

**Submission  
No 40**

## **REVIEW OF THE GREATER SYDNEY PARKLANDS TRUST ACT 2022**

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**Date Received:** 10 February 2025

Submission of Linda Bergin OAM to the Joint Select Committee Review of the  
Greater Sydney Parklands Trust Act 2022

Feb 10, 2025

**Review of the *Greater Sydney Parklands Trust Act 2022***

**Terms of reference**

1. The Joint Select Committee on the Greater Sydney Parklands Trust is to review the *Greater Sydney Parklands Trust Act 2022* to determine whether—
  - a) the policy objectives of the Act remain valid, and
  - b) the terms of the Act remain appropriate for securing those objectives.
2. A report on the outcome of the review is to be tabled in each House of Parliament by 1 July 2025.

<b>1</b>	<b><i>Summary</i></b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>2</b>	<b><i>Background</i></b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>3</b>	<b><i>List of Concerns/Recommendations (noting relevant Object)</i></b> .....	<b>4</b>
3.1	No overall financial picture of the GSPT .....	4
3.2	The “2024 Year in review” is missing from the GSPT website .....	5
3.3	Assessment Review Report tabling deadline appears to have been missed.....	5
3.4	Why is a contract for CMPT land with Royal Botanic Gardens Trust?.....	6
3.5	GSPT Act fails to set out specific PUBLIC consultation requirements; engagement communication channels lack transparency .....	8
<b>4</b>	<b><i>Case Study Intransparency “Centre for Excellence in Nature Discovery”</i></b> .....	<b>10</b>
<b>5</b>	<b><i>Appendix 1 – Consultation and Engagement Framework page 1 Community trustee boards</i></b> .....	<b>14</b>
<b>6</b>	<b><i>Appendix 2 – GSPT Act Objects</i></b> .....	<b>15</b>
<b>7</b>	<b><i>Appendix 3 – Centennial and Moore Park Trust Visitation last 10 years</i></b> .....	<b>16</b>

## 1 Summary

Thank you for the opportunity to make a late submission to the Review.

I wonder if the GSPT legislative framework will cause the parklands estate to go “backwards”<sup>1</sup> in future?

This past Saturday I went to Centennial Parklands, which has by far the largest visitation component of all the GSP, i.e. 80% of all visitations to ALL GSP is Centennial Parklands.

But a very large area of Centennial Park had been fenced off (for 2 weeks) for Sunday’s 1-day Laneway Festival. I noticed on the Centennial website that 40,000 people were expected. Yesterday 45,000 were reported attending.

The NSW Government wants to eliminate these event caps with a sweeping new Cultural SEPP, another blow to the parklands estate.

Also in Centennial, the Trustees have apparently given the go-ahead for a new “\$10-15 million maybe more”<sup>2</sup> development for a “Centre for Excellence in Nature Discovery”, but with no public consultation. See Case Study in this submission. I presume CEND will also be available for event hire, generating more revenue than the existing modest facilities.

It is worth considering whether the GSP’s self-funding model is appropriate. The parklands will always be under pressure to pay the bills, rather than to limit development and activations – so there will simply be more and more incursions into Sydney’s green space, detrimental to the health and well-being of the people.

I am a long-term advocate for Sydney’s parklands, particularly Sydney Harbour heritage parklands. I founded the Headland Preservation Group in 1996 and have been its President twice. The HPG helped draft the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust Bill (Act 2001), has advocated for Harbour Trust lands since, and its campaign wins ensured damaging proposed actions never came to fruition.

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<sup>1</sup> More activations, more development, less green space

<sup>2</sup> Verbally by CP staff

## 2 Background

There are many similarities between the physical lands and the legislative frameworks of the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust and the Greater Sydney Parklands Trust.

