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Wentworth Point Residents Action Group (WPRAG) response to the proposed Joint Use Agreement for the School Oval





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Background

The Wentworth Point Residents Action Group (WPRAG) is committed to representing the residents of Wentworth Point to improve our local neighbourhood. Our group comprises a broad cross-section of occupations, backgrounds and age groups. Our suburb is unique in many ways including that we have the highest density of any suburb in NSW, with all residents living in apartments. Approximately 50 per cent of all Wentworth Point residents have children. According to the 2016 Census, 10% of all families have adolescent children. It is not surprising then that education, schools and parks are key concerns for WPRAG. In 2017, the City of Parramatta managed 367 parks and reserves and 143 ha of sports grounds. None of these parks, reserves or sports grounds is in Wentworth Point. This is despite the Council's Parks and Greenspaces plan acknowledging high density living as needing to be prioritised for health and wellbeing.

The formation of WPRAG was closely linked to the demands of residents for the State Government to deliver on its promise to build a public school at Wentworth Point. Many current residents were drawn to Wentworth Point by the promise of a new school.¹ *The Wentworth Point Precinct Development Control Plan 2014*² stated that the new school would include; "Playing fields located at the northern end of the school site" that were in addition to the 3.9 hectare Peninsula Park. See Figure 1.³

Wentworth Point has contributed \$21 million in developer contributions to Parramatta Council, which has been used primarily to fund playing fields in other local suburbs. Almost all Wentworth Point residents had their rates increased in the 'harmonisation' process. We pay the same rates as all other suburbs in Parramatta Council but unlike other suburbs, our community pays for our roads, footpaths, gardens, lighting, utilities, garbage services etc. The Council only has responsibility for Hill & Burroway Rd. The 2014 DCP, Urban Activation legislation and the Hill Rd Masterplan promised infrastructure to support the 15,000 residents but none has been delivered.

1. Mandatory Requirements

The two schools will find it almost impossible to meet the mandatory practical hours for PDHPE as set out by the NSW Education Standards Authority NESA.⁴ NESA mandates that all 1,500 secondary students must complete at least 2.5 hours per week of planned physical activities. For primary students (750 and expanding rapidly), NESA mandates between 1.5 and 2.5 hours per week. As it stands the proposed High School would find it almost impossible to pass a NESA random inspection to monitor curriculum compliance. NESA inspectors give Principals

¹ "Wentworth Point Precinct Development Control Plan 2014", Adopted 7 August 2014, p.5

² Wentworth Point Precinct Development Control Plan 2014

³ Wentworth Point Precinct Development Control Plan 2014, p.18

⁴ "Curriculum requirements Physical activity and sport policy", last updated February 18, 2020, <https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/curriculum/pdhpe/physical-education/policy-in-practice>

four days' notice and must show a timetable of practical PDHPE lessons that meet the mandated timetable for course delivery. The student numbers and lack of suitable spaces will threaten the accreditation of the school and its ability to provide a diverse curriculum.

2. Safety and Criminal Damage

A major concern for parents and WPRAG is the safety of students and damage to the oval and other property if the shared oval isn't fully fenced. The location of the shared oval gives direct access to the Sydney Olympic Park Ferry Wharf and the oval will have limited visibility due to Wentworth Point Public School. There are already significant issues with anti-social behaviour at the Ferry Wharf, the eastern end of Burroway Rd, The Connection at Rhodes (see Figure 2) and at the shelters on the Bennelong Bridge.

The greatest concern is that the area will need to be checked daily after community use to avoid the risk of needle stick injuries resulting from drug use—already an issue in that area. The question of who would be responsible for checking and safely removing anything dangerous before children are allowed to play is another concern. In informal discussions with local parents, they have said that they would need to have satisfactory answers before considering enrolling their children. A lesser but still significant concern is strangers accessing the school oval whilst the students are on breaks. Though the schools would provide supervision this is limited.

