

REPORT ON PROCEEDINGS BEFORE

**SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE GREATER SYDNEY
PARKLANDS TRUST BILL 2021**

GREATER SYDNEY PARKLANDS TRUST BILL 2021

CORRECTED

At Jubilee Room, Parliament House, Sydney on Thursday 27 January 2022

The Committee met at 9:20.

PRESENT

The Hon. Robert Borsak (Chair)

PRESENT VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

The Hon. Lou Amato
The Hon. John Graham
The Hon. Mark Latham
The Hon. Shayne Mallard
The Hon. Penny Sharpe (Deputy Chair)
Mr David Shoebridge

* Please note:

[inaudible] is used when audio words cannot be deciphered

[audio malfunction] is used when words are lost due to a technical malfunction

[disorder] is used when members or witnesses speak over one another.

The CHAIR: Welcome to the hearing of the inquiry into the Greater Sydney Parklands Trust Bill 2021. Before I commence I acknowledge the Gadigal people, who are the traditional custodians of the land on which Parliament sits. I also acknowledge the traditional custodians of the various lands from which my colleagues are joining today, as well as all people participating in today's hearing. I pay respect to Elders past, present and emerging, and extend that respect to all Aboriginal people present or who may be joining us today. Today's hearing will be conducted via videoconference. I ask for everyone's patience through any technical difficulties that we may encounter today.

If participants lose their internet connection and are disconnected from the virtual hearing, they are asked to rejoin the hearing by using the same link as provided by the Committee secretariat. Today we will be hearing from a number of stakeholders including local members, community groups, sports organisations and government agencies. I thank everyone for making the time to give evidence to this important inquiry. Before we commence I will make some brief comments about the procedures for today's hearing. Today's hearing is being broadcast live via the Parliament's website. A transcript of today's hearing will be placed on the Committee's website when it becomes available. In accordance with the broadcast guidelines, I remind media representatives that they must take responsibility for what they publish about the Committee's proceedings.

While parliamentary privilege applies to witnesses giving evidence via videoconference today, it does not apply to what witnesses say outside of their evidence at the hearing. Therefore, I urge witnesses to be careful about comments you may make to the media or to others after you complete your evidence. Committee hearings are not intended to provide a forum for people to make adverse reflections about others under the protection of parliamentary privilege. In that regard, it is important that witnesses focus on the issues raised by the inquiry terms of reference and avoid naming individuals unnecessarily. All witnesses have a right to procedural fairness, according to the procedural fairness resolution adopted by the House in 2018. There may be some questions that a witness could answer only if they had more time, or with certain documents at hand. In those circumstances witnesses are advised that they can take a question on notice, and provide an answer within three days.

Finally, a few notes on virtual hearing etiquette, to minimise disruptions and assist the Hansard reporters. I ask Committee members to clearly identify who questions are directed to and I ask everyone to state their name when they begin speaking. When you are not speaking please mute your microphone. Remember to turn your microphones back on when you are ready to speak. If you start speaking whilst muted, please start your question or answer again so that it can be recorded in the transcript. Members and witnesses should avoid speaking over each other so that we can all be heard clearly. Also to assist Hansard, may I remind both Committee members and witnesses to speak directly into the microphones and avoid making comments when your head is turned away.

KIM WOODBURY, Chief Operating Officer, via videoconference, City of Sydney Council, before the Committee via videoconference, affirmed and examined

LAURENCE JOHNSON, Program Manager Public Domain Strategy, City of Sydney Council, before the Committee via videoconference, sworn and examined

DYLAN PARKER, Mayor, Randwick City Council, before the Committee via videoconference, affirmed and examined

KERRY KYRIACOU, Director City Planning, Randwick City Council, before the Committee via videoconference, affirmed and examined

The CHAIR: Does anyone have an opening statement?

Mr PARKER: Before I begin I will reiterate for the benefit of the Committee, I am appearing in my capacity as mayor of Randwick, alongside the director of city planning. For the benefit and knowledge of the Committee I would like to declare that I also, as a matter of my employment, am an electorate officer in the office of the member for Maroubra. However, I have had no involvement in this matter during the course of my employment. It has been exclusively in my capacity as the mayor of Randwick. Just to begin: I have read the bill, the Minister's second reading speech, as well as the various submissions to the inquiry. I would like to begin by saying from the outset that I do acknowledge that there are some good components of the bill. Those include overshadowing and parking at Moore Park, similarly the inclusion of the First Nations component, the community consultation and the reduction of the duration of leases as they relate to Centennial and Moore Park trust area from 99- to 50 years, do make some sense.

I can clearly see what the Minister was intending to do with this bill. However, I and Randwick City Council had strong reservations particularly around part 5, the financial powers of the trust, as well as the shared composition and relationship of the trust, from a membership perspective as well as the real adequacy and lack of community representation in decision-making going forward. At its heart we are concerned that the new arrangements will strip localised attention to what are really one of Sydney's premier parklands, as well as lead to increased commercialisation in the area. Relating to the first key point, Minister Stokes. I acknowledge that part 5 of the bill establishes the Greater Sydney Parklands Trust special deposits account. The residents of the Eastern Suburbs over time have accepted a level of commercial usage at Centennial and Moore parks. However, the protections around prioritisation, in our view, are in no way adequate and if anything the new regime would facilitate the transfer of revenue to other parklands. I note this is a view that is shared by other councils across Sydney.