On October 30, 2019, the Morrison government announced the first-ever Review of the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust Act 2001, with broad Terms of Reference. One of many questions in the Public Consultation Paper was *“Do you think the land vested in the Harbour Trust should be returned to the New South Wales Government...?”*

At that time the Harbour Trust was set to be wound-up in just over a decade. Part 10 of the Harbour Trust Act stated the Harbour Trust was a “transitional body” to be wound up in 2033.

On Jun 18, 2020, the Harbour Trust Review Report was released. The 2033 end-date in the Act was repealed. The Harbour Trust would continue in perpetuity.

On July 17, 2000, former Minister for Planning and Public Spaces Rob Stokes released a *“50-Year Vision Discussion Paper”*, which also created a new Greater Sydney Parklands Trust as a non-legislative agency, appointing a consolidated Board of Trustees for all 3 Trusts, Centennial, Parramatta and Western Sydney.

It has always been the case that Section 24 of the Harbour Trust Act allows the transfer of Harbour Trust lands to New South Wales at any time. I am strongly opposed to the transfer of any Harbour Trust lands to NSW.

## 3 List of Concerns/Recommendations (noting relevant Object)

The following comments apply post GSPT Act which commenced on July 1, 2022. They are meant to encourage positive change and are not meant to be a list of “complaints” about the GSP Trust.

<p><b>Recommendation:</b> The following recommendations should be statutorily implemented <b>within the GSPT Act itself</b>, not just as Statutory or Environmental Planning Instruments, both which can be made without Parliament.</p>
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### 3.1 No overall financial picture of the GSPT

There is no consolidated financial statement, instead individual Annual Reports for each underlying Trust.

GSPT has no equity interest in the underlying Trusts and so cannot apply equity accounting. Each underlying Trust has its own Annual Report. This makes it very difficult to assess the overall financial performance of GSPT.

**Recommendation:** GSP should somehow publish a consolidated financial statement with sufficient level of detail. Relates to **Object (a)** “*effectively managed and operated*”.

### 3.2 The “2024 Year in review” is missing from the GSPT website

I presume this report would have been compiled by now. It is the only published report that consolidates the underlying Trusts.

But the “2024 Year in review” has still not been published. Here is the relevant GSP [archived webpage as of Feb 9](#).

Also, the “2023 Year in review” erroneously states “38m+ visitors” instead of “visits” - a big difference - for example in 2019 Centennial Parklands had 32m visits but only 2m visitors, see Appendix 3.

The absence of the “2024 Year in review” is a significant omission to the Committee’s Review and to the public’s submissions.

## Year in review reports

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[Greater Sydney Parklands Year in Review 2022-23 \(PDF, 8.8 MB\)](#)

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[Greater Sydney Parklands Year in Review 2021-22 \(PDF, 4.7 MB\)](#)

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[Greater Sydney Parklands Year in Review 2020-21 \(PDF, 4.7 MB\)](#)

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**Recommendation:** GSP should explain to the Committee why the “2024 Year in review” is missing and Parliament should add provisions in the Act to ensure GSPT’s processes operate effectively. Relates to **Object (a)** “*effectively managed and operated*”.

### 3.3 Assessment Review Report tabling deadline appears to have been missed

This is a provision of GSPT Act Part 2 “*Provisions consequent on enactment of this Act*” Section 5) regarding adding parks to the parklands estate.

**5 Assessment of suitability of certain parks becoming part of the parklands estate**

- (1) The Trust must, as soon as practicable after the commencement, conduct a review to **assess** the suitability of the following parks becoming part of the parklands estate—
  - (a) Chipping Norton Lake,
  - (b) Millennium Parklands,
  - (c) Mt Annan Botanic Gardens,
  - (d) Lake Gillawarna.
- (2) A report on the outcome of the review is to be tabled in each House of Parliament within 2 years after the commencement.
- (3) In this section—

*commencement* means the date of assent to this Act.

This statutory report was not tabled by the Act deadline of April 12, 2024 (assent being April 13, 2022), according to the NSW Parliament tabling officer who only received it November 25. Since Parliament was not in session then, it won't be tabled until February 11, **10 months late**, unless some extension was granted.

