

**Submission
No 81**

**INQUIRY INTO GREATER SYDNEY PARKLANDS TRUST
BILL 2021**

Organisation: National Trust of Australia (NSW) Parramatta Regional Branch
Date Received: 16 January 2022

16 January 2022

Hon. David Borsak MLC
Committee Chair
Select Committee on the Greater Sydney Parklands Trust Bill
Parliament of NSW
6 Macquarie Street
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Sir,

Re: Greater Sydney Parklands Trust Bill 2021

The National Trust of Australia (NSW) Parramatta Regional Branch strongly opposes the Greater Sydney Parklands Trust (GSPT) Bill 2021.

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission on the GSPT Bill. The National Trust of Australia (NSW) is the state's oldest and most respected heritage organisation. We have 18,000 members and we are supported by local and regional Branches who represent the views of local National Trust members. This submission is made by the Parramatta Regional Branch (Parramatta Branch).

Last year the Government put forward a proposed GSPT Bill that creates an umbrella model for the management of Sydney's parklands. The Bill seeks to make parklands profitable through a "selloff" to corporations rather than an investment in improvement and growth to provide open space for the increasing population of Sydney. At this time of a worldwide pandemic, when access to open air is a necessary right for the local community, this Bill seeks to diminish parklands and take control away from their local communities.

This Parramatta Branch submission sets out our concerns, with a particular focus on our local Parramatta Park.

The Branch:

- OPPOSES the establishment of the top-down umbrella approach for the management of Sydney's parks as compared to the local management of parks.
- OPPOSES the concentration of too much power in the hands of the Minister of the day when local management by local people will provide better use of parks.
- OPPOSES the "activation" of precious green space parklands as a revenue source to the detriment of the community use of parks.
- SUPPORTS the proposition that all parkland across Sydney should be used for passive recreation for the community as the first option.
- SUPPORTS the retention of the Parramatta Park Trust that must comprise a mix of skilled representatives to manage this unique UNESCO World Heritage Listed Governor's Domain.
- SUPPORTS the extension of Parramatta Park to include the Cumberland Hospital East Precinct and Wisteria Gardens.

The Parramatta Regional Branch represents the local views of the Parramatta Region heritage community



We have concerns about the proposed powers of the Greater Sydney Parklands Trust Board

The values of the Board, as stated in the GSPT Bill do not align with the Minister's '50 Year Vision' and the goal to protect and increase parklands as outlined in the White Paper.

As outlined in the Bill, the focus of the Board and CEO is on land acquisition and the generation of revenue. With this focus, there is little understanding and appreciation of the cultural and social values of Parramatta Park which is recognised by UNESCO for its World Heritage value.

We need legislation that will protect and safeguard parklands for future generations. This legislation gives no assurances that Parramatta Park's World Heritage significance will not be lost through inappropriate uses within Parramatta Park to generate income or through State Significant Development using the provisions in the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*.

We have concerns about the disposal and surrendering of parklands

The Parramatta Branch has grave concerns for the continuing transfer of Parramatta Park land for "public purposes" and/or "roads". This clause in the Bill will allow further transport infrastructure and tourism activities or, as we are seeing in Parramatta Park with a State Significant Development hotel development proposed by the Parramatta Leagues Club on existing Park land.

Since the establishment of the Parramatta Park in 1858, Parramatta Park land has been divided and diminished in size by, and including, the western rail line tracks, Park Parade, CommBank Stadium, Parramatta High School, Club Parramatta (previously RSL club), and Parramatta Leagues Club. Recently we have seen further reduction in Parramatta Park with the redevelopment of the new CommBank stadium requiring the demolition of the community's public pool. This development resulted in community deprivation for access to a pool and the subsequent replacement now under construction on another portion of Parramatta Park land. Further the Parramatta Leagues Club have now submitted a State Significant Development for a hotel to be constructed on existing Parramatta Park land. Additionally, the Dept of Education has identified the Mays Hill portion of Parramatta Park as an "activation" opportunity on parkland adjacent to the swimming pool which could result in further precious green space taken away.

We need individual Park Trusts

The Parramatta Branch believes that the best management of Sydney's uniquely different parklands and, in particular Parramatta Park, must be entrusted to the community in which they are located.

The membership of these individual Trusts should combine a mix of representatives from:

- local community;
- Australia's first peoples;
- heritage expert;
- park management expert;
- biodiversity expert; and
- local government area in which the park is located.