Other concerns relate to criminal damage in other parts of the school, general rubbish and how dogs would be kept off the shared oval. The proposed Peninsula Park will be the only 'green space' in Wentworth Point and the area is 'dog friendly'. At the moment dog waste is a major issue in the surrounding Marina Square shops, in front of the Public School and Sydney Olympic Park surrounding the Louise Sauvage pathway. It is unrealistic to think this won't become an issue if dogs enter the shared oval. If they are allowed the question is who will remove dog waste, after evening and weekend use before the start of school, to allow safe use by students? Similarly, who will remove the general rubbish and who will bear the cost of rectifying any damage resulting from community access?



Figure 1 - Open Space Network from 2014 Wentworth Point DCP showing school oval & separate 3.9 hectare Peninsula Park

3. Open Space

Wentworth Point is a high density suburb with a current population approaching 15,000. All residents live in units and there are no public parks. In this unique environment, it is particularly important that children have room to play at school. Unfortunately, this is not the case at Wentworth Point Public School. The Public School was built for 400 students on the minimum Schools Infrastructure envelope of 1.5 hectares. As detailed in the Sydney Morning Herald on 4/1/22, by the end of 2021 Wentworth Point Public had reached a utilisation rate of 117%.⁵ With eight more demountables installed in January 2022 (see figure 3.), there is little to no green space for students to play. Growth projections suggest that the current rate of growth will continue for at least the next five years. The proposed Joint Use oval will ensure that Wentworth Point Public students have no place to play. The Department of Planning Design Guide for Schools says that they must “Ensure outdoor playground space is sufficient to accommodate the student population including future growth”.⁶

⁵ Jordan Baker and Nigel Gladstone, “Revealed: The Sydney schools running out of space” The Sydney Morning Herald January 1, 2022

⁶ “Better Placed Design Guide for Schools”, Government Architect New South Wales, May 2018, p.19

In their submissions response for the new High School, the Department of Education said that the play space available will be 9,511sqm this amounts to less than two-thirds of the minimum 10sqm per student.⁷ This doesn't include any use by the Primary School students as detailed above.

4. Community support & consultation

The research in Australia and internationally is universally consistent that "Identifying community needs and harnessing community support ... are critical ingredients for the success of shared facilities ... this should ... include service planning that identifies community needs and mechanisms that build community support for shared facility proposals."⁸

There is strong community support for the development of Joint Use playing fields and other community facilities on the land to the east of the High School. (see Appendix 1 & Figure 6) Community support needs to be harnessed at the start-up stages. A key element to the success of this visionary approach for the City of Parramatta Council in the development stage would include establishing partnerships among stakeholders, developing agreements and designing facilities. WPRAG can play a key role as champions and brokers across the development stage for these shared facilities. We can also play a role during the conception stage. Much of the research suggests that having a respected, strong and committed champion is a condition for success.

The WPRAG proposal above contrasts with the existing situation in Wentworth Point which couldn't be much further from the model for success suggested by the research. The only community consultation that did occur resulted in a detailed plan for Peninsula Park on the Landcom website with a timeline and completion date of December 2020. (see figure 4) The park was commenced with hundreds of River Sheoaks (identified as ecologically important in the 2014 Wentworth Point DCP)⁹ destroyed with the birdlife (see figure 5). Thousands of truckloads of fill were brought in before Landcom left the site in March 2020. Without a word of consultation they unilaterally breached all their commitments and posted a fabricated new stage on their website. All enquires as to what this mystery 'Stage 2' was went unanswered. It then came out in the media that the land was to be used for the new High School. To say that the

⁷ "Submissions Report Sydney Olympic Park new high school SSD-11802230", Mecone on behalf of NSW Department of Education, April 2022, p.42

⁸ "Getting it Together: An Inquiry into the Sharing of Government and Community Facilities", Victorian Competition and Efficiency Commission, June 2009

"Sharing school and community facilities", Audit Office of NSW, November 1, 2017,

<https://www.audit.nsw.gov.au/our-work/reports/sharing-school-and-community-facilities>

"Managing School Infrastructure", Victorian Auditor-Generals Office, May 11, 2017,

<https://www.audit.vic.gov.au/report/managing-school-infrastructure?section=>

⁹ Wentworth Point Precinct Development Control Plan 2014

community has zero trust in Transport for NSW and Landcom is probably overestimating their standing in the community.

