

REVIEW OF THE GREATER SYDNEY PARKLANDS TRUST ACT 2022

Organisation: Friends of Fernhill and Mulgoa Valley Inc

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FRIENDS OF FERNHILL AND MULGOA VALLEY INC. (FFMV)



<https://www.ffmv.org.au>

Our goals are to “safeguard Fernhill Estate and ensure protection, through legislation, of the Mulgoa Valley as an area of outstanding cultural and natural significance to NSW”.

Supplementary Submission to the Review of the Greater Sydney Parklands Trust Act 2022

Members of Friends of Fernhill and Mulgoa Valley Inc. attended or watched the Senate Enquiry and have read the submissions.

FFMV endorse the Objects to conserve the natural and cultural heritage values and protection of the environment within Sydney’s parklands.

The following are additional comments on how the Greater Sydney Parklands Trust Act is administered and how effective the terms of the Act are in achieving the Objects of the Act, with special reference to Fernhill Estate.

We also ask questions that we would like answered about the delivery of services under the GSPT Act.

This is what the public told GSP - this is what the GSPT Act should be delivering:

Community consultation

What you told us

- Parks are for people. Ongoing and genuine community engagement is vital to establish confidence in the GSPT, including the meaningful participation of First Nations peoples.
- Consultation should provide opportunities for GSP and communities to work together to improve the access, amenity and ecological functions of existing parks through integration into the blue-green grid and should secure more parks for the city.
- It is important that the proposed community trustee boards have a real and meaningful role to advise on important local issues and represent diverse local views. These views must be considered in key decisions including on plans of management, commercialisation controls and new activities in the parks.
- A tiered structure of GSPT boards and regional boards may allow for more local operational control of parks.
- Engagement between local councils and GSPT will be critical in providing new GSP parks and in particular in achieving the *50-year Vision for Greater Sydney's Open Space and Parklands*, given their key role in delivering parklands across Sydney.
- The community and stakeholders need to know what matters GSPT will consult on, who will be consulted and how that will be undertaken – including through the consultation and engagement framework.
- Any consultation and engagement framework should be prepared in close consultation with the community. Consultation should be informed by good-quality background documents and studies so that participants understand the related constraints and complexities of the issues being considered.
- If GSP gets consultation right, they will have the power of the community behind them and be much more effective in achieving the 50-year Vision.

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THE VALUE OF PARKS AND THEIR FUNDING

Greater Sydney Parklands are long term assets whose value can be measured on multiple scales: ecology and biodiversity, health and wellbeing, leisure and recreation, quality of place and attractiveness, and climate change adaptation and mitigation.

Thinking differently about how to assess the value of parks and their broader contribution could help both to access alternative funding sources and to target investment more effectively.

¹ <https://www.transport.nsw.gov.au/system/files/media/documents/2022/White-Paper-Parklands-for-People-What-we-heard-report.pdf>

1. Paying for Parks: Eight models for funding urban green spaces – The Parks Alliance² :

Key findings

- The report sets out the strengths and weaknesses of eight models for funding urban green space, and an example of each is provided;
 - Traditional local authority funding
 - Multi-agency public sector funding
 - Taxation initiatives
 - Planning and development opportunities
 - Bonds and commercial finance
 - Income-generating opportunities
 - Endowments
 - Voluntary and community sector involvement
- A one-size-fits-all approach will not work. The report recommends that no matter what approach or model taken, it is important to set up dedicated funding and management arrangements from the outset.
- Successful urban green space funding is often underpinned by a strategic approach to funding and management that incorporates a portfolio of different funding sources, mechanisms and partnerships.
- The success of funding models is inextricably linked to the physical, political and social context within which the green space is located, and the assets and resources available.
- Some models can be more readily applied to access finance in the short term. Other models require more long-term developmental work and radical thinking but could play an important role in funding green space in the future.

Q: Has GSP considered these 8 models for funding Sydney Parks?

Q: Has a discussion paper been developed by GSP evaluating these 8 options (and others?) for use in Sydney? If so, is it publicly available?

Q: Why has GSP adopted only one model – the on/off park business model?

2. Not-for-profit organisations and voluntary and community groups can contribute time and labour, raise funds and encourage community development and local ownership of urban green space. By working with friends or volunteer groups, GSP may be able to access funding sources which were not available to them directly. Eg Mulgoa Landcare accessed West Connex funding for weed control (privet, lantana) along Mulgoa Creek. Fernhill Estate land along Mulgoa Creek has benefited.

Q: Has GSP considered using community groups to contribute time, labour, expertise and to raise money for the park?

