

**Submission
No 7**

FOOD PRODUCTION AND SUPPLY IN NSW

Organisation: Greater Sydney Parklands

Date Received: 28 January 2022



28 January 2022

The Chair
Committee on Environment and Planning
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Submission to the Inquiry into Food Production and Supply in NSW

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the inquiry into food production and supply in NSW, which will examine how food security and equitable access to food can be improved in NSW, and how we can promote more productive and sustainable methods of producing and transporting food.

Greater Sydney Parklands (GSP) brings together some of Sydney's most iconic public open green spaces: Centennial Parklands (Centennial Park, Moore Park and Queens Park), Parramatta Park, Callan Park, Fernhill Estate and Western Sydney Parklands. Western Sydney Parklands, which consists of 5,280 hectares of land, is an essential green corridor for the people of Western Sydney and includes many areas that once formed part of the Greater Sydney food bowl. Western Sydney featured agriculture and horticulture as dominant land uses until the 1940s.

Urban Farming was identified as one of five strategic directions in the Parklands' inaugural 2010 Plan of Management and is reinforced in the Plan of Management 2030 (<https://www.westernsydneyarklands.com.au/about-us/major-projects/plan-of-management-2/>) as a strategic opportunity for Parklands' land use planning to keep the area's heritage alive, and provide opportunities for urban communities to understand where their food comes from. GSP has consistently recognised opportunities to continue and expand peri-urban agriculture/urban farming in the Parklands, maintaining Western Sydney's agricultural heritage, chiefly across the 254-hectare Horsley Park Precinct (<https://www.westernsydneyarklands.com.au/places-to-go/urban-farms/>). It is proposed that other urban farming precincts will be developed elsewhere in the Parklands over time.

Horsley Park Precinct's desired future character identified as a sustainable urban farming precinct is outlined in the Horsley Park Precinct Urban Farming Master Plan 2019 (<https://www.westernsydneyarklands.com.au/assets/Places-to-go/Urban-farms/Horsley-Park-Urban-Farming-Masterplan-2019-Final-low-res.pdf>), which aims to deliver the successful roll-out of urban farming; to protect and promote valuable

urban agricultural areas; and to showcase industry best practice, research and development, training, employment pathways and community education.

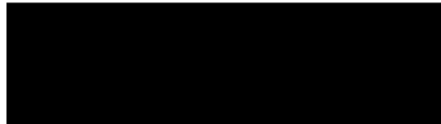
The Parklands' urban farming program offers relevant experience and opportunities for strategic collaboration in relation to this inquiry. Additional information considering the inquiry's Terms of Reference can be found in Attachment A, particularly in regard to the need to preserve productive land and water resources, and consideration of workforce challenges and skills development.

The Parklands' Master Plan program could benefit from cross-agency government collaboration to address:

- opportunities to showcase food production to provide community education, and to promote the health benefits of consuming fresh food, directly from the farm-gate
- a Precinct-wide water management strategy and the investigation of alternative water sources, with an emphasis on recycled water and stormwater harvesting, maximising sustainable practices and commercial viability, and
- workforce challenges and skills development in Western Sydney, by establishing a broader farming network to provide farming expertise; advice on sustainable land management/farming and training, marketing, and business development; and establishing links for new migrants to the urban farming program.

We look forward to continuing to participate in the inquiry. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely



Suellen Fitzgerald
Chief Executive
Greater Sydney Parklands

Attachment A – Relevant Terms of Reference

Preserving productive land

- Western Sydney Parklands' Plan of Management 2030 (<https://www.westernsydneyparklands.com.au/assets/About-Us/POM2030/PlanOfManagement2030-Final.pdf>) ensures protection of valuable urban agricultural areas to create recreation, tourism, education, local sustainable food supply and economic opportunities.
- The Parklands' Horsley Park Precinct will continue to contribute to peri-urban agriculture within the Sydney Basin. The ability to produce food, particularly highly perishable food types that cannot travel long distances, makes farming an attractive economic prospect within the urban fringe.
- As resource-based land across Western Sydney decreases, the Parklands' farming precinct is more valuable at a time when consumers are increasingly interested in how their food is grown, processed and brought to market. People want to feel connected to food growing and fresh produce. It provides an opportunity to showcase food production, to provide community education, and to promote the health benefits of consuming fresh food at accessible prices, directly from the farm-gate.
- Recent Parklands' community feedback indicate that the community values the Horsley Park farming precinct, especially the ability to access fresh, locally grown produce in their local government area.
- **Based on the Parklands' model, urban farming can be an appropriate interim land use for government land holdings or speculative land purchasers in other locations. The land can be used to showcase food production and supply in locations close to the population.**

Preserving water resources

- While Sydney Water's potable water supply lines are readily accessible, the cost for small-scale farmers to connect to this infrastructure, including an appropriately sized connection with backflow device, and ongoing supply costs, places a heavy burden on commercial returns to the tenant.
- The establishment of recycled water and stormwater harvesting infrastructure would reduce the burden on potable water supply. However, infrastructure, storage and water purchasing costs are currently unviable.
- In stormwater harvesting, consideration should be given to water quality required for food production, often further increasing costs.
- With farm dams contributing only low volumes of water, farms will continue to rely on potable water in the short to medium term. However, given increasing costs, this is unlikely to be a viable source in the future.
- Harvestable rights and stormwater harvesting are caught in the water licensing embargo that is seemingly inconsistent with increased peri-urban run-off and developer requirements to manage stormwater. This requires resolution.
- **The future of the precinct depends on a stable and financially accessible water supply, particularly under the lens of climate change. The investigation of alternative water sources and sustainable practices, with consideration of funding for recycled water and stormwater harvesting,**

requires a broader, Precinct-wide water management strategy. This would ideally be progressed with the involvement of key government partners such as Sydney Water, particularly as the precinct expands to include new farms.

Consideration of workforce challenges and skills development

- The Sydney Peri-Urban Network estimates there are 2,000-3,000 people employed in agriculture in the peri-urban areas of Sydney and 80 to 90 per cent of these are migrants with a first language other than English as their first language (James, 2009). Most of the Parklands' farming partners are from Chinese, Vietnamese, Cambodian and Lebanese backgrounds.
- Consistent with the Horsley Park Precinct Urban Farming Master Plan, GSP has already negotiated a number of agricultural leases across approximately 100ha in the Horsley Park Precinct. Leasing requires ongoing testing, refining, and improving approaches to recruiting suitable farming partners, and determining suitable locations, sizes, uses and lease conditions, to ensure continual improvement.
- Retaining existing farming partners, capacity-building for individual operators and stimulating greater commercial interest in locally grown produce is crucial to the Precinct's success.
- Beyond primary production, the Precinct's farming partners are encouraged and supported to develop direct connections with consumers, value-adding to their produce and farm gate sales. A thriving farming and food community drives investment in farm lots, leading to efficiencies in irrigation, water harvesting, waste minimisation and recycling.
- The Horsley Park Precinct Urban Farming Master Plan aims to showcase industry best practice, research and development, training, employment pathways and community education, as well as a focus on sustainable farming practices.
- **Work is underway to establish a broader farming network to provide farming expertise and training, marketing, and business development. This would benefit from targeted support from government and educational partners and stakeholders.**
- **The opportunity also exists to link new migrants to the urban farming program, and to provide employment and skills development for residents of culturally diverse backgrounds within the Fairfield Local Government Area as well as adjacent Western Sydney suburbs.**