In terms of the two Schools, we have sought to be included in the consultation and development of sustainable plans. The Department of Education's consultation (as noted in the NSW Audit Office reports in 2017 & 2021 & the P&C Federation submission to an NSW parliamentary inquiry in February 2022¹⁰) is characterised as extremely poor and tokenistic.¹¹ This is consistent with the experience of our community and WPRAG. Clement Lun (WPRAG Convenor) as P&C President is on the Project Reference Group (PRG) for the new High School and has commented numerous times that he is there to tick a box and sign what Schools Infrastructure has already agreed to. This is consistent with the criticism stated by the NSW P&C Federation to a parliamentary inquiry "It is concerning that the Auditor-General found that some business cases for school developments are reverse engineered to fit pre-announced funding"¹² The Department of Education consultation is completely tokenistic in Wentworth Point. There is a two-page dot point consultation plan for Sydney Olympic Park High on the Schools Infrastructure NSW webpage. This contrasts with similar size school developments in Alexandria Park¹³, Darlington, Fort Street¹⁴, Smalls Rd, North Ryde and Armidale Secondary College which have 20 to 26 page Community Communication Strategies. Wentworth Point needs and deserves a comprehensive consultation plan that includes surveying the local community for their views, a town hall meeting to gauge community opinion and WPRAG representatives being included in the Project Reference Group (PRG).

The proposed Joint Use Agreement for the school oval is symptomatic of the actions of Transport for NSW, Landcom and the Department of Education. As detailed at the beginning of this report, the community was promised a Primary School with an oval/s and a separate 3.9 hectare Peninsula Park. The community still hasn't been advised that Transport for NSW will not provide a school oval. We discovered the 25-year lease in the Department of Education submission report. The intent of the so-called lease was clear to everyone in the community as

¹⁰ "INQUIRY INTO PLANNING AND DELIVERY OF SCHOOL INFRASTRUCTURE IN NEW SOUTH WALES", Federation of Parents and Citizens Associations of NSW, 11 February 2022, <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/lcdocs/submissions/77161/0038%20Federation%20of%20Parents%20and%20Citizens%20Associations%20of%20NSW.pdf>

¹¹ "Delivering school infrastructure", Audit Office of NSW, April 8, 2021, <https://www.audit.nsw.gov.au/our-work/reports/delivering-school-infrastructure>

¹² "INQUIRY INTO PLANNING AND DELIVERY OF SCHOOL INFRASTRUCTURE IN NEW SOUTH WALES", Federation of Parents and Citizens Associations of NSW, 11 February 2022, <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/lcdocs/submissions/77161/0038%20Federation%20of%20Parents%20and%20Citizens%20Associations%20of%20NSW.pdf>

¹³ "Community Communication Strategy Fort Street Public School", Schools Infrastructure NSW, March 2021, <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/lcdocs/submissions/77161/0038%20Federation%20of%20Parents%20and%20Citizens%20Associations%20of%20NSW.pdf>

¹⁴ "Community Communication Strategy Alexandria Park Community School", Schools Infrastructure NSW, April 2019, https://www.schoolinfrastructure.nsw.gov.au/content/dam/infrastructure/projects/f/fort-street-public-school/may-2021/a23aiii/b12/Fort_Street_Public_School_CCS_FINAL.pdf

was the contempt of Transport for NSW actions. We would suggest that the City of Parramatta Council does not align itself with these Departments and agencies. The current Joint Use proposal is rejected by the community and its guaranteed failure will damage the standing of the Council in the community.