The missing the Assessment Report is a significant omission to the Committee's Review and to the public's submissions.

**Recommendation:** GSP should explain to the Committee why the Assessment Review Report was not tabled in time and Parliament should add provisions in the Act to ensure GSP's processes operate effectively. Relates to **Object (a)** "*effectively managed and operated*".

### 3.4 Why is a contract for CMPT land with Royal Botanic Gardens Trust?

## Moore Park All-Weather Field Upgrade - CW-SR00026-1

### Contract Award Notice Details

**Contractor Name** SYNERGY TURF MANUFACTURING PTY LIMITED

**ACN** 635223068

**ABN** 54 635 223 068

**Is an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander owned business** No

**Street Address** 165 Prospect highway

**Town/City** Seven Hills

**State/Territory** NSW

**Postcode** 2147

**Country** AUSTRALIA

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**Other private sector entities involved in, with an interest in or benefiting from this contract**

Not Applicable

**Estimated amount payable to the contractor (including GST)**

\$1,519,801.00 (Goods or services supplied)

**Contract Award Notice ID** CW-SR00026-1

**Publish Date** 10-Dec-2024

**Category** Specialised service

**Agency** Royal Botanic Gardens & Domain Trust

**Particulars of the goods or services to be provided under this contract**

Remove existing synthetic grass surface and install new synthetic field comprising playing surface and replace underlying shock pad (as necessary) in accordance with the required performance standards laid by major sporting organization (eg. FIFA, Rugby Union, Rugby League, Cricket).

**Contract Duration** 1-Aug-2024 to 27-Feb-2026

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### 3.5 GSPT Act fails to set out specific PUBLIC consultation requirements; engagement communication channels lack transparency

Engagement is an overall term which includes PUBLIC consultation, which is more specific and includes advertising a plan, proposal or development application and allowing the public to submit comments (hopefully published) and then a report of the feedback is published and the results incorporated.

Under Section 29 of the Act, GSPT is required to create a statutory “consultation and engagement framework”, a document to be signed off by the Minister, which has been done and is published [here](#).

Section 31 of the Act talks about the contents of the “framework” with 31(b) saying it **MUST** include “**matters in relation to which the Trust will consult.....with the community**”

Page 10 of the “framework” says that the GSP will consult on policies, plans, projects and programs. But later in the document “**consult**” **does not include public consultation, but other less robust forms.**

#### Our engagement role

Our engagement role involves three key elements:

- We **communicate** with people and communities at the local level and across Greater Sydney
- We **engage** with people and communities including to consult on policies, plans, projects and programs
- We **advocate** for Greater Sydney’s open spaces and parklands with a particular focus on the parklands within our portfolio.

*PAGE 10 FRAMEWORK*

Page 13 below “When We Engage” does not list specific “matters”, only that “each project or initiative will include appropriate methods”. **Public consultation is not listed as a method.**

## When we engage

### Opportunities to get involved

We use a wide range of methods to engage with people, communities and other stakeholders on parkland matters.

Our engagement approach includes quick and easy opportunities for people to access information and share their thoughts. It also involves opportunities for people to get involved in deeper conversations about the things that matter most to them.

Each project or initiative will include appropriate methods to ensure we are engaging with all relevant audiences. We aim to grow connections with new and existing stakeholders and communities through proactive and ongoing engagement.

**Recommendation:** The GSPT Act (Part 4 “Community Consultation”) and the GSPT’s statutory “Consultation and Engagement Framework 2023” fail to meet Object (g) “to provide increased opportunity for community engagement to shape regionally significant parklands in response to diverse community needs”. **The Act should specify a PUBLIC CONSULTATION FRAMEWORK, including WHAT is to be consulted, WHEN it is consulted and HOW.**

There should be a list of matters specified being at least **1. Preliminary proposals that may have a large impact on the parklands, including large activations 2. All statutory Management Plans, 3. All significant development applications, 4. All significant policies.**

**All the above should be disallowable by Parliament.**

The GSPT website is poorly designed and lacks detailed information.