We need Parramatta Park preserved and expanded as green space

The Parramatta Branch has concerns about the GSPT Bill stressing 'activation' of parklands rather than protection of parklands. Further the GSPT Board will diminish the local community involvement in the management of the green space that will be accessible to them. Genuine community participation is necessary for the management of each individual park.

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Parramatta Park requires the re-imagining of the Parramatta Park Trust Board. Parramatta Park is a World Heritage listed site that contains Old Government House, the oldest public building still in existence and as such requires strong heritage representation from the National Trust of Australia (NSW).

We believe that this GSPT Bill should be withdrawn and reshaped to highlight the protection of community green space, heritage, biodiversity, and public access. With the exponential population growth happening in Parramatta, the Parramatta Branch urges the Government, as part of the Westmead 2036 Place Strategy, to return the 20-hectare Cumberland Hospital East Precinct back to Parramatta Park. The Cumberland Hospital precinct contains the National Heritage listed Parramatta Female Factory as well as 70 State Heritage items.

Parramatta Park, originally the Governor's Domain, was the genesis of Australia's botanic gardens and its continuation as recreational green space highlighted by gardens is vital for the health and wellbeing of the existing community as well as the many thousands envisaged for the future growth of Parramatta. Additionally, the Park must include the promised Wisteria Gardens portion of Cumberland Hospital which, after four years this transfer of title is still yet to occur.

The transition from Governor's Domain to Parramatta Park had its origins in local agitation for access to the domain. From 1848, the community lobby group - *Parramatta Citizens' Movement for Recreation in Open Lands* - clamoured for access to the domain for 'exercise and recreation in open grounds and pure air'. Parramatta Park became a "park for the people" ten years later in 1858. These access requirements for 'exercise and recreation in open grounds and pure air' are even more important now 164 years later. Open space has been shown to be essential factor in the disease transmission modelling occurring throughout the current COVID-19 pandemic.

Parramatta's population continues to grow exponentially yet Parramatta Park continues to dwindle in size because of commercial allocations. Under the GSPT Bill this will continue to happen. With a population forecast for 2021 at 279,471 (45 times greater than 1858), with further growth estimated to be 487,731 by 2041 (81 times greater than 1858) and the burgeoning community of residents housed in high-rise dwellings devoid of outdoor the community is again clamouring for greater access to parkland for 'exercise and recreation in open grounds and pure air'.

A 50-Year Vision for Greater Sydney's Open Space and Parklands A Discussion Paper

The data from: Tell us about your neighbourhood, Department of Planning, Industry and Environment, 2019; Healthy Built Environment Checklist, NSW Ministry Health 2020; Infrastructure Australia Audit 2019 stated on Page 10 of the discussion paper indicated that: -

"Many people visit local parklands more than once a week for a range of activities – from jogging, walking and relaxing, to barbeques, picnics and ball games."

"70 per cent of respondents consider open space an important factor in their lives".

"60 per cent of people would like to see more outdoor recreation areas near their home or their work".

Further surveys during COVID-19 found that:

- *People used these spaces for exercise, to get outside or for essential activities (such as shopping and accessing services).*
- *People appreciated their local parks, local streets, and walking tracks most of all.*
- *45 per cent of people spent more time in public space than they did before the COVID-19 restrictions.*

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We need more parkland created to address the impact of global warming

Australia is a hot, dry country and with the consequences of global warming will be an even hotter and drier country. We are already seeing the impact of rising temperatures on Parramatta, with temperatures reaching 47 degrees Celsius in recent years. Parramatta is becoming a “concrete jungle” and there is a great need to increase tree coverage to allow trees to remove carbon dioxide from the air, storing carbon in the trees and soil. This action will in turn release oxygen back into the atmosphere. We need more green space parkland to sustain a health living environment for future generations. If the Bill is passed, “activation” would result in less green space and increasing temperatures, poorer air quality and have detrimental effects on the health of the community.

In summary, the Parramatta Branch does not support the GSPT Bill and believes that individual park trusts, particularly the Parramatta Park Trust managing the UNESCO World Heritage listed Governor’s Domain, must be retained. This Bill will have immense impact on parklands that once lost to “activation” will be lost forever for future generations.

Yours Faithfully,

Cheryl Bates
President, Parramatta Regional Branch
National Trust of Australia (NSW)

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