The lack of community consultation and support concerning the Joint Use school oval in Wentworth Point is even more problematic because of the lack of involvement by the High School Principal. It will be the new High School Principal who will be critical to the successful implementation of any joint use agreements. The overarching commitment for the Principal under the Department of Education guidelines¹⁵ is to ensure that the operation of the agreement "does not interfere with school operations. " This must include; implementing the department's Drugs in Schools policy, ensuring that school educational programs have priority of use and defining expected behaviour standards of facility users. There are also stated expectations that the community has been fully consulted and is supportive of the planned agreement. The priority of the Principal must be student safety followed by smooth school operation.

5. Administration & governance

The WPRAG proposal for a 'comprehensive' collection of shared facilities, including an oval, on the eastern side of the new school, to be managed by the City of Parramatta Council meets the second essential element for successful Joint Use Agreements. The research shows that the most common reason for failure in Joint Use agreements is that they are conceptualised and managed as capital works projects.¹⁶ Cross-jurisdictional coordination is challenging, around details such as budgeting and facility agreements, but can be managed if the agreement is conceptualised and managed as a partnership.¹⁷ It is further complicated by the differing objectives, and statutory and policy requirements of the partnership participants. The Joint Use Agreement must appraise and respect different perceptions and tolerances of risk between the partners. The challenge of recognising and resourcing the 'partnership work' necessarily required to sustain and optimise the capital and other investments in a shared school community facility was a consistent theme across all case studies.¹⁸ The support of the Wentworth Point Community and WPRAG is a key to creating the environment for a successful 'partnership.'

The existing proposal does not meet these criteria. There has been no consultation and the proposal fails to fund or recognise the partnership as the key element for success.

6. Costs

¹⁵ Sharing school and community facilities

¹⁶ Getting it Together: An Inquiry into the Sharing of Government and Community Facilities

¹⁷ Getting it Together: An Inquiry into the Sharing of Government and Community Facilities

¹⁸ Getting it Together: An Inquiry into the Sharing of Government and Community Facilities

The evidence from Victoria and around the world is clear that building joint-use school facilities is significantly more expensive in the long term and requires a stronger commitment to operate and maintain community facilities.¹⁹ Infrastructure Victoria estimates that each new or developed school requires approximately \$1 million to support joint planning and design of school sites for joint use. Victoria's '30-Year Infrastructure Strategy' recommends that all school infrastructure projects receive this funding in addition to any investment in physical assets.²⁰ In the 10% of facilities managed by Councils, there is significant evidence of 'cost shifting' with Councils complaining that they are expected to pay for all long term running costs.²¹

The community does not support the sharing of the school oval for the reasons outlined above. Education is now a competitive market and there are new education precincts at Meadowbank, Rydalmere Education precinct and others proposed. A significant potential cost to the Wentworth Point community and the City of Parramatta Council is that the community may boycott the new school. The proposed Joint Use Agreement offers no benefit to the schools, community or the City of Parramatta Council. It will impose significant additional costs. The alternative proposal by WPRAG has significant benefits to all parties and there is potential to derive income from other assets and the lease of much-needed community facilities.

Conclusion

The proposed Joint Use Agreement for the School Oval does not have the support of the Wentworth Point Community or WPRAG. It is a fundamental breach of *The Wentworth Point Precinct Development Control Plan 2014*. The proposal would allow Transport for NSW to move ahead with its intention to build more towers on the peninsula threatening the already precious but fragile wildlife and ecology of the Olympic Park Peninsula. The High Rise will overshadow and create wind tunnel effects for the park and the new High School. The proposed Joint use plan does not meet the needs of the school or the students, it fails to meet the criteria for successful sharing agreements and will be more costly to build, operate and maintain. The alternate WPRAG proposal addresses all these concerns and would result in better schools, stronger community partnerships and improved standing for the City of Parramatta Council.

