000 people), cutting it off from the rest of Newcastle. The only way out will be through the race circuit. Areas to the east of the circuit have no bridge proposed to enable people to cross the circuit. Access will be via a tunnel at Newcastle Beach, with residents then having to negotiate the circuit.**

There are a large number of health professionals who live inside the race precinct. For those who will be on call during the event, or who must travel to work, accessibility is a concern.

The disruption to access will include construction of the circuit approximately for 8 weeks before and 4 weeks after as barriers and infrastructure is assembled and dismantled (refer <http://www.newcastle.nsw.gov.au/Supercars/Residents>)

We understand there is a plan for three footbridges and no motor vehicle access during race days and also restricted access in the lead up to and following the event. People who live in the region enclosed by the event should have access to emergency health support and other emergency vehicles if this is required.

A Boston medical study shows that delays in hospitalisation has the potential to increase deaths and time spent in hospital. *"Most people have not thought of this as unintended consequence of marathons and other public events," said study coauthor Dr. Anupam Jena, an associate professor of health care policy at Harvard Medical School in Boston.* <https://www.aol.com/article/news/2017/04/13/heart-attack-deaths-rise-when-a-large-marathon-is-in-town/22039033/>

Residents wishing to use their cars during the event will have to move them out of the precinct and park them in another, as yet unknown, distant part of the city. There is a critical shortfall of parking spaces in the city because most residents and businesses have only on-street parking and there are few garages. To date, organisers have not delivered a viable plan for the relocation of residents' and workers' cars.

During the event residents have been told that they must register with Supercars and provide documentation to move in and around their streets – so called "accreditation". There is a fear amongst residents that accreditation will involve terms and conditions that will waive rights we already have to reasonably access our homes, a limit the liabilities of Supercars (as do tickets and their conditions of entry). This seems outrageous to simply access our homes.

The previously large 'purple zone' (resident only, according to Supercars) has been halved, effectively giving race patrons access to the narrow streets and laneways of the residential areas.

## **11. Parking**

During road construction, installation of infrastructure and throughout the event, parking will be a problem. In this parking-poor part of town, there is simply no-where to accommodate the many displaced cars of residents, visitors and workers.

## **12. Newcastle 500 Act**

The legislation, **Motor Racing (Sydney and Newcastle) Act 2008**, simply added the word Newcastle to the existing Homebush Act, an act that was written for an industrial area with wide roads, open space and excellent transport facilities. As a result of imposing that legislation on a heritage, residential area, there will be unintended consequences. <https://jade.io/article/276026/section/17>

The legislation attempts to severely restrict the power to act under the **Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979**, the **Local Government Act 1993**, the **Roads Act 1993**, the **Motor Vehicle Sports (Public Safety) Act 1985**, s 115 of the **Road Transport Act 2013** and the **Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997**.

The legislation attempts to protect DNSW and Supercars from legal liability for actions, and states that NO compensation will be payable in respect of motor race-related matters by: NSW Govt, DNSW, Supercars and NCC. This protection includes the situation where an act or omission (directly or indirectly) is committed by the race promoter or anyone acting for them.

The legislation states that: during the motor racing period the rights or obligations of any other person in or in relation to the care, control, management and use of the land are suspended for the motor racing period. There is a perceived conflict of interest when DNSW is both a promoter and the approvals body for the event.

Authorities will not disclose what insurance protection is afforded to State and Local Heritage items and heritage homes, less than three metres from the circuit.

The fears of danger and damage give rise to another issue - the problem of insurance in the event of injury, death, damage, fire or theft. Home insurance policies do not cover residents for any claim arising from the event. All questions to Newcastle City Council, Supercars and Destination NSW about insurance have gone unanswered, apart from each body referring residents to the other bodies for clarification. Businesses and residents are understandably worried about this aspect of the event.

### **13. Construction**

**Supercars indicate that they reserve their rights to allow construction 24/7 to complete the circuit in time for the race. Families will have to endure construction noise day and night. The health affects of inadequate sleep are also well documented.**

*“Sleep deficiency adversely affects alertness, cognition, productivity, safety, learning and mood and is implicated in a raft of additional pathophysiological processes, leading to adverse metabolic, cardiovascular and mental health outcomes... Medical Journal of Australia 2013; 199 (8): 5-6.*

**The Newcastle Doctors Group concludes that the proposed race is medically unsafe. In the rush to cut down the lead-time for this event, many potential risks have been ignored. No credible attempt has been made to establish the nature and extent of the risks to local residents. With the build having already started, this is now impossible.**