For example, “News” should be on the home page, however it is several menus levels down being “Learn and Discover, then “Stories and News”. To get to Annual Reports is “About Us”, then “Our Organisation” then “Leadership and Governance” which includes Annual Reports.

There are no drop-down menus.

**Recommendation:** GSP Website is old-fashioned and needs better navigation to be able to find things. It also needs to include far more information.

The GSPT Act establishes “Community Trustee Boards”. The “Framework” states they will “provide transparency” and “act as a direct voice between the community and the GSPT Board”.

In fact, the “direct voice” is one way, from community to CTB PERHAPS (there are no contact details for CTB members). CTB members are subject to a Code of Conduct which discourages disclosing information to the public.

CTB meetings are not open to the public except with permission.

**Recommendation:** Community Trustee Boards should be more democratic, transparent, and self-governing. Vacancies should be publicly advertised and names of nominees published. CTB meetings should be open to the public. CTB should be able to set their own agenda. Published agendas should include documents. This is exactly how Councils operate. **This should be set out in the Act.**

#### 4 Case Study Intransparency “Centre for Excellence in Nature Discovery”



SITE OF THE NEW CEND

There is very little transparency and no effective public engagement (except the very superficial CTB Meeting Summary) for a major new project called “Centre for Excellence in Nature Discovery” in Centennial Park.

Although this project is in the early stages, with no DA, I believe it should have been subject to “early engagement” like Moore Park South, because it is potentially very impactful to the environmental and heritage values of Centennial Park. And surely to get public feedback before large sums of money are expended?

This is a large project, **“\$10-15 million maybe more” according to Centennial personnel**, and will be built on the mostly open space of the Discovery Centre. I presume it includes a large new building.

The Discovery Centre is presently a mostly secluded outdoor collection of simple structures and a nursery. It is located inside the loop and is waterfront (Fly Casting Pond).

Topic	Summary
<p><b>Site visit - Centre for Excellence in Nature Discovery (CEND)</b>            Kristine Marshall,            Senior Manager            Capital Works, GSP</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GSP provided information about the existing functions of the WILD PLAY Discovery Centre indoor and outdoor classrooms and detailed the site for the future CEND facility. GSP noted that community and stakeholder consultation is planned for early 2025.</li> <li>• The CTB raised the following queries and comments:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- key milestones for the project. GSP advised the design consultants to be appointed late November 2024, and a communication and engagement program in development. Anticipated for February/March 2025.</li> <li>- whether the nursery will continue to operate during construction. GSP advised operations of the existing facilities would be looked at as part of construction phasing.</li> <li>- whether the carparking or hard surfaces will be expanded. GSP advised that the intent was to limit the building footprint to the existing hard stand.</li> <li>- whether GSP envisages the CEND will allow for larger groups to attend at one time. GSP advised that the rationale for the project was to provide weather protection and increase capacity for groups that are currently turned away from the program due to inclement weather.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

*CTB MEETING SUMMARY 30 OCT 2024*

The CTB Summary of its October 24, 2024 meeting gives little information. In fact, “*design consultants*” is misleading, because the next month, on December 9, 2024, a much wider scope [“Project Manager”](#) contract was awarded for \$548,695.00 for “*design, planning, approvals and business case*”.

The “*existing hard stand*” is described as “*limit the building footprint*” inferring that it is small when it is in fact very large.

I visited the site and a new building on the hard stand footprint would likely involve removal of trees. There is presently no vehicle access so I imagine a short road and car parking would have to be constructed.

In a further blow to transparency and engagement, CEND is not listed on the [“Parklands Projects” page of the Centennial website](#), even though a similar stage project, Moore Park South (golf course) IS listed on the Parklands Project page, its [contract for Design Services](#) awarded just 1 day after CEND contract.

