

## **INQUIRY INTO SYDNEY STADIUMS STRATEGY**

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**RECLAIMING A GREAT and HISTORIC URBAN PARK:  
THE CENTENNIAL PARKLANDS**

**THE PEOPLE'S PLAN FOR the CENTENNIAL PARKLANDS  
(3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, 2018)**

*An Alternative View on the CP&MPT's Plans of Management*

*Compiled by Dr Neil Runcie for the Save the Parks Campaign and  
The Coalition of Eastern Suburbs Resident Action Groups.*

*Forward: What would Sir Henry Parkes, back from the dead, say about the current plans for his " People's Park"? This critique of the Centennial Park & Moore Park Trust Plans of Management aims to capture the enduring concerns that motivated the Great Urban Parks Movement that flowers in many of the Great Cities on our planet such as London, Paris and New York.*

*This critique complements the earlier submissions that comment on earlier Draft and Final Reports by the Trust administration that have presumably been scrutinised by the Trust. Has the Trust recently been strengthened with additional appointments mainly from the corporate sector? Weakness, paradoxes and contradictions remain: in technical expertise in this context in corporate planning, in Great Park Management and History, in Botanical Review and in Public Participation that is especially appropriate in Sir Henry's People's Park.*

**Current concerns are widespread in the community. See earlier comments in:  
*The People's Plan for Moore Park, 2016 Future Directions (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed) pp230***

***Reclaiming a Great Park: the Centennial Parklands (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed, 2017 )pp23***

***The People's Plan for the Centennial Parklands, No 4 pp9 (9/3/18)***

***Because of significant current Trust lack of knowledge of past research and reports on the Centennial Parklands, a People's Plan Supplement is being compiled. It is a very extensive collection of reports and other documents to accompany Reclaiming a Great Park 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed 2017.***

***This report focuses on certain inexcusable weaknesses that jeopardise the future of a Great and Historic Urban Park.***

**CHAPTER 1. THE OBJECTIVES OF A GREAT and HISTORIC URBAN PARK**

**Preamble: *A thing of beauty should be a joy for ever.*** Great Parks fall into this category like Great Music, Great Novels, Great Films and so on. The Centennial Parklands is part of the cultural heritage of the Eastern Suburbs, of Sydney, and of Australia as the proclamation seat of Federation. Sir Henry Parkes' People's Park, in its current expanded form, has a long history that informs and guides the present. **The message is: the Centennial Parklands need protective beautification as a top objective.** This has not been mentioned in Trust reports nor has it been occurring.

**The Present:** The recent de facto Trust objective is **complicit alienation and commercialising** of the Parklands, especially Moore Park. The Trust has lost sight of **the primary legislated historical obligation of the Trust that has strong community support.** *That objective is to continuously maintain and to add to the precious natural beauty of the Parklands for community health and wellbeing and incidentally for providing for active and passive recreation and to add to the historicity, so easily ignored by the ignorant. Even the name chosen for the Parklands is historically significant.*

**Resolution 1:** The CP&MP Trust's top priority should be ***Beautification not Commercialisation of the Centennial Parklands. The latter undermines the dedication and future of a Great and Historic Park.***

**Resolution 2. Neglect of beautification in the Centennial Parklands environment has led to *surreptitious alienation and erosion of the Parklands*** and especially in Moore Park; this neglect and apparent *aesthetic ignorance* requires **immediate correction at the political as well as the administrative level.**

**Resolution 3.** The stunning **omission of beautification** in the Trust's stated objectives has led to confused thinking in the Trust contradictions and the abandonment of caring park management.

**For example,** there is a **belated recognition** by the Trust that the award winning (*sic!*) SCG Moore Park Bus Station is an intrusive and ill conceived exercise in park management. **Firstly,** the stated original bus station objective of diverting all the buses using the busroadway to the SCG bus station was rapidly abandoned as stupid although it was used to justify NSW taxpayer dollars: the stop was an irrelevant diversion for normal bus services. **Secondly,** the invasive bus station, that was even recently expanded, alienates much of the Park. It was a grave error of judgment when there were other better bus solutions to the occasional SCG traffic and parking problem including, with improvements, the original bus arrangements in Driver Avenue and Macarthur Avenue that could be re-established with modifications immediately.

**Resolution 4.** Thus the **elimination of the excessively intrusive Moore Park Bus Station,** as envisaged by the Trust's latest Plan of Management, should be undertaken as soon as possible with the restoration of parkland and bus services as required.

But there are sceptics about "Words". It is a mistake to wait till the invasive light rail is completed, now in 2020. Moreover the location of the Moore Park Bus Stop on CSELR is not well located for SCG/SFS patrons and requires careful planning by the CP&MPT so as not to exacerbate the CSELR damage and **alienate further Moore Park parkland.**

**For example again, the much ridiculed and invasive Tibby Cotter Bridge,** apparently built at SCG request with NSW taxpayer funds, falls into the same category of a failure of park management, and of Great Urban and Historic Park Management in particular. Moreover, this Bridge shockingly damages the start of ANZAC PARADE, Sydney's finest memorial boulevard, as well as the Parkland that

once carried twenty plus cricket fields in Moore Park East, that are now unbelievably reduced to two. The Bridge is an over-elaborate structure that was engineered at a high standard possibly for vehicles to a non-existent and unlikely parking station. Why? See the report of the NSW Auditor General. The Bridge, apparently built without strong opposition from the Trust, has been repeatedly ridiculed as “The Bridge to Nowhere”. Pity the NSW Taxpayers! Pity the Parklands!

**Resolution 5. Support routes to the invasive Tibby Cotter Bridge** in Moore Park should be redesigned to minimise the impact on the Parkland of the Bridge and aim to preserve and enhance park beauty (tree replanting, etc) as well as the public and schools’ need for cricket and sporting fields pending the Bridge’s eventual removal.

Yet again, **the recent proposal to commercialise Driver Avenue, rather than beautify it**, is yet another example of Trust confusion about objectives and desperate desire to compensate for bad decisions of park alienation by adding yet another.

