

**Submission
No 88**

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

Organisation: AFL NSW ACT

Date Received: 14 January 2022

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The Hon. Robert Borsak, MLC
Select Committee on the Greater Sydney Parklands Trust Bill 2021
Parliament House
6 Macquarie Street
Sydney NSW 2000

RE: Select Committee on the Greater Sydney Parklands Trust Bill 2021

Dear Chair and Members of the Select Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this submission to the inquiry into the Greater Sydney Parklands Trust Bill 2021 (the Bill).

AFL NSW/ACT is responsible for the growth and development of Australian Rules Football in New South Wales. AFL plays a significant role in communities throughout the state and AFL NSW/ACT manages inclusive and aspirational community football leagues, delivers participation experiences designed to inspire the next generation of players and fans, and develops quality places to play, socialise and connect to ensure all participants are welcome and thrive in our environments.

The Moore Park precinct is strategically significant for the AFL with the SCG being the home of the Sydney Swans – an elite club which boasts a membership of more than 60,000 and an impressive 1.2 million supporters nationwide, the largest supporter base in the AFL. Recent developments will see the Sydney Swans, in collaboration with the NSW Swifts and NSW Government, redevelop the Royal Hall of Industries into a world-class training and administration building designed to house the Swans' men's and women's and Swifts programs, complete with a community hub to the south of the SCG. The AFL's state headquarters has been located within the precinct for more than three decades with 65 full-time employees based in its Entertainment Quarter office located adjacent to the Showring Oval which was home to local AFL Sydney community football matches up until the late 1990s.

Over the last decade AFL has seen an explosion in interest and participation across NSW, especially in the past five years with the growth of women's football and the launch of the national AFLW competition. NSW now has the second most female community footballers in the country and for every one female football team in 2010, there are now over 11 teams playing our game. The Sydney Swans are set to enter AFLW at the end of 2022 alongside the GWS GIANTS which has participated in the competition since its inaugural season in 2017. The popularity of the game is not abating with the Swans already boasting the largest female membership base in the country.

Ensuring the game has a sustainable pathway from Auskick through to elite athletes in Greater Sydney is one of the code's top priorities. Community sport and its talent pathway plays a vital role in building active, cohesive and strong communities. Participation in sport contributes to physical and mental health and wellbeing of individuals and drives a sense of belonging and ritual for those participating or spectating. Access to quality parks and sports fields, and associated amenity, are critical for community and elite sport sustainability.

The AFL's infrastructure challenge across Greater Sydney is now the single biggest factor inhibiting the continued development of our code in NSW, Australia's largest and most strategically important market for the AFL where annual industry economic contribution exceeds \$700 million (pre-COVID).

Despite the consistent growth, the network of approximately 260 venues in NSW trail the nation in both quality of existing venues and capacity to grow the game at community and second tier levels. This is especially acute across Greater Sydney, due to a deficient provision of new open space, and a lack of inclusive amenity and inadequate lighting at existing venues. The average facility in NSW meets just 54 per cent of our AFL Preferred Facility Requirements, only 27 per cent have female friendly changerooms and 68 per cent do not have adequate lighting (100 lux or above).

We value every opportunity to collaborate with government agencies, local Councils, industry and community representatives to shape a shared vision for adequate supply, quality and access to sporting infrastructure. We must do this to support increasing community demand for open space and modern amenity in conjunction with passive use, which has been so valued by Greater Sydney residents during the challenges of the COVID-19 global pandemic.

AFL NSW/ACT shares the view that the various parks that comprise Parklands Estate are best managed through a single agency, such as the Greater Sydney Parklands, that can speak with a unified voice and engage with other government agencies, local councils, and community representatives to shape a shared vision for the future growth, governance, management, and funding of the State's parklands. However, and as noted in the white paper *Parklands for People*, it will be important to acknowledge the individual characteristics of each park and to identify the unique value and contribution each can make to the health and well-being of Greater Sydney's residents.

Accordingly, we request that in implementing the amalgamation of a number of parklands across Greater Sydney under the proposed *Greater Sydney Parklands Trust Bill 2021*, the Select Committee reviewing the contents of the Bill ensure no unintended consequences for the continued development of the state-significant Moore Park sports and entertainment precinct that services local community, sporting, performing arts and education industries daily on Venues NSW and Centennial Parklands land.

Specifically, AFL NSW/ACT is concerned that amendments to the Bill agreed in the Legislative Assembly in their current format will:

- Stifle the proposed \$2 billion revitalisation of The Entertainment Quarter within Moore Park, set to provide a vibrant, connected and accessible precinct for the local community and surrounding sport, art and entertainment industries *and*
- Prohibit car parking on grass at Upper Kippax Lake (EP2) in Moore Park without alternate solution(s) causing significant accessibility concerns for patrons accessing the sport and entertainment precinct, home to the Sydney Swans and all AMPS members.

Entertainment Quarter Revitalisation

AFL NSW/ACT strongly supports the proposed Entertainment Quarter Reinvention as part of Carsingha's USP and masterplan that will stimulate Sydney's sporting and entertainment industries at a critical time as Sydney seeks to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. A key component of the revitalisation of the precinct involves refurbishment of the Showring Oval and returning it to its historic use as an active sports and events venue. The proposed masterplan includes an industry-leading multi-purpose surface for the community capable of hosting local AFL club training and competition matches, schools and community events, female pathway programs and Sydney Swans AFLW matches as well as local and international outdoor events. This would see more than 1,350 hours of activity played annually on the Showring Oval engaging thousands of local community and Greater Sydney participants to the precinct.

In addition, the adaptive reuse of heritage buildings adjacent to the Showring will be the home of dedicated multi-purpose community clubroom and female change room facilities. This space will also host community health and wellbeing programs, as well as youth leadership camps for Indigenous and multicultural athletes, school holiday camps, gala days and a variety of other community activities.

Through a collaborative approach, the collective vision for a multi-purpose active sports and events venue in the Entertainment Quarter will benefit young and old. A unique opportunity exists to revitalise and unlock the precincts potential, directly support women's sport participation at all levels, while also benefiting the broader community with more quality open space that is in high demand.

We urge the Select Committee to consider removing the prohibitive amendments to the Bill that were made in the Legislative Assembly that puts at risk the significant benefits afforded through the Entertainment Quarter Revitalisation that will be enjoyed by current and future generations.

Car Parking

AFL NSW/ACT is supportive of the phased removal of car-parking on greenspace in Moore Park only at a time when a mutually agreed process, timeline and solution(s) are agreed and approved by all key stakeholders. AFL NSW/ACT recommends a collaborative approach to the issue be sought between AMPS, NSW Government, Transport for NSW, Venues NSW, Greater Sydney Parklands, the Entertainment Quarter and the local community to ensure that any future vision for Greater Sydney Parklands is complimentary to the effective utilisation and accessibility of the NSW Government's two world-class stadiums with mutually beneficial outcomes for all stakeholders.

This complex issue need not be adversely influenced or constrained by directives contained within the Bill and we urge the Select Committee to remove from the Bill any reference to parking on Moore Park East greenspace being an offence or prohibited activity at this time.

We welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss our submission further and our aspiration to see the Moore Park precinct fulfil its potential for our local community and Sydney as a global city.

Kind regards,

TIFFANY ROBERTSON
Head of AFL NSW ACT
Australian Football League