

## AN OPEN LETTER TO THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF VENUES NSW, KERRIE MATHER

### CAR PARKING ON MOORE PARK

Dear Kerrie

I'm writing to you on behalf of the community to seek answers to four questions. A copy of this letter is being sent to members of the Legislative Council Select Committee on the GSP Trust Bill 2021 and, as it raises issues which I believe are in the public interest, it will be disseminated more widely, including to our 4000 plus supporters. I look forward – as I'm sure do many others - to your response.

My questions relate to the following key elements of the Venues NSW submission to the Select Committee:

- *“Removal of all on-grass parking from 31 December 2023, without the provision of a like-for-like carparking alternative, will leave the Moore Park precinct with 1,100 fewer carparking spaces and create a significant barrier to access for many NSW residents...”*
- Specifically, this will adversely affect *“... young families, western Sydney and regional NSW residents, elderly and those with accessibility needs, (for whom) public transport is not always convenient, particularly for night-time sporting and entertainment events...”*
- The use of parking facilities at Randwick Racecourse to compensate for the removal of on-grass car parking on Moore Park is dismissed on the grounds that *“previous trials... have been unsuccessful”*, due to a lack of public interest.

These statements misrepresent some facts and ignore others.

The 1,100 spaces are those on the section of Moore Park known as EP3, opposite the Hordern Pavilion and Royal Hall of Industries. If parking were to cease there without any alternative, the number of car parking spaces in the Moore Park precinct – based on your own figures - will still be nearly 80% of the existing number. In short, given the prior history of use of parking spaces in the precinct, there will still be ample parking for SCG/SFS patrons, including all the groups you identify who may need to drive.

In fact, demand for car parking spaces rarely reaches anywhere close to 100% of available car spaces. A survey of 11 games in 2019, where crowds were 30,000 or more, indicated that 14% of available car spaces were unused. This was before the CBD and Eastern Suburbs Light Rail commenced operations, further reducing the demand for car spaces.

In fact, crowds attending events at the SCG/SFS are usually much smaller – in the 10,000-15,000 range. Peak demand for car spaces occurs on six or seven event days a year. It makes absolutely no sense to retain on-grass car parking merely to meet patrons' traditional preferences on these few days when it deprives the much broader community of precious parkland at a time when increased housing density and the effects of the pandemic mean the community's need for parkland is greater than ever.

There is an alternative. The above ground carpark at Randwick Racecourse holds about 580 cars. Patrons – and particularly those from south-eastern and south-western Sydney - could easily be encouraged to use this by charging less for parking there than in car parks closer to the SCG/SFS and, with integrated ticketing, backfilling light rail carriages between the Racecourse and Moore Park at no cost. Rather than lengthy delays getting out of carparks in the Moore Park precinct after events, patrons would be able to get away more quickly. They would both avoid and reduce traffic congestion around Moore Park.

You mention two failed ‘trials’ of parking at Randwick Racecourse: one in 2018 (which was in fact in 2017) and one in connection with the January 2022 Test Match. These hardly constitute an objective feasibility analysis.

The former predates commencement of the Light Rail and so is irrelevant. As for the latter, attendances at this year’s Test were well down on normal and there was ample car parking closer to the SCG; so who wouldn’t choose to park there? Nor was this option well publicised before the game. In any event, by the time people paid to park at Randwick (rather than Moore Park) and then had to pay light rail fares, it would have been a more expensive option – a further deterrent. It sounds like a trial that was set up to fail so that the option could be dismissed.

I now come to something which the Venues NSW submission ignores – the **Green Travel Plan** you are required to complete as a Condition of Approval for the new SFS. Its overarching aims include to “*positively influence the travel behaviour of users of the venue by promoting alternative travel modes to car*”, “*thereby reducing car dependency of spectators and staff...*”.

Venues NSW claims to advocate for those from Western Sydney and regional NSW being able to drive to the SCG/SFS, but surprisingly does not consider that people travelling some distance may actually prefer more public transport given the high cost of fuel and added parking fees – particularly if integrated ticketing were provided so that travelling by public transport would effectively be free.

Venues NSW is also required to provide an **Event Car Parking Management Plan** which considers alternative strategies, including satellite park and ride areas, to provide car parking for the stadium patrons on event days. If the car park at Randwick Racecourse were made available for event car parking, then the cessation of car parking at EP3 would mean a decline of no more than 10.2% in available car parking spaces.

It is surprising that Venues NSW would say that “*The intention to remove all on-grass parking without providing viable alternatives was only made public when the Bill was read in Parliament.*” The latter was, of course, on 10th November 2021.