Yet again, the proposed **new Allianz Stadium at Moore Park**, raises many issues that impinge on the Trust’s responsibilities. Is the silence of acquiescence cowardice by a wide range of planners, institutions and stakeholders? Has the Trust made a submission to the NSW Government about NSW Stadia Policy and the proposal to knock down and rebuild what is a little used facility that still serves spectator sport?

**Resolution 6. Driver Avenue should not be closed off, or used for pop up shops, as proposed, rather than beautification by additional tree planting especially on the eastern side.** Trees are essential to parkland beautification of Driver Avenue. Driver Avenue meets a need for access to the SCG, Fox Studios, EQ, Centennial Parklands and Centennial Park Garden Suburb. It also carries a safety and functional overflow from the Eastern Distributor.

*Most importantly, there is the predictable massive damage to Moore Park, Centennial Park, Alison Road and Anzac Parade by the ill conceived CSELight Rail project that should never have had explicit and/or de facto support from the CP&MPT in its present form. Again see the Auditor General’s report and press and other comments on the bad planning involved, leading to a possible doubling of construction costs. But, more importantly, there is a failure to take account of the environmental, business and social costs of the project which should be included in an honest cost benefit analysis. This mandated analysis has not been done, even by NSW Infrastructure. Shockingly simplicity business cases are unprofessional and hide a multitude of hidden costs not least to eventual users as well as adding temporary and permanent congestion transfer that the project was allegedly designed to eliminate. Was this an historic bungle, driven by vested interests, because good men did not speak up, or was the public duped by inexcusable ignorance of officials?*

If the Trust demanded that CSELR route be underground in Moore Park West, why not in the rest of Moore Park (and elsewhere as local Surry Hills residents have submitted with professional support and protest)? Indeed the whole project needs and certainly needed peer review as various options were conveniently ignored.

Quite apart from the failure to carry out an honest cost benefit analysis for the project, no doubt driven by a group of opportunistic developers, the design of the route has not had proper public scrutiny. Public meetings handing down decisions have been ridiculed by attendees. There are many options. Consider for example the Chinese city that has over 15,000 electric buses, many on dedicated routes no doubt like the Moore Park Busroadway. Of course retaining an efficient bus service to the SE was not preferred by contractors! But it will still be necessary it would appear from capacity calculations and the need for feeder services to the terminals and stops along the route. Pity the users who face higher costs and inconvenience.

**That is, there are numerous hidden costs in CSELR, apart from inconvenience, which will eventually fall on "Public Transport" users many of whom will still need bus services. Many have praised the present highly efficient bus services. And again pity the taxpayers and the park users for this grandiosity!**

**Resolution 7. The failure of the CP&MPT to oppose the planned CSELR is an incredible stunning failure of the Trust to protect and beautify the Parklands and to seek alternative traffic solutions as is its patent duty. It did not appeal for help. The Trust opposition to the light rail on the north side of Alison Road was a belated recognition of the environmental damage of the poorly researched CSELR.**

**One may well ask why was the arboreal damage not minimised. Saving the two magnificent figs at the corner of Alison Road and ANZAC PARADE was recommended in the official arboreal report on the project. Was this destruction intentional without proper justification or was it bureaucratic vandalism?**

**There are many additional examples of missed beautification planning, both large and small. Here are a few examples:**

- (i) The failure to integrate the *Raleigh Park Oval* with the Centennial Parklands and to recognise the case for potential parkland access for and to Kensington residents.
- (ii) The failure to **plant trees and provide a fountain in the mislabelled Federation Place where Federation Celebration funds were used to erect a Park entrance structure. That structure was designed by distinguished architect Alexander Tzannes. It might have been better located elsewhere and in the short run this " Federation Place" space needs enhancement of a fountain and the elimination of parking in front of the Municipal Sports Pavilion ( both already detailed to the Trust) and additional tree planting in and adjoining the mislabelled Federation Place. *All this has already been suggested to the Trust and now is more urgent because of CSELR imposed ugliness at the intersection.***
- (iii) **Again the two magnificent fig trees at the corner of ANZAC PARADE and Alison Road that predate the old tram route, were successfully defended when the busroadway went in; they were slated for retention in the original arboreal study of the CSELR route. These historic trees like three iconic palms in Moore Park SE were removed without proper consultation and were important features of the Centennial Parklands and ANZAC PARADE environment.**

- (iv) **Needless to say the CSELR scheduled superior possible routes through ATC land were not properly considered.** Did the CP&MPT effectively argue its case instead of again acquiescing for friendly institutional relations (ATC, etc) in spite of **demonstrable conflicts of interest?**
- (v) **The food outlets in Centennial Park at three locations** are intrusively placed for commercial reasons and not even customer convenience and certainly not aesthetic reasons. The two recent additions (the permanent mobile silver bullet bus and support vehicle and the “demountable” Green House structure are badly planned, ugly, intrusive and out of keeping with the relaxing and traditional character of the Park; they destroy parkland vistas. The two recent additions are badly placed, cause unnecessary congestion and even near accidents. They form yet another attack on parkland beauty and do not qualify as Parkland beauty enhancement! And the main restaurant extension is excessively noisy and needs acoustical cladding on the ceiling at least. Sir Henry Parkes would turn in his grave at these foolish and badly planned intrusions! I believe a number of former Park Directors would agree.
- (vi) **The recently installed synthetic field in Moore Park SE damages the Moore Park vistas and causes residential disturbance when it might well have been more appropriately located in Moore Park East. A failure to consult local residents regarding this development is poor town planning on several counts. Local amenity of street and field noise, and the optimum location in the Parklands, were sacrificed for a quick fix avoiding meaningful public participation and even consultation it seems. Is this always to be the modus operandi?**
- (vii) **The use of Moore Park for SCG/SES carparking (and more recently for light rail contractors) points to a significant failure to protect and beautify Parkland and is symptomatic of a deficiency in understanding park aesthetics now and in the future.** A belated CP&MPT genuine and effective resolution for removal of all this carparking is still missing although the “words” are there to satisfy Trust conscience.