The argument in the *Submissions Report Sydney Olympic Park new high school* is that the Master plan for Wentworth Point Peninsula is being updated by Transport for NSW because the current development controls were adopted more than 16 years ago. It correctly points out that much has changed since. The startling omission in the report is that 15,000 residents now live in Wentworth Point and Transport for NSW has failed to deliver on almost any of the 'promised' infrastructure. They now seek to reward themselves by selling off the last piece of land for even more high rises at the expense of the community and the natural environment. If this document is to be believed, after 16 years, "there will be opportunities for the community to participate in

¹⁹ Getting it Together: An Inquiry into the Sharing of Government and Community Facilities

²⁰ Managing School Infrastructure

²¹ Getting it Together: An Inquiry into the Sharing of Government and Community Facilities

the process and provide feedback.”²² We are now expected to accept that after 16 years of waiting and broken promises that “Transport for NSW is considering how to deliver the next stage of work on the Peninsula Park to provide the local community with access to open space and the waterfront.”²³

WPRAG have put forward a proposal that will meet the needs of the Schools, and residents and benefit the City of Parramatta Council. We call on the City of Parramatta Council to reject the proposed Joint Use Agreement. The current Joint Use proposal is rejected by the community and is destined to fail and will critically damage the standing of the Council in the community.

²² *Submissions Report Sydney Olympic Park new high school*

²³ *Submissions Report Sydney Olympic Park new high school*



Figure 2 - Anti-social behaviour at the Ferry Wharf, the eastern end of Burroway Rd and The

Connection at Rhodes



Figure 3 - Eight more demountable buildings were installed at Wentworth Point Public School in January 2022

NEXT STEPS

Feedback will help us finalise the park design. When the design is complete, we will submit applications to commence construction to the City of Parramatta for approval to start works.

Subject to approvals, construction is expected to start in late 2018, with completion in early 2020.

JULY 2018

- Community information session - detailed design
- Work with school students to design public art

OCTOBER 2018

- Applications for construction commencement submitted to the City of Parramatta
- Community information session - construction approach and staging

DECEMBER 2018

- Approval to start construction anticipated
- Construction starts (subject to approval)

EARLY 2020

- Park opens

KEEP IN TOUCH

We will host another information session later this year to provide an update on the works program and construction management. Information about how we will manage the remediation of contaminated materials and construction impacts will be available at this meeting.

We will keep you informed about the project through newsletters and updates to our project webpage at landcom.nsw.gov.au/wentworthpointpeninsulapark.

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Figure 4 - Landcom website with a timeline and completion date of December 2020.