A month earlier, on 13<sup>th</sup> October, a senior representative of Venues NSW advised the SFS Community Consultative Committee that parking on EP3 would be completely removed – not relocated - once the new 1500 space Village Precinct carpark was operational, and that a holistic solution was required, involving behavioural change. The proposed cessation of


parking by 31 December 2023 as provided in the Bill is, of course, entirely consistent with this commitment, which is recorded in the publicly available Minutes of that meeting. The fact that this accurately reflected the discussion has been confirmed by CCC members. These same members said it was Venues NSW's expressed intention not to seek to use Moore Park for patrons' parking any longer that swayed them to support the new multi-million dollar publicly funded carpark.

I now come to my questions:

1. The 2019 Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the SFS Redevelopment stated
  - that *'light rail and public transport would have additional capacity to transport people to the SFS to offset the loss of parking in the event EP2 and EP3 are no longer available'*.
  - *'Providing no additional car parking as part of the development proposal complements the strategy of promoting public transport, walking, and cycling to access the stadium and reducing the reliance on private vehicles.'*
  - a) Does Venues NSW still believe these statements to be correct – that public transport does have the capacity to meet patrons' needs if on-grass car parking ceases and that the transport strategy should therefore promote a reduction in reliance on private vehicles?
  - b) If they are correct, then given its proposed Village Precinct car park provides like-for-like car parking for EP2 (Moore Park North) and the former members' car park, why is Venues NSW now also seeking a like-for-like car parking alternative to EP3?
  - c) If they are not correct, did the EIS misled the public or has something changed that invalidates the transport strategy articulated in the EIS? If so, what has changed?
2. The Transport Assessment undertaken in 2019 by Arup noted that 35% of event attendees come by car (4.1, Figure 3). The **Green Travel Plan** is required to have objectives and travel mode targets. What is the target reduction in the 35% figure? To put this another way, if the Plan can't deliver a 10% reduction in people driving and parking, what's the point of having it? If it does deliver a 10% reduction, why does Venues NSW need a like-for-like replacement for EP3?
3. The same Transport Assessment clearly envisages satellite park and ride areas outside the Moore Park precinct (6.6.2). What does the **Event Car Parking Management Plan** therefore have to say about the Randwick Racecourse car parking option given that, together with the Green Travel Plan, this would ensure that all SCG/SFS patrons who need or wish to drive and park will be able to do so?
4. Does Venues NSW stand by the commitment given at the 13<sup>th</sup> October SFS CCC meeting (and approved by Venues NSW for public dissemination via the Department of Planning website) that parking on EP3 would be completely removed – not relocated - once the new 1500 space parking on Village Precinct carpark is operational? If not, why not?

As should be evident from the substantive content and tone of this letter, we take the above issues very seriously. We find it very difficult to come to any conclusion other than that Venues NSW said what it had to in order to garner support for the Village Precinct car park and is now seeking to renege on an unequivocal commitment it gave to remove on-grass parking.

I look forward to your response to the issues I've raised and will distribute this to everyone who receives a copy of this letter.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Waterhouse". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Michael Waterhouse  
President  
Saving Moore Park Inc.  
30 January 2022

**A SECOND OPEN LETTER TO THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE  
OF VENUES NSW, KERRIE MATHER**

**CAR PARKING ON MOORE PARK**

Dear Kerrie

Other than a polite acknowledgement from your assistant, I've not had a response to my Open Letter to you of 30 January 2022.

On behalf of the large and growing population in the suburbs surrounding Moore Park, I'm calling on you to abandon your opposition to the removal of car parking from the Park on 31 December 2023, as provided in the Greater Sydney Parklands Trust Bill 2021.

Specifically, I'm calling on you to honour the commitment given by your representative to the Sydney Football Stadium Community Consultative Committee on 13<sup>th</sup> October 2021 that car parking on Moore Park will cease once the new Village Precinct car park is operational.

The 2019 EIS for the SFS Redevelopment explicitly states that *'light rail and public transport would have additional capacity to transport people to the SFS to offset the loss of parking in the event EP2 and EP3 are no longer available'* and talks of *'reducing the reliance on private vehicles'*.

Reflecting these statements, a Condition of Consent for the new stadium requires you to submit a **Green Travel Plan**. I'm therefore requesting that you take this legal obligation seriously and ensure that the Plan has, as its target, a reduction of at least 10% in the number of people attending events at the SCG and SFS by car and so requiring car parking.

Another Condition of Consent requires you to submit an **Event Car Parking Management Plan**, the development of which must consider satellite park and ride areas outside the Moore Park precinct. I call on you to develop a Plan which is consistent with and supports the objectives of the Green Travel Plan.

You have, quite appropriately, identified various groups as needing car parking facilities, including *"young families, western Sydney and regional NSW residents, elderly and those with accessibility needs, (for whom) public transport is not always convenient"*. The removal of car parking from Moore Park does not of course mean the removal of car parking altogether. Once car parking on the grass at Moore Park ceases, there will still be ample car parking for those who need and wish to drive at one of the several locations in and close to the Moore Park precinct.

In short, Kerrie, on 31 December 2023 the sky will not fall.

Michael Waterhouse  
President, Saving Moore Park Inc.  
7 February 2022