**The various decisions show that no one in the Trust has any mature and informed notion about park aesthetics, park beauty, and how harmony created by beauty, is far better than a labyrinth or crummy food outlets.**

## **CHAPTER 2. WHY HAVE A TRUST?**

**Here are some questions about the Centennial & Moore Park Trust that have arisen in the recent wide ranging group and public discussions about the Parklands that has been reactivated by the CSELR and the Stadia Debate:**

- (i) What are the main features of a Trust?
- (ii) What is the advantage of a Trust over the previous Government Department administration?
- (iii) What are the objects of the Centennial Parklands Trust?

- (iv) Is the CP Trust the owner of the area?
- (v) Is the CP Trust to be a Model of Excellence?
- (vi) How is public participation to be established in the Centennial Parklands?
- (vii) How are conflicts with government proposals to be handled?
- (viii) How many members should be on the CPTrust and what should be their qualifications?
- (ix) How frequently should the CPTrust meet?
- (x) Should the CP Trust be landlord to the SCG/SFS?
- (xi) How should the CP Trust "control" the CP administration?
- (xii) What should the CPTrust and Community Consultative Committee minutes contain?
- (xiii) How should the CPTrust be made more independent?
- (xiv) How should the Community Consultative Committee membership be determined?
- (xv) Because of recent egregious failures should the Chairman and/or the Trust be called on to resign?
- (xvi) Grave concerns about the representativeness of the present Trust have been expressed and also about the Trust's ability to review the work of the current administration.

**Resolution 1. The appointments to the Trust and to the CCC should be made so that they are aesthetically informed and have the technical ability to review the work of the administration. The Trust should act as a think tank guiding the administration. Members of the Trust and the CCC should have appropriate qualifications and should not be appointed or screened by the administration.**

**Resolution 2. The Trust membership should be immediately expanded to 12 to gather aesthetic and technical ability in landscaping, horticulture, town planning and with the ability to organise independent advice apart from the administration's use of paid consultants.**

**Resolution 3. Trust and CCC members need to be fully briefed on the history of the Parklands and the role and purpose of an independent Trust and CCC for Sir Henry's People's Great and Historic Urban Park. The Trust should meet monthly on a set schedule.**

**For example, Sir Henry Parkes's People's Park was previously administered for nearly a century by the Department of Agriculture on delegation from the Premier's Department. The Park design and initial care was from the Botanic Gardens staff. So why was a Trust appointed? See below.**

In the early 1970s, when the Parklands were still administered by a Department, consultants were appointed to examine **conflicts between the RAS and the SCG regarding land rights triggered by SCG aggression.** However, it was suggested privately to the NSW Minister for Lands, the Hon Ton Lewis, that Moore Park and the Centennial Park area should become an Olympics Complex with complementary changes in the dedication of the Parklands. It was not clear why the consultants exceeded their initial brief but a large two volume study resulted.

**The recommendations of the consultants were defeated in a wide ranging public debate. That debate, led by the Save the Parks Campaign, led to the appointment of distinguished architect Walter Bunning to conduct a review leading to the Bunning Report on the optimum site for an Olympic complex in Sydney. The result was the selection of Homebush for an international standard sporting and expo site closer to the centre of gravity of Sydney's population. Subsequently that led to the RAS's move to Homebush from Moore Park.**

*The basic reason for establishing a Centennial Park Trust was to insulate the Parklands from political interference that was not possible when it was under the direct control of a Department and from political lobbying. The Trust's responsibility was, and still is, to recognize the area as the People's Park with important historic and cultural significance for all of Sydney and beyond.*

**The Trust was installed initially to manage Centennial Park and Queens Park after the 1970s Olympics complex proposals were defeated by a better informed public. Subsequently Moore Park was added to the Trust's responsibilities for a number of reasons. Then the old RAS site was added when the RAS moved to Homebush. The NSW Government determined that the old RAS site was not to be parkland as many would have wished or residential development. The NSW Government opted for a film complex and a complementary exhibition and education area.**

*Opportunistic commercial lobbying has recently emerged. Why has this been allowed?*

**Resolution 4. The Trust should reserve the old RAS site for film and community uses including community film, video, radio and educational purposes with minimum commercialisation and with no extension of the current EQ lease to a commercial venturer.**

**In spite of this build up of Trust responsibilities in the last 50 years, there is a sorry history of parkland alienation over that recent period. Consider the current breathtaking damage along Alison Road and the resulting ugliness. Further consider the impact of the Tibby Cotter Bridge, the disappearance of the SCG's Cricket Ground No2 and the SCG's Sports Ground, of the proposed South Paddington Park and Community Centre, and of the Raleigh Park Oval, of the impact of the Eastern Distributor and of CSELight Rail slicing up the Park as well as the SCG invasion of Moore Park for carparking with damage to Moore Park East playing fields and the invasive SCG Bus station. Note the disappearance of the Fred Miller Indoor Stadium in the NW corner of Moore Park. Further, there is the loss of the major portion of the strategic old Eastern Suburbs Hospital site, in spite of two government reports recommending integration with the Centennial Parklands.**

**Resolution 5. The Trust is Park custodian for the People. Urban users seek harmony and beauty in a Great Historic Urban Park. The Trust should abandon**



the commercialisation objective of Moore Park as adequate funds for Parklands maintenance are available from other sources that the Trust has not properly explored. The Trust should call on the State Government to cover any shortfall arising from the abandonment of commercialisation and to continue the current capital works support under scrutiny.

**Resolution 6.** The NSW Government should consider making the CP&MPT landlord of the SCG lands to complement the CP&MP Trust role in respect to the old RAS site. The Trust function should not be limited to revenue gathering; it needs the capacity to undertake critical reviews of all developments impinging on the Parklands.

**Resolution 7.** Overall town planning for the area in and around the Parklands requires closer liaison with the four surrounding Councils in conjunction with GSC, the NSW Planning Department and the surrounding residents. This close liaison has not been occurring and requires municipal representation on the Trust and a formal town planning consultative body versed in park preservation in the interim.

