



## POSITION PAPER

### ST JOHN'S ANGLICAN CHURCH, CAMDEN

#### BACKGROUND

St John's Anglican Church Camden was one of the first properties listed on the National Trust Register in 1949 as it is a fine group of ecclesiastical buildings set within a particularly appropriate rural landscape. The spire and tower of the church combine to form an exceptionally fine architectural statement that even today manages to provide the dominant element for miles around. The view of Camden from Narellan is particularly important where the full impact of St. John's setting in relationship to the town can be appreciated. Another important view is that which creates the historic visual link from Camden Park House to the church. St John's Church was built from 1841-1849 primarily through the patronage of the Macarthur family. Further, the building is an excellent early example of a Gothic Revival Church in Australia. The churchyard and grounds consist of pasture-like grassed slopes and thick clumps of mature eucalypts and pine trees.

The preservation of the open space between the Church and Rectory is unequivocally essential so that their visual and historic pastoral relationship is retained. With their wooded environment, the church and rectory have relatively few intrusions, making this group one of the most dramatically sited compositions of Colonial architecture still in existence.

The revised National Trust Register Listing Report in 1975 stated that strict controls should be imposed on future town development as regards permissible heights so that the church group retains its visual importance. The wooded slope to the east of the church is also particularly attractive and its preservation is thought essential to the survival of St John's visual integrity. The accuracy of and validity for those controls is re-affirmed by the continuing urbanization of the locality and accompanying pressures on important landscapes and scarce urban spaces.

In May 1978 the St John's Hills and John Street Urban Conservation Area was listed on the National Trust Register. In that listing St John's Church was described as 'perhaps the finest single example of the early Gothic Revival in Australia' which is superbly sited for near and distant appreciation. That siting is still effectively as it first was and one reason for the Trust Register Conservation Area listing is to provide a lasting context for that important building. Distant views of the church are well known and important. The hilltop is double humped; the church is on one prominence, the rectory on the other, while between them a grassy saddle of land commands broad views over one part of the town and to the eastern distance.

In early 2017 newspaper reports indicated that there were proposals to sell the land between the church and the rectory to fund the construction of a secondary, modern church building.

#### NATIONAL TRUST POSITION

- The Trust most strongly supports all actions that will result in the land between the church and the rectory being conserved and maintained intact to protect the historic views and to protect the setting of the St John's Church Group and the St John's Hill and John Street Urban Conservation Area.
- The Trust opposes any buildings on the land between the church and the rectory.
- The Trust strongly supports the nomination of the St John's Church Group for listing on the State Heritage Register.

#### ACTION TO PROMOTE THE TRUST'S POSITION

The Trust will promote its views on this issue in the media, with Camden Council and the NSW government.