² <https://www.theparksalliance.org/paying-for-parks-eight-models-for-funding-urban-green-spaces/#:~:text=Summary%20Paying%20for%20Parks%20investigates%20eight%20models%20for,good%20practice%20examples%20from%20the%20UK%20and%20abroad>

3. In UK over £850m of National Lottery investment (most delivered jointly by the Heritage Lottery Fund in partnership with the Big Lottery Fund England through the Parks for People programme) has been critical to improving park facilities.³

Q: Has GSP considered this lottery option for funding parks?

4. *“Any comprehensive system of parks has three income classes of properties: a) those that can never generate income in excess of costs; b) those with a profit potential; and c) those with a profit history”.*

Q: How is prioritisation of investment in, or maintenance, of one park over another, to be determined?

NATURE-BASED AND HERITAGE TOURISM POTENTIAL

- The parks should project their rich history and culture and biodiversity.
- Heritage tourism (international and local) could be a revenue source eg for Fernhill, Callan and Parramatta Parks
- Nature-based tourism eg bird watching, could be a source of revenue for WSP and Fernhill

Heritage tourism uses assets - historic, cultural, and natural resources - that already exist. Rather than creating and building attractions, destinations look to the past for a sustainable future. Indeed these assets need preservation and often restoration or interpretation, but the foundation for creating a dynamic travel experience lives on in the stories and structures of the past. Often, the opportunity to create a tourist product is more easily attained by using existing heritage sites than if the destination had to develop new attractions.⁴

Q: Is a plan being developed to market nature and heritage based tourism of Greater Sydney Parks?

GREEN SPACE

12 Committees (1) The Trust may establish—

(a) a committee, known as the Blue-Green grid committee, to advocate for a long term vision for and outcome of quality parklands across Greater Sydney, particularly connectivity of green corridors and public access to open space,

Q: Has a blue-green committee been formed? If not, why not?

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<https://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/communities-and-local-government-committee/public-parks/written/39448.html>
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/645535/Cm_Govt_Response_Future_of_Public_Parks_PRINT.pdf

⁴ Hargrove, C.M., 2002. Heritage tourism. *CRM-WASHINGTON-*, 25(1), pp.10-11.

United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 11.7: *By 2030, provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, in particular for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities.*⁵

Green space should be at the heart of planning as it is fundamentally important to creating and shaping communities where people want to live, and where they are able to thrive. The emphasis on meeting housing need has created pressures on planners and made it challenging to achieve the necessary focus on green infrastructure.

There is a need to be much more proactive, and to see green infrastructure as infrastructure, in the same way that hospitals and roads are. Parks, and green infrastructure more widely, must be properly recognised in the Government's planning (local and state).

Recommendation: When preparing or updating their Local Plans, local councils should take a whole-place approach which recognises the importance of parks and green spaces both to existing and to new communities,

Q: What role has GSP played in promoting public participation in the identification, acquisition, planning, design and management of new parklands, greenways and reserves to realise the Green Grid concept for Metropolitan Sydney?

Q: Has GSP considered holding forums in which community groups, councils, experts etc can come together to discuss the blue green grid? Or should such a forum be held by the local council?

Q: Funding for green space acquisition and maintenance?

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Division 2 COMMUNITY TRUSTEE BOARDS

38 Membership

(4) In recommending persons for appointment as members of a community trustee board, the Trust— a) must be satisfied—

(i) the person has sound knowledge of the relevant parkland including the activities carried out in the parkland,

Information supplied to FFMV suggests that most Fernhill CTB members had not visited Fernhill prior to their appointment!

(ii) the person is able to communicate effectively with local residents, local community groups and other persons who use the relevant parkland, and

Q: how does a resident contact a CTB member? There is no contact number or e-mail listed!

⁵ <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal11>

Q: is there a communication framework recommended to CTB members for informing the public?

Q: who sets the agenda for CTB meetings?

Q: why are the summaries of CTB meetings so brief? Just topics discussed, not what was determined

Q: why aren't CTB meetings held more frequently?

Q: why aren't CTB meetings open to observation by the general public?

Q: Is a CTB member able to share information eg reports from their meetings with the general public and particularly with community groups such as FFMV?

Recommendation: there should be representatives with biodiversity and heritage conservation credentials on CTBs

COMPETING DEMANDS AND TENSIONS BETWEEN PARK USERS

There is a strength of feeling in some communities about the events which take place in their local parks. Common themes in their concerns include the impact on community access to parks, disruption or nuisance to local communities, and damage to the park during or after the event.