### CHAPTER 3 DOES THE TRUST HAVE A CONSERVATION STRATEGY?

The above question goes to the heart of Great and Historic Urban Park management: how to conserve a precious legacy. In discussions with various groups the following conservation features were identified:

- (i) maintenance of and in the Parklands;
- (ii) top dressing of sports fields to refresh and remove bumps and subsidences;
- (iii) preserving heritage features;
- (iv) "keeping" where practical rather than replacing;
- (v) avoidance of over development;
- (vi) tender loving care and attention to detail;
- (vii) historical research;
- (viii) insulation from urban noise and disturbances;
- (ix) the concept and role of a park ranger;
- (x) preserving and enhancing public vistas;
- (xi) respect for the amenity of park neighbours;
- (xii) excessive signage out of keeping with park aesthetics;
- (xiii) stop junking up the Parklands;
- (xiv) preserving and enhancing the components of beauty and harmony leading to tranquillity;
- (xv) a variety of tree planting consistent with harmony of design as originally envisaged.

The above list is largely self explanatory. However, a few observations are necessary.

**Firstly, the Trust appears to be preoccupied with sustaining the Parklands financially by internal generation of revenue and running operating surpluses.** This preoccupation is the excuse for inappropriate commercialising of a Great and Historic Urban Park. Should Great and Historic Urban Parks be self financing? The near unanimous answer is certainly not! But what is worse is even pretending that they need to be self financing as a defence of commercialising. Does the claim that “we need the revenue from Moore Park to pay for maintenance of Centennial Park and Queens Park” fall into the latter category? This suggestion is an unreasonable interpretation of the NSW Government stance, and the Treasury stance in particular, as the Trust was given the rent from the old RAS site (ie Fox and EQ) and the Treasury generous provision of capital grants as well as other grants.

**Secondly, what should the present Trust seek to preserve? It should preserve a Great Urban and Historic Park as parkland.** This involves knowledge of aesthetics and parklands history including Federation in the Park and the rejection of the Parklands Olympic Complex proposals. The preservation and enhancement of the park territorially and environmentally are central concerns. **These features include landscape design for natural beauty, preservation of Federation period charm where possible, and a broad appreciation of park aesthetics. There is current weakness in all these areas.**

**Thirdly, the selection and preservation of trees is very important in this work.** The two varieties of fig trees are an iconic feature of this Great Urban and Historic Park by design and these trees should be preserved as long as possible with a life of several hundred years. **Trees create a relaxing environment that contrasts with the urban environment. They are a precious urban oxygen farm and pollution filter.** Further, consider the destruction of 12 mature gum trees and of the acoustical embankment sheltering the tennis courts, netball courts and Centennial Park residential area from ANZAC PARADE traffic noise. **This embankment was destroyed for an ostentatious metered carpark!** The Trust must share the blame for massive tree destruction associated with the CSELR. There were other CSELR options as the Trust appears to be aware at least in respect to the southern boundary along Alison Road where park walks and an acoustical mound have been partly destroyed as well as a fine line of trees.

**Fourthly, the immediate urban environment should be of concern to the Trust.** The Centennial Park Garden Suburb is under unreasonable pressure from Trust decisions such as the overuse of the Moore Park SE playing fields and the resulting traffic and parking problems. Surprisingly, given the Parklands dedication, noise problems adversely affecting the residential neighbourhood have occurred. Urban overdevelopment locally may adversely affect placid parkland vistas as well as introduce through and non-park traffic in the Parklands that is already a serious problem partly due to Trust planning (eg the Robertson Road exit). Also currently consider the implications of the WestConnex extension and the impact on intersections adjoining the Parklands. **Through traffic in the Parklands area and the destruction of trees and park alienation follow inevitably from these proposals.**

**Fifthly, the current Trust noise policy needs review.** It is disingenuous. Selective monitoring of sound levels of rock concerts diverts attention from the impact on traditional park users as well as local residents. **There are wider social issues associated with illicit drug distribution as well as with the location and length and evening nature of these noisy functions in a Great Urban and Historic Park.** These functions constitute an inappropriate use that may be challenged legally.

Also amplified noise associated with the Superintendent's Cottage and the Rangers Cottage, that are now let for private functions, are of concern. Further sporting groups and other lessees using amplified sound have also violated reasonable concern for others. **The aural policy of the Trust is full of contradictions with Park dedication and government policy, much to the annoyance of local residents and traditional park users.**

**Sixthly, strangely there is a long list of concerns about maintenance in the Parklands apart from the tree destruction due to CSELR and Trust actions.**  
*Here are a few illustrations.*

**Repeated complaints about obnoxious weeds** have been treated with slight concern; occasional spraying of mature plants fails to recognise that the seeds, that proliferate at maturity and earlier, are immune to the spraying and create a repeated cycle; that is spraying is necessary on the young plants before seeding. The Sydney City Council has co-operated in dealing with the repeated problem in Martin Road infestations originating in the Park

**Again repeated complaints about erosion in the Parklands** have also been treated with slight concern and much erosion has now been aggravated by the dry spell. This problem has been substantially ignored and calls for a variety of measures.

**Again proper maintenance of the "Centennial Park iconic fence"** on the boundary of Centennial Park and in Moore Park is almost non-existent now except for emergencies. Fifty years ago this iconic heritage preserved fence was painted regularly, corrosion was dealt with especially at the base of the spikes and cementing of fractures in the base of the fence done to improve longevity; these simple measures are all ignored now – why?

Again the maintenance of **the Moore Park chain fence** is almost non-existent and encourages vandalism.

**At best the present top dressing is highly selective and is missing in important areas.**

*More money is constantly demanded but maintenance is a preventive measure that is also money saving.*

**Seventhly, excessive temporary and permanent and tizzy signage has been added to the Parklands environment** in spite of attention being drawn to Land and Environment Court rulings, launched by residents, covering a number of instances. These excesses reflect a lack of concern and understanding of parkland aesthetics and are frequently associated with commercial activities in the Parklands.