The 2018 CMPT statutory Management Plan blue box states (see below) “We will build a world-class education capability” .... not building. This is the only mention in the Management Plan.

**5.**

**Education & knowledge**

We will build a world-class education capability delivering programs to Australia and the world.

- We will develop and grow the suite of education, community and knowledge programs to reach local, national and global audiences
- By delivering inspiring experiences we will be leaders in innovative digital learning, sustainable outdoor education, science and community engagement
- We will create advocates and a new generation of supporters for our botanic gardens and parklands

CMPT MANAGEMENT PLAN 2018

The [2013 Centennial Park Master Plan](#) mentions a “revitalised” Education Precinct, however the Ian Potter Wild Play had not yet been built. CEND is not listed in the 2013 Centennial Park Master Plan Vol 1 “Costing and Implementation Plan to 2040, some \$36m in costed projects.

by providing a new sheltered area for casual horse riders.

#### **KEY MOVE 7: PLAY FOR ALL AGES**

The Master Plan proposes a significant increase to the Park’s offer for children:

- All play spaces to offer an innovative, world’s best play experience
- Play spaces to be collocated with complementary visitor services
- Each play space should have a unique character and together, they should offer a diverse range of experiences and cater for a diverse group of people, from babies to adults
- New play spaces should respond to and enhance the existing Park landscape character.

More recently, it is not mentioned in the [October 30, 2024 dated 2024 CMPT Annual Report](#) or any other [recent CMPT Annual Report](#).

The project IS described in the [Greater Sydney Parklands job advertisement Manager Philanthropy October 2022](#) on the website of “Richmond Associates” which no one would have seen.

### Capital Campaign

Following the success and continued demand for The Ian Potter Children’s WILD PLAY Garden (IPCWPG), and GSP nature play programs, the Centennial Parklands Foundation is aiming to raise \$10m towards the creation of a world-class nature education precinct in the heart of Centennial Park. The Nature Discovery Space will feature stimulating indoor and outdoor facilities where nature is the focus for learning and development. The

## 5 Appendix 1 – Consultation and Engagement Framework page 1 Community trustee boards

### Consultation and Engagement Framework 2023

**Community trustee boards** will provide transparency and act as a direct voice between community members and the Greater Sydney Parklands Trust Board (GSPT Board). Community trustee board members will be invited to provide advice on a range of parkland matters to contribute to strategic decision-making by Greater Sydney Parklands. This includes providing comment on priorities for parks, master plans, landscape plans, capital works and other projects. Their role will also involve nominating and exploring new ideas for Greater Sydney Parklands to consider. All members of the community will have access to meeting agendas and summary reports. These will be published on the Greater Sydney Parklands webpage, as part of our commitment to open dialogue and transparency. For further information about community trustee boards see page 17 of this document and the standalone [Terms of Reference](#) and [Code of Conduct](#) documents.

## 6 Appendix 2 – GSPT Act Objects

### 3 Objects

The objects of this Act are as follows—

- (a) to maintain and improve the parklands estate across Greater Sydney and ensure the parklands estate is effectively managed and operated to deliver world-class and ecologically sustainable parklands for the public,
- (b) to enable the Greater Sydney Parklands Trust to facilitate a connection to Country for First Nations peoples that—
  - (i) recognises and conserves First Nations peoples’ cultural heritage and values through the use of the parklands estate, and
  - (ii) establishes long-term and mutually beneficial partnerships that give effect to the ongoing relationships of First Nations peoples with Country,
- (c) to ensure the conservation of the natural and cultural heritage values of the parklands estate and the protection of the environment within the parklands estate,
- (d) to advocate for a long-term vision to achieve the outcome of quality parklands across Greater Sydney, particularly connectivity of green corridors and public access to open space,
- (e) to encourage the use and enjoyment of the parklands estate by the community by

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Current version for 31 May 2024 to date (accessed 9 February 2025 at 10:26)