In the planning and management of parks, local authorities must engage effectively in dialogue with their communities to assess and understand their needs, and to explain the decisions which they take.

- We recognise that it may be appropriate at times for local authorities to grant exclusive access to a park or a part of a park, whether on a temporary or a permanent basis, to particular user groups or organisations.
- It may also be appropriate for local authorities to charge for some uses of a park, especially when parks are used by commercial ventures as part of their business models. However, such exclusive use or charging must not disproportionately affect or hinder access to the park for other uses.
- To ensure transparency for local communities, and to enable them to hold their local authorities to account for the decisions which are made, local authorities should consult on, and publish, policies which set out the criteria upon which:
 - a) any application for exclusive use of a park or part of a park will be determined;
 - b) any decisions about whether park users will be charged for the use of the park, park facilities, or clean-up costs will be based.

Striking the right balance between open access to parks, and revenue-raising activities such as events or granting exclusive use to particular groups is challenging.

Recommendation: GSP should consult on, and publish, policies which set out the criteria upon which:

- a) any application for exclusive use of a park or part of a park will be determined**
- b) any decisions about whether park users will be charged for the use of the park, park facilities, or clean-up costs will be based.**

FINANCES

(5) To avoid doubt, the Trust's annual reporting information prepared under the Government Sector Finance Act 2018 must include—

(a) information about all leases, licences and easements granted by the Trust over land within the GSPT estate during the financial year to which the annual report relates, and

(b) details of all money received by the Trust as revenue, during the financial year to which the annual report relates, from leases, licences and easements over land within the GSPT estate.

- **There are no financial reports provided by the GSP Trust Board**
- **CEO Joshua French made the statement to the Review Panel that all finances are recorded under the three Trust Annual Reports**
- **Annual financial reporting for Centennial and Moore Parks, Parramatta Park and Western Sydney Parklands all state; “While GSPT has significant influence over the underlying Trusts and would disclose this in its financial statements” Meaning?**
- **“From 1 July 2022, a new SPA arrangement was entered with GSPT and DPE. The new SPA replaces the individual Trust agreements and costs and services across entities. Where are the GSPT Shared Costs reported? How are GSPT operating costs allocated to the three Parklands Trusts ie PPT, WSPT, CPMT and GSPT?**
- **Where are the total GSPT operating costs included in each of the three parkland trust reports?**
- **Where are the financials for the 2023-2028 Corporate Plan?**
- **Budget figures have not been detailed in any reports.**

An FFMV member has summarised Profit and Loss reports for the various parks before and after the GSPT Act was introduced:



Comparative%20financial%20profit%20

Submitted for your consideration on behalf of Friends of Fernhill and Mulgoa Valley Inc.
by

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WESTERN SYDNEY PARKLANDS TRUST

	2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/2021	2021/22	2022/2023	2023/2024
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
REVENUE						
Rental Revenue	6,318	6,523				
Sale of goods and services from contracts with customers			314	197	368	401
Investment Revenue	5,233	7,519	22,465	28,804	34,357	40,498
Retained taxes, fees and fines			4	4	4	4
Grants and other contributions	4,063	38,896	10,847	79,865	6,414	35,783
Acceptance by the Crown of employees benefits and other liabilities			81	-39	190	306
Other income	4,252	3,819	1,654	2,684	1	1,363
TOTAL REVENUE	19,866	56,759	35,365	111,615	43,241	78,355
EXPENSES EXCLUDING LOSSES						
Personnel services expenses	3,134	3,252	2,887	3,449	3,656	5,082
Other operating expenses	6,496	5,828	7,144	8,411	11,533	13,526
Depreciation and Amortisation	2,672	4,380	4,708	5,760	8,927	11,907
Grants and subsidies						632
Finance Costs			38	31	3	1
TOTAL EXPENSES EXCLUDING LOSSES	12,302	13,460	14,777	17,651	24,119	31,148
OPERATING RESULT	7,564	43,299	20,588	93,864	19,122	47,207
Net gain/(loss) on disposal	106		-624	-1,251	-682	1,858
Other gains/(losses)			14,470	-20		
Gain on lease assets			15,317		4,515	
Impairment write back/(loss) on financial assets			-156	-56	-219	95
Other gains/(losses)		12,467				
Gain/Loss on de-recognition of right-to-use assets				83		
NET RESULT	7,670	55,766	49,595	92,620	22,736	49,160
OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME						
Items that will not be reclassified to net result in subsequent periods						
Changes in revaluation surplus of property, plant and equipment	86,274	51,124	153,580	71,922	90,013	55,959
TOTAL OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME	86,274	51,124	153,580	71,922	90,013	55,959
TOTAL COMPREHENSIVE INCOME	93,944	106,890	203,175	164,542	112,748	105,119

