

**Submission
No 147**

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

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Greater Sydney Parklands Trust Bill 2021 Upper House Inquiry

I am a Hurlstone Park resident and very much want Sydney's parklands to be maintained improved and extended. I've watched online the Greater Sydney Parklands Forum, Feb 21 (<https://alliance4parks.org/online-forum>) and believe the Act is inadequate.

Greenbelts I noted Minister Stokes was not keen on the Western Sydney Parklands greenbelt which provided connectivity and scope for quality natural habitat. (1:11:18) On the other hand he spoke in praise of the greenbelt of national parks encircling Sydney “*that enlightened leaders of the past safeguarded*”. Most of the minister's electorate comprises Ku-ring-gai National Park east of Cowan Ck and a chunk of Garigal National Park to the south.

City in a park The encircling of Sydney by national parks seems to be his concept of a city in a park “*My vision is rather than having a series of parks in a city, lets have a city in a park*” (1:10:55) This does not bode well for Centennial and Moore Parklands, Callan Park, Parramatta Park and the Western Sydney Parklands, nor any other state or local council owned green spaces. Linda Bergin, president of Headlands Preservation Group and Sydney Harbour Trust said: (15:53) “*The Harbour Trust defines parkland as places of respite and solace. Will Sydneysiders have to travel outside Sydney for respite and solace?*”

Reading between the lines I have no legal skills but have come to realise it's not simply what is written into legislation but what is omitted. There is no mention of what powers might be at the Minister's discretion or other means of getting round the following very clear and specific prohibition:

Part 3 Functions of Trust

Division 2 Functions about land

22 Prohibition on disposal of GSPT estate

The Trust must not sell, exchange or otherwise dispose of the GSPT estate or land within the GSPT estate.

I support member for Auburn, Linda Voltz's, recommendation, “*the scheduling of the land and the requirement that government has to take any changes before parliament*”. (1:25:10)

Collaboration Minister Stokes spoke passionately about collaboration and I was initially impressed with the Act's proposed make up of the Trust, more to the liking of the Alliance, only

Division 2 Community trustee boards

40 Trust's powers

The Trust may, at any time—

(b) dissolve a community trustee board.

He spoke of a Pittwater campaign to preserve Currawong holiday location, formerly for trade union members. The NSW Government granted the land to the Labor Council of NSW when two weeks paid annual leave was won, post WWII, and the unions sold it to a developer in 2007. The NSW government purchased it in 2011 for the local council to manage after community collaboration.

<https://www.northernbeaches.nsw.gov.au/things-to-do/currawong/history>

Good Northern Beaches story, not so happy collaboration for the Western Sydney

Parklands where native forest has been eradicated, compensated for by off-sets which in turn have been eradicated for developments. Habitat for rare black bitterns lost, habitat for the critically endangered Regent Honeyeater threatened by more development. Koala's in peril of losing the Georges River – Nepean River corridor. On the other hand feral deer have thrived.

Backyard semi privacy lost to high rise, an unmet need I love Sydney City Council's Sydney Park with planted native bushland. Walking tracks, hideaways with benches, open forest with rocks to sit on in quiet contemplation, log structures for semi-privacy, places where people can be themselves away from the public gaze. Where I live there are no such places and I don't see the great need for this acknowledged in the Act, the semi privacy I enjoy in my backyard. People have little option but to keep moving along shared paths as if we can't be trusted. We must be in full view, we're on parade. I hate to think that Sydney Park could be taken over by the NSW Government and sections repurposed as has happened to Western Sydney Parklands. (***Division 2 Functions about land 17 Acquisition of land***)

Same rights and opportunities? The Minister acknowledged: (1:06:49) *asymmetries of power, ... lack of funding, a pressured commercialised neoliberal idea of getting the parks to pay for themselves and that that's not good enough. ... politicisation of appointments, ... lack of democracy, ... the actual destruction of bushland ... lack of transparency, ... this idea that trust is gone.* (1:09:45) *There are in some areas no legal prohibitions to governments of the day just deciding just to sell bits of land. Is that good enough? I don't think it is.*

I agree with these statements but am not satisfied the Act meets these expectations. I have read and heard stories of people like Dick Smith and Charlie Veron who lived next to the Ku-ring-gai National Park and from early childhood benefitted richly from the freedom to explore the bush. The Minister in relation to the trade unions' use of Currawong: *“They had their own golf course like the people of Palm Beach did, they had their own beach like the people of Palm Beach did, and they as working people had the same rights and the same opportunities as those who might have considered themselves their betters”* from the mid 1940's to early 2000's and for only two weeks when vacancies allowed, but not now.

Not “It's the economy, Stupid”, “It's the stupid economy” In this property prices based economy genuinely poor people without any hope of purchasing homes of their own aren't even able to obtain social housing. Why, I believe it's because social housing is bad for property prices. They live on the street and in other public places and are moved on. Base our economy on social and environmental values. Prioritise the ending of homelessness and unemployment over high immigration. From 1996 we've had five Prime Ministers who have loudly and proudly declared their Christian faith. Our Premier proudly declares his deep Christian faith so I finish with Isaiah 5:8 *“Woe to you that join house to house and lay field to field, even to the end of the place: shall you alone dwell in the midst of the earth?”* Let's share it generously with natural ecosystems and with the poorest of us to end homelessness and unemployment. There are already enough vacant properties for everyone to have a home. There are not enough tree hollows.
(<https://www.catholicdoors.com/bible/isaias.htm>)

Yours sincerely
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