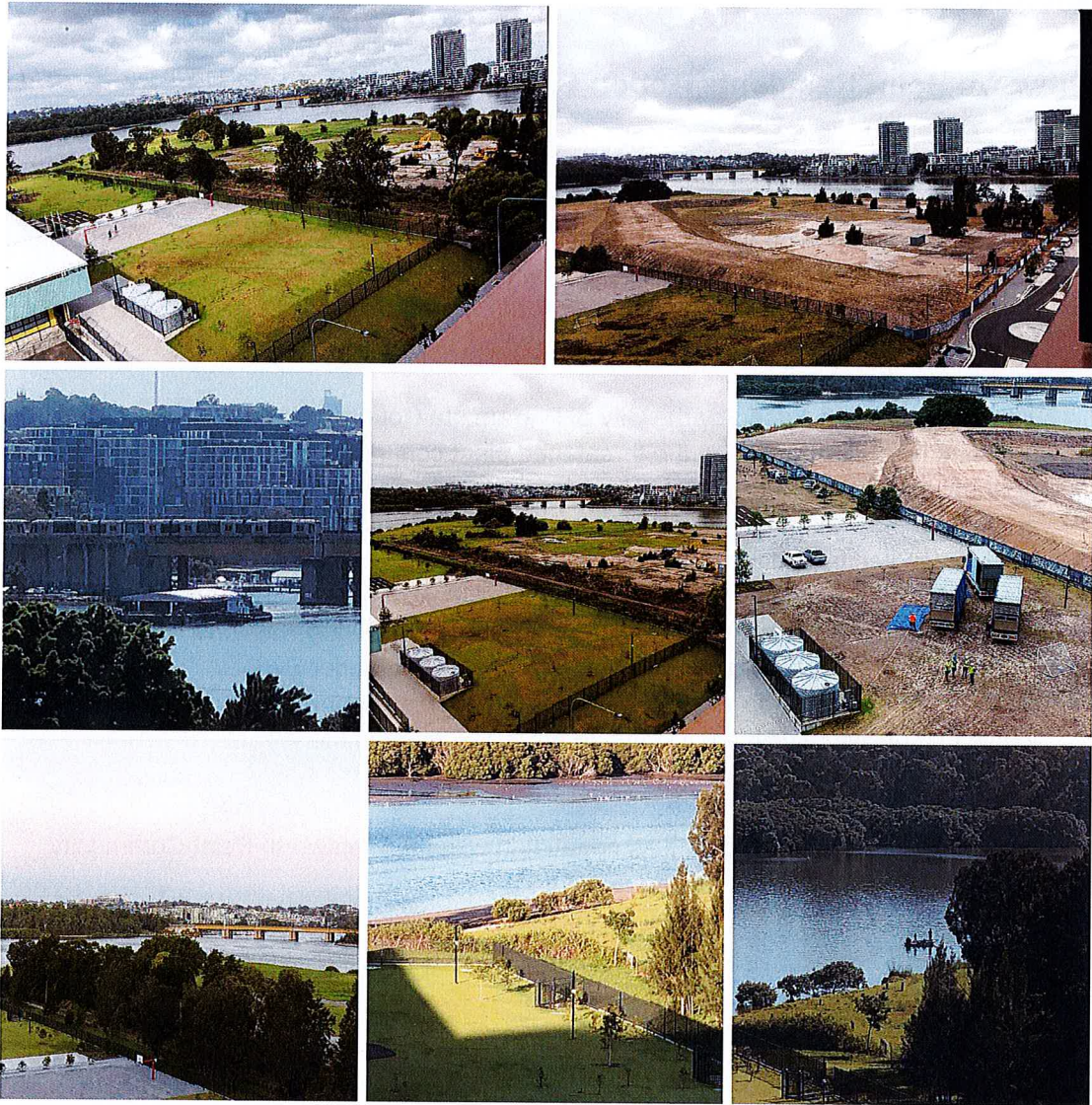


Figure 5 - Hundreds of River Sheoaks and the accompanying birdlife were destroyed by Landcom in 2019

Appendix 1

Wentworth Point Residents Action Group (WPRAG) Joint Use Proposal

1. That the 'land' in question is the so-called 'mixed-use land' to the east of the new High School (see figure 6) which should be returned to the community either via:
 - i. A Voluntary Planning Agreement with the developer of Block H. The developer to hand the land to the City of Parramatta Council for the benefit of the community
 - ii. Transport for NSW to hand the land to the City of Parramatta Council for the benefit of the community
2. The 'land' should be used by the City of Parramatta Council to create;
 - i. A natural buffer protecting the threatened plant communities on the northeastern corner of Peninsula Park. It will provide an important addition to the habitat for migratory birds, Sea Eagles and the 200 bird species located in Sydney Olympic Park & Newington.
 - ii. A wide corridor between the northern (Peninsula Park) & the southern end of Wentworth Point. To provide an open connection along Haslams Creek from the Parramatta river to "integrate with the broader Sydney Olympic Park, Parklands and Wentworth Point open space network."²⁴ It would be consistent with the vision and promises made in the Wentworth Point Precinct Development Control Plan 2014.
 - iii. Shared playing fields
 - iv. Shared Community facilities as negotiated with the Wentworth Point Community

²⁴ Wentworth Point Precinct Development Control Plan 2014

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