Page 6 of 43

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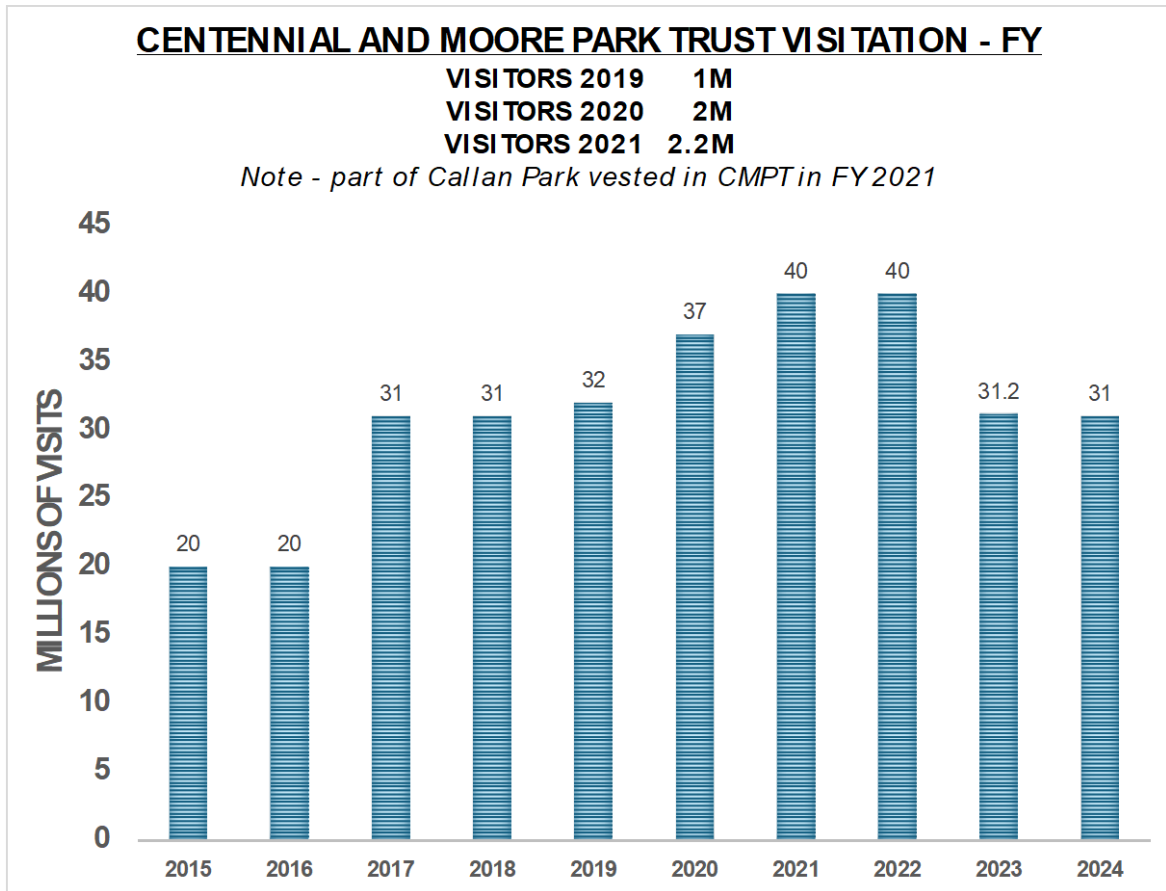
Greater Sydney Parklands Trust Act 2022 No 9 [NSW]

promoting and increasing the recreational, historical, scientific, educational, cultural and environmental values of lands within the parklands estate,

- (f) to ensure the parklands estate may be used by the community in a way that is adaptive and recognises and responds to the diverse needs of the community,
- (g) to provide increased opportunity for community engagement to shape regionally significant parklands in response to diverse community needs.



7 Appendix 3 – Centennial and Moore Park Trust Visitation last 10 years



Compiled by Linda Bergin from CMPT Annual Reports