**One can only say maturity of understanding and concern for park maintenance is missing in the Trust.**

#### **CHAPTER 4. WHAT IS THE TRUST STRATEGY FOR THE EQ?**

*Should EQ be an Entertainment Quarter or an Educational Quarter? Should COFA have been relocated to complement AFTRS? Could this happen in the future? Should EQ have residential development and commercial development rather than community uses? Should EQ be integrated with the Centennial Parklands? In fact the CP&MPT is now the landlord for the whole of the old RAS site and needs proper and sincere research into potential uses.*

**The future of the old RAS site including the EQ was much debated when the RAS moved to Homebush to be part of an international sports and expo site.** Many issues about the future of the old RAS site were raised at the time including conversion of the whole site to parkland to add to the Centennial Parklands. And another option was residential development to add to the Centennial Park Garden Suburb. In due course the community accepted proposals to establish local film studios, currently Fox Film Studios that has recycled a number of the RAS buildings including several exhibition halls as film studios. The southern portion of the site that is EQ includes the old RAS Showring, two cinema complexes, AFTRS, a ballet school and some shops and restaurants, a pub and the Hordern and RHI. In the event the old Showring has luckily been retained as open space (but not landscaped), and is used for community markets, occasional circus and other activities.

**The site has further potential to complement the (Fox) film studios and for related community media and educational purposes including documentary making, a film library and a cooperative bookshop.** Recent developments such as wine bars are of concern

One proposal is to establish a **Globe theatre** with appropriate school, University and community involvement from Sydney, NSW and beyond. Another proposal is for a performance high school to complement the Newtown school with a different emphasis. Another is to house **community and educational media activities** including community radio, video and TV facilities. And note the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal comment on the licence application by Sydney Public Broadcasting Foundation and the Channels developed by **Centennial Park Community Video and Cable Association such as NASA, Worldnet and a Community Access Channel as part of the Centennial Park Optic Fibre Trials.** Also note the close proximity of a number of schools and the Paddington Town Hall ventures including 2RES, Chauvel cinema and the video studios. Note the local efforts to establish FM in Australia and a number of radio stations (including 2MBS, 2RPH, 2RES), Schoolnet, Uninet (now absorbed in ARNET supported by 39 Australian Universities) and the Centennial Park Optic Fibre trials that had 12 channels developed by the local residents and was subsequently half sold by Telstra to Murdoch to become Foxtel.

Community Radio House, Sydney Public Affairs Radio Foundation (SPAR) and Sydney Open Channel (SOC) and a Community Media Centre were nascent ideas that temporarily withered because of the difficulty of finding suitable low cost premises at the time, and lack of the authorities' vision that could have been corrected.

**The initial development of the southern section of the old RAS site by Fox and Lend Lease was a planning and financial failure involving the write off of over \$400m.** This is no small matter. Next CFS Retail was happy to sell the remaining portion of its lease to a consortium, led by retailer Gerry Harvey, that apparently wants commercial development of the site and beyond in Moore Park. Mr Harvey's consortium apparently only sees commerce.

**Resolution 1.** The southern section of the old RAS site should be retained for present and future community uses with limited commercial development.

**Resolution 2.** The residential real estate development should be confined to a residential college for AFTRS.

**Resolution 3.** The proposals of the present lessees of the EQ for an extension of their lease should not be allowed.

**Resolution 4.** A community co-operative bookshop should be established on the site to accept book donations from the public.

**Resolution 5.** A Globe theatre (apron stage) should be established on the site with complementary research facilities to produce Shakespeare, other productions and for public and community meetings. A Shakespeare library with access to cinema should be available for research by high school and University students and others including visitors and tourists.

**Resolution 6.** The bus station site should be retained for buses (eg bringing School children to the theatres or sports). The site should not have been closed off for mini tennis!

**Resolution 7.** The Hordern and RHI should be retained as a popular indoor music location and as an exhibition area.

**Resolution 8.** Night Club activities on the site should be phased out as inconsistent with community uses. There have been serious concerns about drug distribution that cannot be denied.

**Resolution 10.** Beautification of the EQ site requires much better landscaping than has occurred so far and with integration with Driver Avenue including the reopening of the access gates that was the main RAS entrance.

**Resolution 11.** Schools ranging from kindergarten to performance high schools and supplementary activities such as ballet, opera and stage training should be considered.

**Resolution 12.** There should be no physical link between the SCG/SFS and the present EQ site other than the present Driver Avenue and Lang Road Entrances to preserve the family and community uses of the site. The traditional Driver Avenue entrances are adequate and the main historic entrance should be reopened and maintained except for special occasions.

**Resolution 13.** The Trust should examine the implications and lessons of the loss of the proposed South Paddington Park & Community Centre that was approved by the City Council. Ventures proposed for that site included artist and artisan facilities, relocation of the Frank Saywell Kindergarten, indoor tennis and a community gymnasium all using existing buildings on a landscaped site. A swimming complex was also envisaged on the Moore Park Road boundary.

## CHAPTER 5. WHAT IS THE TRUST STRATEGY FOR SPORTS FACILITIES?

**Preamble:** The first set of problems concern the commercialisation of sport with its demand for special facilities that has led to problems for the CP&MPT. For example, the alleged provision of a fenced off AFL ground opposite the SCG for the commercial Sydney Swans raised the ire of local cricketers and park lovers. For example again, mismanagement at the golf club led to partial commercialisation and a money generating golf driving range added from the Park partly for financial reasons. **The second set of problems is concerned with the local demand for participant sport facilities.** For example, the precipitant shutting down of the Moore Park bowling club has led to incessant demands to turn the site into above ground and underground car parks mainly, if only partly, for the commercial operations at the golf course. Again there is the demand of Lord Mayor Clover Moore to limit the golf course to 9 holes all north of Dacey Avenue and to add local sport and recreation on the south side of Dacey Avenue. **The third set of problems is concerned with the demand and supply of participant sports facilities for the region.** The use of the Marks Athletic field for regional schools would be a leading example. But there is also the bussing in of schools to Moore Park SE with car and bus parking excesses in Martin and Robertson Roads, and even into Centennial Park reversing earlier restrictions on bus entry. **The fourth set of problems is concerned with the demand and supply of spectator sport facilities.** So far the Trust, with community support, has successfully prevented some of the incessant demands by the SCG (eg the alienation of the whole of Moore Park East and the recent proposed Kippax Lake stadium). Also the recent demands by the tennis bodies for a tennis complex in Moore Park were apparently rejected. **In both cases these developments would be at the cost of Olympic Park at Homebush and other western suburbs facilities.**

