

Submission
No 282

INQUIRY INTO CROWN LAND IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Name: Mrs Margaret Ostinga

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The Hon Paul Green MLC

Chair

Inquiry into Crown Land

NSW Legislative Council

Dear Mr. Green

Thank you for the providing the opportunity to make a short submission about Civic Park, Newcastle which is facing loss of land and destruction of trees from its northern boundary. This submission follows an earlier submission in response to the White Paper of 2014. I have not been able to determine what the status of Civic Park is but I assume it to be Crown Land. I sincerely hope that your committee will see fit to consider the problem it presents as it is an important element in the fabric of Newcastle.

I very much look forward to your committee's deliberations.

Yours faithfully

Margaret Ostinga

Civic Park is a small but important park in the civic centre of Newcastle. It is bordered on the north by King Street, with its important early twentieth century Town Hall, its twentieth century administration building and to the west of the Town Hall the significant Art Deco Sodersten building which houses the inner city campus of Newcastle University.



Henry White Newcastle Town Hall 1926



The Art Deco Sodersten Building

To the west of the park is Auckland Street and it's here the Newcastle Conservatorium with its purpose built late twentieth auditorium and student complex is situated.

In the southwestern corner of the park is another significant addition to the area; the Menckens designed nineteenth century St Andrews Church.



Frederick Menckens Saint Andrews Presbyterian Church Civic Park

The northern edge of the park is lined by the impressive Baptist Tabernacle, the Cultural Centre housing the City Library and the Regional Art Gallery with its excellent Brett Whitley sculpture.



Baptist Tabernacle Newcastle



Newcastle Regional Gallery with the Brett Whitley Sculpture in the foreground.



Lyndon Dadswell Him and Her



Margel Hinder's Fountain Civic Park

Not only is the park surrounded by important civic buildings, it is also the location of some of the most important sculptures in the city. There is the Brett Whitely sculpture already mentioned. Lyndon Dadswell's 'Him and Her', at the entrance of the Cultural centre is a favourite. Beside the Town Hall is the Marylyn McGrath bronze corm, and the southern edge of the park itself set off by the magnificent Margel Hinder fountain, the result of a national competition.

About four years ago the mature fig trees forming a canopy over Laman Street and the southern edge of the Park were removed. This, like the destruction of the trees in Anzac Parade Sydney, caused an enormous outcry from the community. The southern wall of green to the south suddenly disappeared. Some trees have been replanted but the area has lost its lush green appearance probably for several years and all the shade in this part of the park has gone.

Now it would appear the northern curtilage of the park is threatened.

With the loss of the transport corridor and the proposed location of the light rail down Hunter Street, King Street is expected to suffer heavy volumes of traffic. To solve this problem there is a proposal to widen King Street by taking the northern edge of the park with its beautiful mature fig trees. To whittle away a significant and important park because of traffic congestion caused by a train debacle is the poorest of town planning and no solution to the problem.. Widening the road is to launch onto the slippery slope where the road width is never wide enough and more and more park is needed.

The fig trees on the northern boundary form a canopy that shelters the park from intrusive traffic noise and provide a sanctuary for those relaxing for a few moments or enjoying a stroll through the markets.

Civic Park is only a small park but it provides cohesion to the important civic and cultural buildings surrounding it.

On a daily basis it provides a breathing space for the people who work there, for the students of the Conservatorium and the University and the number using the park will only increase with the completion of the new Law School which provides for 6000 students. The park has other uses. Its elevated southern edge forms a podium and provides a natural meeting place for public forums and gatherings. It is used on a regular basis for the Olive tree markets.

To even consider removing part of the northern edge of the park from such a small but significant park is to disregard the significance of the city centre, its important buildings, its historical value to the fabric of the city. It is to fail to understand the true value to the community of this open and public space with its magnificent Margel Hinder fountain.