The construction will necessitate the removal of 171 mature trees and the annexation of large areas of parkland. Many of the trees have taken 30 years to grow to their current height. The inner city will lose green space and be denuded of shade trees for many years to come. A further 25 trees will be removed from Watt St, Scott St, Nobbys Rd and Zaara St. Residential streets will look bare and hostile. The growth of any new planting is extremely slow in this area. Salt laden and corrosive wind from the sea combined with poor soil with high salt levels, is notoriously harsh on planted vegetation. The loss of parkland will be irreversible. Destruction of any urban forest results in the displacement of bird and animal life. In this case there will be negative impacts on local populations of lorikeets, sulphur-crested cockatoos, eastern spinebills, spangled drongos, galahs, tawny frogmouths, fruit bats, magpies, crows, ibis, white faced herons, eastern rosellas, cuckoo shrikes, eastern koels, yellow faced honey eaters, red wattlebirds, crested pigeons and brush-tailed possums.

Beaches adjacent to the circuit are home to silver gulls, pelicans, ruddy turnstones, great cormorants, little pied cormorants, little black cormorants, sooty oystercatchers (vulnerable), white fronted terns and crested terns. The Motor Racing (Sydney and Newcastle) Act 2008 removes protections offered under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* (NSW).

The circuit is routed through and alongside regional coastal park and fragile dune areas. Volunteers have spent years stabilising the dunes between Nobbys Reserve and Horseshoe Beach and planting endemic species. Long-term and permanent changes will occur on this sensitive coastal peninsula as a result of the infrastructure required for these events.

### **14. Environmental factors**

**Whilst Supercars boast of eco fuels for the racing cars they still emit carbon. The support trucks, construction vehicles, cranes and machinery will be emitting fumes at close proximity to residences. The old terrace houses are not well sealed, and fumes from outside easily penetrate the interior. There is considerable research that shows the detrimental and toxic effects of ‘rubber dust’ emitted from tyres as they travel at high speeds.**

It is known to be deadly to marine life and causes respiratory problems in humans and increases the occurrence of asthma attacks. It is recommended that food not be eaten if it has been in contact with rubber dust. What will this mean for our extensive community garden, situated close to the circuit? Concerns have been raised as to how the particulates will be prevented from entering adjacent ocean, drains and harbour. Vehicle fumes and possible fire from accidents are genuine concerns for residents, with vehicles passing their homes at speeds of up to 280km/h.

## 15. Cost

The cost of staging the event as a street race in the city is by far higher than constructing a purpose-built circuit in the Hunter that could be used year-round for associated events. Hunter motor racing enthusiasts have been lobbying for more than 60 years to have a dedicated permanent venue for racing. The people of Newcastle are paying twice for this street circuit...once as rate-payers and again as tax-payers for an event that delivers somewhat dubious economic and social benefits. (ACT Auditor-General's Office 2002 report "V8 Car Races in Canberra – Costs and Benefits", NSW Auditor-General's Report Performance Audit 2010 Government Investment in V8 Supercar Races at Sydney Olympic Park).

There will be costs associated with providing protection for hearing and health risks, damage prevention or repairs to heritage homes, repatriation of parks and heritage features on streets, to move the monument in Parnell Place (erected in 1904) to make way for the race circuit, to reconstruct the streets in accordance with race regulations, to build permanent pit areas (by annexing a park), to comply with OHS regulations for residents (workers are already covered), will cost a great deal of money. The cost of repeatedly installing, then removing a temporary circuit would easily cover the cost of building a permanent one on land zoned for such events.

## 16. Circuit design

Many Supercar fans have criticised the circuit's ability to deliver the kind of race they love – that is, one with lots of overtaking, crashes at high speed and plenty of fire.

Access will also be very difficult for race goers. The rail line has been removed and replaced by an inadequate interim bus service. The city will be closed to vehicles one kilometer west of the race zone. Patrons will arrive by shuttle or on foot. Patrons will have to park in outlying suburbs and catch buses into the peninsula. There are only two roads into and out of Newcastle East. Access is only from the west. Organisers claim there will be crowds of up to 160 000 attending the event. The city is gridlocked when 8000 attend the Anzac Service on the peninsula.

Moving people in and out of the precinct will be a challenge. Heavy vehicle access will be difficult. The streets of the peninsula are narrow and not suitable for heavy vehicles and equipment.

## 17. Impacts on business owners

The effects on businesses in the city will be significant. Families and businesses as far west as Darby Street, will be impacted. Restricted zones for non-race goers and crowd control will extend far beyond the immediate circuit. This has the potential to seriously disrupt life and businesses in Newcastle East. There are some 150 small businesses potentially impacted each year during the race and construction periods.