*Some elaboration of these points follow.*

**Firstly, there is a case for the free use of parkland for sport and related passive recreation. The Parklands are a community good for the "common good" and not for special groups.** This is what should be meant by "The Park is there to share" and not by adding extraneous facilities that should be located elsewhere. Health and active recreation in parkland for all are seen as closely linked since the reactions to

the overcrowding of the Industrial Revolution, and its modern equivalent in the Information Age is feeding the CBD with workers. Thus there is a need to ration and allocate a scarce resource in the absence of appropriate and adequate open space provision in Sydney town planning. Centennial Parkland was designed to provide for walking and horse riding around Grand Drive. Walking needs encouragement but not by narrowing Grand Walk in Centennial Park as occurred a few years ago. However, the CP&MPT was certainly correct in rejecting the administration suggestion of car parking meters and the macadisation of car parking spots in Centennial Park although they have crept in (eg in Moore Park). The present expanded cycle facilities do create problems for pedestrians and car users and should be reviewed and not be extended in Centennial Park. The area in front of the cycle shop is a commercial and safety invasion that is simply bad planning that earlier Trusts would not have allowed.

**Secondly, this absence of adequate open space needs to be addressed as the Greater Sydney Commission has suggested for good town planning and to take the pressure off the Centennial Parklands.** This is a view strongly supported by the Keep Sydney Beautiful campaign and the Save the Parks Campaign and other groups. The CP&MPT needs to play a role as a Model of Excellence not just in providing facilities but in encouraging and assisting others to do so. The loss of the proposed South Paddington Park and Community Centre, on the Army Engineers' land, for example, for the SFS was a tragic mistake at Moore Park especially given the earlier SCG destruction of Cricket Ground No2 and of the Sports Ground. A new Allianz/SFS stadium in the Moore Park area creates problems for the Trust and local residents. A critical review by the CP&MPT is called for in the interests of the provision of appropriate sports facilities for Greater Sydney.

**Thirdly, the absence of concern and even knowledge by the CP&MPT of the disappearance of the near new Fred Miller Indoor Stadium for indoor tennis, basket ball etc during Eastern Distributor construction are amazing.** The SBHigh and UTS initiatives are a minor compensation that could be improved with appropriate support.

**Fourthly, planning sport facilities in the Centennial Parklands should involve the sporting clubs and the local community.** The destruction of the cricketers' club house in Moore Park SE was unfortunate at the time but perhaps inevitable in the light of subsequent events; and there was no compensation. However, support and close liaison is apparent at the golf club. Further, should the Golf Club House be opened up as a community facility available to other sporting groups and local residents at Moore Park? What is more urgent is for Sports planning with Centennial Parklands Sports Groups and with local residents that can focus on preservation of sporting facilities. Surely such a body would not endorse the fenced off synthetic football field in Moore Park SE rather than Moore Park East! And the mini tennis facility at the entrance to the bus parking area is a devious attempt to prevent its legitimate use rather than directing buses to park in Robertson and Martin Roads against weight and town planning regulation.

*The propensity to commercialise sport in Moore Park does not encourage developments elsewhere that could be more convenient and appropriate in what is now a multicentre metropolis.*

## CHAPTER 6 . THE TRUST'S NEED FOR INFORMED PLANNING and FOR A CRITIQUE OF CURRENT PLANS

**Preamble: The biggest weakness in the Trust's current approach to Planning for a Great and Historic Park is the emphasis, almost a preoccupation, on increasing visitor numbers ( by any means?) and achieving a surplus with current receipts greater than current expenditure to allegedly sustain the Parklands.** This approach twists the meaning of sustain and fails to note the historical diminution of the Parklands in recent years that has continued under the current Trust. Moreover some Trust land adjoining the Randwick Racecourse was sold off to the CSELR contractor operator at I am advised was probably a serious undervaluation. This is the slippery slope that eventually involves turning a Great Park into a Luna Park to the delight of certain vested interests. The theme "a park is for everyone" twists the People's Park dedication if it encourages non traditional uses of the Great Urban and Historic Park. These non-traditional uses have proliferated at the cost of sustaining a Great and Historic Urban Park. Ultimately they lead to alienation and deterioration of Trust lands. **Moreover Park Aesthetics are being ignored.**

*Here are a few examples of non traditional uses that are frequently raised in community discussions.*

**First here is an historical alienation.** The **old tramsheds site** at the corner of Dacey and South Dowling Streets became the Brambles container dump and then, against the fervent planning of the City Council, it was sold by the NSW Government (over the Christmas period!) and then in a series of rapid transactions to become the SupaCenta that then sought to expand. This sale of land scheduled to return to Moore Park by the local town planning authority, cut off a most important signature corner of Moore Park. The planned SupaCenta would have been better located in the near west where there were many possible sites at the time..

**Second, the next corner opposite on the north side is now under attack with alienation of Parkland and Tree Destruction from the WestConnex Extension.** Has this Extension been correctly thought out? And has the Trust sought advice on options? There are some features of WestConnex Extension that have been long planned but not this particular alienation that further adds to long run congestion in the Parklands environment.

**Thirdly, day night Centennial Park rock concerts of long duration (10hours+) are licensed to sell alcohol and are an acknowledged venue for drug distribution contrary to State law and policy.** These concerts are seen as an inappropriate use of the Great Urban and Historic Park because of the disturbance to traditional users and neighbours in surrounding suburbs and uncheckable antisocial behaviour that extends beyond the Park. The disturbance is not only due to park alienation and damage on the day but for preparation a week before and for dismantling a week after the event. **These events are a perfect cover for drug distribution that has become a major social problem which no one honestly can deny. The CP&MPT should not be aiding this antisocial and illegal activity that has long run health and social consequences in the community and has even occasioned death in the Park.**



**Fourthly, excessive signage lowers the quality of a Great Urban and Historic Park** especially where it is connected with commercial activities and other non traditional uses of the Park. The Trust administration is obsessed with building up the number of visitors that are mischievously commercialised and labelled “customers” in its current thinking. **Past rulings of the Land and Environment Court have been ignored.**

**Fifthly, in a bravado attempt to counter the current Parkland alienation the Trust has proposed the closure of Driver Avenue with pop up shops, a mere fad.** This bravado fails to take account of the long run purpose of Driver Avenue, now and in the future, and sweeps away much past planning and reports that have demonstrably not been studied.

