

**Submission
No 230**

INQUIRY INTO SYDNEY STADIUMS STRATEGY

Name: Mr Bob Edgar

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Director,
Public Works Committee
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
Sydney NSW 2000

25th May 2018

I write with reference to the INQUIRY INTO THE SYDNEY STADIUMS STRATEGY. As a Western Sydney resident my comments will mainly concern the Parramatta Stadium and War Memorial Pool.

I am of the view that the Stadium Strategy was devised with little or no consultation with the local communities. Particularly with regard to Parramatta, the Government sought to build a new stadium with increased seating capacity that would replace a stadium that had only on one or two (non sporting) occasions been filled to capacity. In effect, football games in the future will be played in front of 5,000 extra empty seats, at a cost of more than \$300,000,000. The existing stadium had existed for more than 35 years on the same site as Parramatta War Memorial Pool and it was clear to any casual observer that inasmuch as a new stadium was necessary there would be no reason for this situation not to continue. Indeed, the North Parramatta Residents Action Group (NPRAG) engaged the architectural firm, Figgis, Jefferson and Tapa, who designed the pool in the mid 1960s to draw up a new stadium showing that this was achievable, without the loss of a much loved pool and the expense of a replacement. The Government refused to consider it.

There was no consultation with the community of Parramatta regarding the closure and demolition of the pool other than the offer of an alternative venue for the use of Parramatta Swimming Club. All other groups were not informed of the pool's imminent closure. This includes more than 45 schools in the area, various pensioner groups, families, rehab patients and recreational swimmers. I can say that on numerous occasions over more than 12 months of campaigning for the pool's retention pool patrons were shocked and surprised that the pool could be arbitrarily shut down and demolished. At the time of the announcement of the new stadium it is clear that there was no consideration for the retention or replacement of Parramatta Pool. Only in the last days of the pool's operation was there any indication of the possibility of a replacement and this would involve alienation of yet another parcel of the World Heritage Listed Parramatta Park.

Notwithstanding the loss of Parramatta War Memorial Pool, paid for by public subscription, the location of the stadium needs to be called into question. It will greatly affect the amenity of recreational users of Parramatta Park, worship at nearby churches, and the rights and amenity of local residents. Traffic to and from the stadium, vehicular and pedestrian, will enormously compromise the movement of general traffic. Here was a great opportunity to locate the stadium in the same precinct as Rosehill Racecourse. At Rosehill there is ready access to main roads, James Ruse Drive, Victoria Rd, Parramatta Rd and M4, there is a railway, river access, even a nearby heliport. The possibility of a wonderful outcome for all sections of the community was wilfully ignored in favour of commercial interests.

It is absolutely a disgrace that the ratepayers of Parramatta should be asked to pay for a new pool when the existing pool was summarily removed without consultation and without a replacement being considered. The Parramatta community has now been without a pool for 14 months, without a design for a new pool having been finalised. Best advice suggests it will be at least another three

years before any new pool could be completed, if the first sod were turned today. The Government has pledged \$30,000,000 towards the cost but this will barely cover the design stage.

I am confident in saying that there was no clamouring from the Parramatta community for a new stadium and there was definitely no movement in favour of the theft and demolition of Parramatta War Memorial Pool.

Parramatta Stadium, when completed, will sit idle for most of its life as did its predecessor. The hundreds of new jobs trumpeted by Parramatta State MP Dr Geoff Lee will be filled on event days only. Parramatta Pool was one of very few Western Sydney public facilities open all year round. No more will nearby schools have ready access to their local pool for swimming lessons, training and carnivals. Pensioners are denied their exercise and recreational swimming, not to mention the social outlet. Sporting groups such as diving and water polo have been dispersed to far flung suburbs. Parramatta office workers can no longer enjoy a swim before work or at lunchtime. Family groups will no more picnic on the lawns, enjoying a healthy, inexpensive outing. The health and wellbeing of the community has been irrevocably compromised in favour of the interests of large corporations. All of these groups can now stroll to stadium and stand on the bare paved forecourt while staring in disbelief at the social and architectural blight that has comprehensively altered their sporting and recreational life.

In summary, Parramatta Stadium is an ill-conceived piece of infrastructure. There was little or no public consultation regarding the size, location or design of the stadium or the future of Parramatta Pool. Indeed, at a meeting in 2016 with representatives of Infrastructure NSW, Venues NSW and Parramatta Stadium management NPRAG was told that community consultation was limited to the National Rugby League (NRL), the Football Federation Australia (FFA), Australian Rugby Union (ARU), Parramatta Eels, Western Sydney Wanderers and the president of Parramatta Swimming Club (who were offered an alternative venue). The people of Parramatta deserve better.

Best Regards,
Bob Edgar