Supercars have stated there will be no compensation to businesses negatively impacted by the event. At other venues around Australia many small businesses have suffered as a result of these events.

Employers operating businesses on the circuit have a duty of care to workers. Employers must comply with **Work Health and Safety Regulation 2011:**

<http://www.legislation.nsw.gov.au/#/view/regulation/2011/674/chap4/part4.1>

ensuring that employees are not subjected to noise levels above the standard exposure level. With no access to an Environmental Noise Assessment or a noise management plan, business owners and residents are unable to determine the health risks. Supercars and DNSW have consistently refused to provide advice to affected business owners and workers in regard to hearing and noise levels and their impact on health.

Business owners concerns include the inability of delivery trucks to cross the circuit, staff access to businesses inside the circuit, and the loss of their regular clientele due to street closures. It will be difficult for clients to access businesses in close proximity to the race zone. The noise will make normal business operation almost impossible. Noise and parking problems will be ongoing issues for many weeks a year, and not just on race days.

The disruptions in traffic flow will be greater this year as the construction of the Newcastle Light Rail gets underway. A temporary circuit is the most expensive and disruptive option that could have been taken.

The city will be closed to traffic from Darby Street to the Foreshore. Race patrons will arrive at the venue from outlying locations such as Wallsend, Jesmond etc. Overnight visitors will struggle to find accommodation in the city. Hotels and motels have already set their prices high...out of the reach of most families. Only two hours from Newcastle, Sydney patrons are likely to come for the day and drive back to Sydney at the conclusion of the day's racing.

## **18. Financial benefits**

With no competitive tendering, and no assessment of the opportunity cost, Supercars overinflate the economic benefits that will flow on to the host city. Recommendations by the Auditor-General to improve each business case and cost/benefit analysis have not been instigated. The stated benefits are proposed to be \$57 million over 5 years. If we subtract the Council and DNSW funding (\$20 million), then the projected benefits are reduced to \$37 million over 5 years.

There will be 6 months of one-off civil works and circuit construction in 2017 and a 12 week bump in and a 4 week removal period around each event during which street barriers, grandstands, pit areas etc. are erected and dismantled. During these times, valuable parking spaces will disappear.

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Research has shown that a permanent site is the only way of achieving value for money in a motor racing event. The injection of cash will go to Supercars, Foxtel, some hotels and a few restaurants. NCC's input will not result in value-for-money long-term gains for the city. Improvements in infrastructure are restricted to along the circuit. There will be no flow-on into surrounding streets where repairs and maintenance works were scheduled prior to the Supercars 'opportunity'. Meanwhile, the rest of Newcastle (and residents) will put their lives/city/businesses on hold for the sake of a private company.

## **Conclusion**

The opportunity to deliver a major event to Newcastle does not have to be at the expense of the residents, business owners and people who use the peninsula on a daily basis. The time and money spent trying to make the race fit an inappropriate location would be better spent making it a stand-alone event with attractive side benefits for the city.

Relocation of the Supercar event to a purpose-built circuit would see benefits all round. Visitors and race patrons would still seek accommodation in the city and surrounds. Cafes, restaurants, hotels and bars would be freely accessible to all...all the time. In an appealing tourism package, the East End peninsula would be an attractive additional destination for the proposed influx of visitors, along with the vineyards, Honeysuckle, Darby and Beaumont Streets, Maitland, Morpeth and Port Stephens. And all this is possible without closing down one of the most highly utilised parts of our city. Racing events could be held throughout the year, bringing revenue to the region on a long-term basis.

This location is entirely unsuitable for a motor racing event and will pose a high risk to health and wellbeing to hundreds of residents. Importantly, the most vulnerable residents in the race vicinity, i.e. the children, the aged and those with disabilities need protection rather than exploitation. There are more suitable venues for motor racing. A high-density residential area in a heritage precinct on the end of a peninsula is not one of them. This event places the economic interests of Supercars above those of existing businesses and above the safety and health of residents.

The race could be re-directed to eastern Creek for 2017 while an appropriate assessment of the suitability of this circuit is established by a properly constituted independent body, as it was for Homebush.

***Please use your powers to stop or delay this event – it is not an appropriate event for the residential community of Newcastle East. Consultation has been poor. The process has been rushed. There is the very real potential for harm***

***to be inflicted on residents. There is the very real potential for damage to the reputation and brand of motorsports generally.***

We await your response with anticipation.

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Newcastle East Residents Group