**Sixthly, the Superintendent and Ranger Cottages in Centennial Park have been commercialised in a questionable use of these Crown Land uses .** This coincides with a decline in the detail and loving care of Parkland that resulted from these on the spot staff observation posts. Their ranger function should be reinstated. Amplified noise from these commercially converted cottages has been the subject of complaint. **Moreover the commercialisation and outsourcing of the role of the ranger, with a limited set of jobs, creates a break with the older rangers ‘Pride in the Parklands’.** Experience suggests this is cause for concern.

*The basic failure of the Trust Park Planning recently has been the failure to take the Parliamentary dedication of the Parklands seriously and to concentrate on preserving, maintaining and beautifying a Great Urban and Historic Park. Excesses of modernisation and innovation are frequently thoughtless commercialisation contrary to the objective of preserving a Great Urban and Historic Park. This deteriorating trend is of growing concern in spite of Commonwealth and State Heritage Listing. The preservation of a Great Urban and Historic Park is suffering and the needs of metropolitan Sydney with it. There is a failure to understand the “Dynamics of Vested Interests”. The various press releases and submissions of Gerry Harvey are a classic illustration of the “Dynamics of Vested Interests”. But there are many other and diverse illustrations of inappropriate commercial press statements undermining the Trust's main responsibility to maintain, preserve and beautify the Parklands.*

**Of course the Government Objectives in respect to the old RAS site as film studios and appropriate enhancing adjuncts are different from the Centennial Parklands dedication of a Great Urban and Historic Park. There has been a confused attempt by the Trust to marry them.** The objective of fostering a local film and related media activities have not been understood. Much could be done and the Trust has an obligation to pursue this objective that involves forward thinking about community objectives and not immediate and short term commercialisation that will prejudice the achievement of long run objectives. Expertise in community participation and planning is missing. And in true military style it is claimed, perceptive criticism is greeted as the enemy to be destroyed!

**The repeated attempts by the SCG to grab a significant part of Moore Park for a stadium and for car parking and in their destruction of Cricket Ground No2 and of the Sports Ground and of the proposed South Paddington Park and**

**Community Centre call for legislative town planning redress.** The establishment of private club and commercial activities as a substitute on dedicated Crown Land cannot be allowed to carry on in this way. I would hope that a future CP&MP Trust is made the landlord of the SCG grounds so that a countervailing force emerges as repeated attempts by the SCG are contrary to the public interest. The CP&MPT should be in a better position to advise the various Ministers about the town planning implications. In summary, the SCG is being administered as a private club on Crown Land with taxpayers money and with little regard for the need to protect participant sport in Moore Park. Internally the SCG site it is a town planning mess. Hence, the need for a town planning review again with public participation.

**The second step in planning, after understanding objectives, is to ascertain the resources available and how they might be achieved.** Just reporting past financial results in the various Plans, as in the annual reports, is not an answer yet that is all that is in the Plans! Recognition that community involvement is necessary to secure the future has occurred in only a limited way. One example is the repeated and requested failure of the Trust to report to public meetings as in the past and to conduct specialised seminars (ornithology, flora and native animals, equestrian activities, landscaping, etc) for professionals and interested persons on facets of the Trust's responsibilities **as in the past successful seminars!** Centennial Parklands should not become a velodrome. **Some alienation of goodwill has resulted.**

**The third step in the planning process is to make forecasts.** The Trust preoccupation with being financially self sustaining has not been followed up by credible financial forecasting in the Trust official plans. The complexities of potential government support for a Great Urban and Historic Park call for better information to gain public and parliamentary support. Contrary to recent behaviour by the Trust the resident action movement can be the most important ally in achieving the Objectives of a Great Urban and Historic Park, in the development of film and media activities, and in a more rational approach to planning metropolitan stadia activities.

**The fourth step is the creation of a plan for the Centennial Parklands.** The present dribbling out of various plans of management for the parts of the Centennial Parklands with different periods of coverage is time consuming for the public, staff and parliamentary representatives. This calls for legislative reform in the interests of economy and efficiency and understanding; the Trust and the Minister should be pursuing this rationalisation.

**The fifth step is for the Trust to conduct a continuous review of progress in the achievement a plan. To do this the Trust cannot be a rubber stamp but an "Upper House" conducting inquiries and inviting criticism from outside the administration. The Trust should invite public participation in reviewing the detail of objectives, resources and forecasts made by the administration. The Trust has an obligation to review progress in maintenance of a Great Urban and Historic Park with Democratic Public Participation in Sir Henry's People's Parklands.**

## CHAPTER 7

### SOME CONCLUSIONS:

#### **THE WAY AHEAD FOR Sir Henry Parkes's PEOPLE'S PARKS** *A Centre of Excellence in Park Protection and Maintenance* *versus an Entertainment Complex*

The Centennial Parklands had the potential to be a **Centre of Excellence in Park Protection and Maintenance** in urban environments in Sydney's Eastern Suburbs, in Metropolitan Sydney, in the State, in Australia and internationally. **That potential is the gift of the 19<sup>th</sup> century vision of NSW Governor Lachlan Macquarie, Premier Sir Henry Parkes, and NSW Governor Lord Carrington. But the Trust has not risen to the challenge that is now deliberately implicit in the integration of Centennial Parklands staff with the three Botanic Gardens. That combined operation should be the Centre of Excellence with outreach and the Centennial Parklands should also be a Model of Excellence with outreach.**

The trigger for this vision in recent times was the **informed public and professional reaction**, led by the **Save the Parks Campaign** and its commissioned studies in the 1970s, to the proposed destruction of part of the Centennial Park Garden Suburb and of a Great and Historic Urban Park. Criticism of the inappropriate Moore Park / Centennial Park Olympic Complex needs to be revisited because of SCG repeated aggression and a failure to undertake informed research.