CENTENNIAL PARK AND MOORE PARK TRUST

	2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/2021	2021/22	2022/2023	2023/2024
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
REVENUE						
Rental Revenue						
Sale of goods and services from contracts with customers	14,318	14,553	18,155	16,544	22,683	25,425
Investment Revenue	11,034	8,776	8,061	11,240	15,164	16,044
Retained taxes, fees and fines	357	201	148	250	277	311
Grants and other contributions	18,910	13,436	29,718	31,464	8,834	9,854
Acceptance by the Crown of employees benefits and other liabilities	85	478	124	242	522	357
Other income	1,530	2,881	2,237	1,704	2,427	2,016
TOTAL REVENUE	46,234	40,025	58,443	61,444	49,907	54,007
EXPENSES EXCLUDING LOSSES						
Personnel services expenses	6,543	6,859	6,202	7,445	8,307	8,502
Other operating expenses	20,302	21,024	22,590	24,865	29,516	32,857
Depreciation and Amortisation	5,928	7,258	7,819	9,692	13,188	14,320
Grants and subsidies						275
Finance Costs	2	1	1	1	1	1
TOTAL EXPENSES EXCLUDING LOSSES	34,981	35,142	36,612	42,003	51,012	55,955
OPERATING RESULT	13,463	4,883	21,831	19,441	-1,105	-1,948
Net gain/(loss) on disposal	-2462	-360	-642	-755	-960	-2,608
Other gains/(losses)						
Gain on lease assets						
Impairment write back/(loss) on property, plant and equipment		-813	-249	-198	-40	
Impairment write back/(loss) on financial assets	59	-912	-390	405	495	201
Other gains/(losses)						
Gain/Loss on de-recognition of right-to-use assets						
NET RESULT	11,060	2,798	20,550	18,893	-1,610	-4,355
OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME						
Items that will not be reclassified to net result in subsequent periods						
Changes in revaluation surplus of property, plant and equipment	74,222	8,707	23,551	110,184	153,310	41,396
Impairment write back/(loss) on Building Assets		-453				
Assets recognised for the first time				2		
TOTAL OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME	74,222	8,254	23,551	110,186	153,310	41,396
TOTAL COMPREHENSIVE INCOME	85,282	11,052	44,101	129,079	151,700	37,041

PARRAMATTA PARK TRUST

	2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/2021	2021/22	2022/2023	2023/2024
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
REVENUE						
Rental Revenue						
Sale of goods and services from contracts with customers			934	698	1,008	1,244
Investment Revenue	135	56	552	864	991	1,410
Retained taxes, fees and fines			85	67	71	76
Grants and other contributions	2,045	2,952	4,820	4,444	4,456	3,670
Acceptance by the Crown of employees benefits and other liabilities			23	-20	71	113
Other income	2,902	2,485	124	136	173	248
TOTAL REVENUE	5,082	5,493	6,538	6,189	6,770	6,761
EXPENSES EXCLUDING LOSSES						
Personnel services expenses	1,345	1,356	1,042	1,211	1,263	1,345
Other operating expenses	2,865	2,800	2,596	3,523	3,530	4,050
Depreciation and Amortisation	853	931	1,053	1,115	1,310	2,082
Grants and subsidies						
Finance Costs						
TOTAL EXPENSES EXCLUDING LOSSES	5,063	5,087	4,601	5,849	6,103	7,477
OPERATING RESULT	19	406	1,847	340	667	-716
Net gain/(loss) on disposal					-230	-872
Other gains/(losses)			27,100	-260		
Gain on lease assets						
Impairment loss on Infrastructure assets				-301		
Impairment write back/(loss) on financial assets			-32	6	-66	-326
Other gains/(losses)						
Gain/Loss on de-recognition of right-to-use assets						
NET RESULT		406	28,915	-215	371	-1,914
OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME						
Items that will not be reclassified to net result in subsequent periods						
Changes in revaluation surplus of property, plant and equipment	-46	10,138		3,326	5,137	14,746
TOTAL OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME	-46	10,138		3,326	5,137	14,746
TOTAL COMPREHENSIVE INCOME	-27	10,544	28,915	3,111	5,508	12,832

Please note the changes in Centennial Park and Moore Park and Parramatta Park Results after GSPT Involvement in 2021/2022.

From a Surplus to a deficit