The rise of local Resident Action Groups seeking better planning was assisted at the time by the Green Ban Movement. The NSW Government appointed distinguished architect and town planner Walter Bunning to adjudicate on community protests and submissions. Bunning's decisive recommendation in favour of Homebush for an Olympics Complex was accepted by the Government. This finding needs to be revisited especially because of, I repeat, renewed SCG aggression and the westward growth of Sydney across the Sydney Plain.

However, the vision of properly managed parkland in Sydney from Kelly's Bush at Hunters Hill, to the Centennial Parklands, to Sydney Harbour and Foreshores, to Parramatta Park and the Nepean area involves a **community vision of the unique circumstances that should make Sydney a Great City. The Greater Sydney Commission has endorsed that view with a vision of a chain of urban parks befitting a multicentre metropolis.**

**The threats to that community vision of a Great Urban and Historic Park at Centennial Park, called by Sir Henry Parkes "The People's Park", have come from entrenched bureaucracies that are seeking to turn the facilities in Moore Park and the Centennial Parklands into an Entertainment Complex. CFS Retail pressed this Entertainment Complex idea for the southern end of the old RAS site after the debacle of the Lend Lease/Fox vision that involved massive write downs of well over \$400m on their initial investment. In fact the EQ should be seen as an Education Quarter reserved for education and community uses with only very limited adjunct commercial uses.**

The **Model of Excellence potential** has been implicitly recognised by the NSW Government and others with the **re-amalgamation** of the CP&MPT administration with the Botanic Gardens staff that administers Farm Cove Botanic Gardens and the

Domain, Mt Tomah and Mt Annan. Surely this was seen as a step towards producing a **Centre of Excellence** apart from career opportunities for the staff involved. *Other parkland amalgamations should be contemplated (eg Bi-Centennial Park as argued elsewhere)*. **The amalgamation plan was not for mindless empire building, but for assisting the community in park protection and maintenance to build a better urban environment across the whole of Sydney.**

**Resolution 1: The purpose of the Centennial Parklands as a Model of Excellence is to help build and to protect a quality urban park in metropolitan Sydney that will enhance the health and well being of the people of Sydney in the Inner and Eastern Suburbs and beyond.**

**Resolution 2. The CP&MP Trust needs to liaise with the Greater Sydney Commission, the Botanic Gardens Trust and the National Parks and Wildlife Service in the establishment of quality urban parks across Sydney including BiCentennial Park. Appointments to the Trust and staff should reflect the need for professional inputs designed to enhance the quality of the urban park network in a major city, the largest in Australia, including, of contemporary interest, Parramatta Park.**

**Resolution 3. The CP&MP Trust is not the owner of the Centennial Parklands except in a narrow legal sense but a temporary custodian of the People's Park. The CP&MPT needs to be made more accountable to the People through genuine public meetings called by the Trust at least annually, and seminars dealing with particular facets of the Parklands. This is good corporate governance.**

**Resolution 4. The papers relating to any disagreement between the NSW government and the Trust should be tabled on the floor of the Legislative Assembly and of the Legislative Council for at least 20 sitting days before implementation of any government directive.**

For example, such a provision might have led to an alternative route for CSELR through ATC land.

**Resolution 5. The Trust should threaten to resign if its mandate to protect the Parklands is compromised by government proposed action as has happened in the past. The light rail and its route through the Parklands was such an issue as were the Tibby Cotter Bridge and the SCG demands for the continuing use of the Parklands for an invasive little used bus station as well as pre-emptive use of the Centennial Park lands for SCG "customer" carparking. .**

**Resolution 6. The NSW Government should acknowledge the importance of the Centennial Parklands as a Great Urban and Historic Park with adequate funding and protection from political interference by the "Reserve Bank of Australia protection" that requires any disagreement between the Trust and the relevant Minister be tabled for at least 20 sitting days in both Houses of the State Parliament.**

**Resolution 7.** To this end the Centennial Parklands should be a Great and Historic Urban Park, not compromised by commercial interests and inappropriate lighting and signage that proliferates. Excessive signage needs to be curbed as an inappropriate invasion of urban planning into a Great Urban and Historic Park. Park aesthetics with genuine knowledge needs to be much better understood by the administration and the Trust.

**Resolution 8.** Day /Night rock concerts and amplified music in the Parklands have adversely affected traditional park users and local residents to a much greater extent than the Trust appears to realise. These concerts are ready made drug distribution venues exacerbating a major social problem here. These highly commercial functions affect the Parkland with a truck and operator invasion for a week before and a week after the event; that is a fortnight on each occasion.

**Resolution 10.** The Entertainment Complex idea is out of place in a Great Park. It has more relevance to Homebush as an international sporting and expo site that needs more thoughtful planning and input and, for some purposes to Darling Harbour Convention Centre Complex.

**Resolution 11.** The SCG aggression is not in the public interest and reflects a 19<sup>th</sup> Century view of Sydney's needs. Over the years the SCG has become commercially oriented as a private fiefdom but seeking excessive taxpayer funds, and it has done much damage to the parklands at Moore Park and elsewhere as well as to local residential amenity. Moore Park is now far from the centre of gravity of Sydney's population and will become even less central than it was in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The provision of private club facilities on Crown Land and the commercial developments of the old Sports Ground site require re-examination in connection with a review of Stadia Policy that spills over into the Parklands.

**Resolution 12.** There needs to be a proper town planning inquiry into planning of the SCG lands with present extraneous uses scrutinised so as to maximise sport facilities in the Moore Park area in view of SCG past aggression and jumbled on site development.

**Resolution 13.** There is also a need for a town planning inquiry into the optimum locations for stadia complexes in metropolitan Sydney including an assessment of the opportunity cost of knocking down the present SFS and rebuilding on the present site. There should be a cost benefit study, not a simplistic and dubious business case.

**Resolution 14.** The role and functions of Infrastructure NSW need to be developed so that honest cost benefit analysis (as distinct from so called business plans) and comparative cost benefit is presented to the government before decisions are made. In the case of CSELR and the SFS, the damage to the Centennial Parklands as well as many other factors that are left out of account would need to be included in the assessment.