I would suggest to the Committee, if councils across both western and eastern Sydney are in agreement around the concern of funds raised being spent on other parklands across Sydney that is a cause for concern and a pause for thought. I think it will lead to additional pressures to generate revenue, which will be placed on Centennial Parklands. These are very viable parks and they do quite well and the concern is that that will be pushed to other parts of Sydney. I acknowledge part 5, section 45, subsection 2 (a), that the trust may in its discretion allocate money in the fund to expenditure across the Greater Sydney Parklands Trust estate. Yes, there is mention around prioritising local needs and making sure that local parklands are adequately served. But, this is really an insufficient protection and will not adequately address those needs.

Just moving to the composition of the Greater Sydney Parklands Trust and its relationship to the Centennial Park and Moore Park Trust. I acknowledge that this bill formalises the arrangement where the membership is now the same across both bodies. I look at that and I go, that is hardly going to see greater trust attention to Centennial and Moore parks in my view, when that attention is spread all across Sydney. While it does maintain the separate entities, having identical membership of the trust really effectively abolishes it as a unique identity from a decision-making standpoint. I hardly see that the trust members are going to disagree with themselves on two separate bodies. They are the two major points that I suggest and put forward for consideration by the Committee.

Mr WOODBURY: Thank you for the opportunity to address the select Committee inquiry on the Greater Sydney Parklands Trust Bill. The creation of the Greater Sydney Parklands agency by the New South Wales Government is recognition of the importance of improving and expanding public parks and green spaces to support sustainable growth of Sydney and the health and well-being of its people. COVID-19 has further demonstrated the importance of public, accessible green space for the physical, social and mental health benefits for our community. The Centennial Parklands have never been more important to support Sydney's growth. Moore Park is on the doorstep of the Green Square urban renewal area, which is being transformed from a former

industrial area to one of the highest density residential areas in Australia. It will have an expected population of 70,000 people and 22,000 workers by 2031.

In addition, Redfern and Waterloo has the NSW Land and Housing Corporation proposing redevelopment of its property assets, as well as other development, which will see an additional 15,000 to 20,000 people in the area. By 2040 we will expect to see about an extra 90,000 people living within a two-kilometre distance from Moore Park. That will add further demand on active and passive recreation. The bill is therefore critical legislation that needs to provide clarity on governance, community participation, transparency of decision-making and ongoing management, use and protection of our valuable public spaces. A key challenge for the agency and the legislation will be to achieve the right balance between overarching metropolitan strategic planning objectives, and meeting the local communities who want to play an active role in the future of the parklands.

The city's submission on the bill highlights issues with the trust structure, local community engagement, parkland protection, leasing of public land, removal of on-grass car parking from Moore Park, the future use and development of Moore Park showgrounds and the financial sustainability for the parklands. The amendments for the bill passed by the Legislative Assembly have gone some way to addressing these concerns, and those changes are supported by the city. However, the on-grass car parking at Moore Park needs to be removed immediately and returned to park use. The area is of limited benefit, or can be much more improved once car parking is removed and that part of the parkland embellished. The city also remains concerned about the future of the showgrounds side in terms of additional development and increased commercialisation, to maximise financial gain at the expense of public access and community use.

Ongoing local government engagement with the agency is recommended to provide a further voice for community advocacy, as well as ensuring park and recreation planning and development issues are openly communicated to better inform decision-making. Robust plans of management for individual parklands that align with the provision of the Crown Lands Management Act and the Local Government Act are required to ensure transparency on the management and use of parklands estate and, in particular, leasing and licence requirements being proposed. Ultimately, the parklands within the estate must remain public and accessible to everybody and the legislation needs to be measured against those overarching principles.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Thank you both for your submissions today. I know the passion with which the local communities in your local government areas have had for all our parklands over a long period of time. First, the City of Sydney. In terms of the car parking on Moore Park, I want to ask about what you envisage would happen once the car parking is removed there?

Mr WOODBURY: I will respond to that. Obviously there needs to be consultation about the use of those areas and a process to go through. Obviously being a fairly hard stand kind of area at the moment, it is not conducive to a good passive recreation use. I also make the comment that currently a 1,500 new car park has been proposed as part of the stadium, adjacent to the stadium. We have a new multibillion-dollar light rail, which now services the area with a specific stop for high-volume patronage. Certainly the city does not agree with the argument put forward by others that there is a need for more car parking. Certainly with what has been provided there is more potential for use for public transport, and needs to be encouraged.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Has council been involved in the development of the green transport plan to precinct?

Mr WOODBURY: I might have to pass to Mr Johnson, or take that on notice.

Mr JOHNSON: I will have to take that on notice.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I have a question for Randwick City Council. Thank you for your submission. I want to get a sense from you. If I understand correctly you support the amendments that were passed in the Legislative Assembly in relation to some aspects of the bill. I want to unpack a little bit more about your concerns about planning proposals and how they interact with plans of management for the proposed bill?

Mr PARKER: I will refer that to Mr Kyriacou.

Mr KYRIACOU: Thank you, Mayor Parker. The concerns are around the construction of the clauses in relation to development and the reference to a development consent, which is particular to development applications. What you would find, and I think this is the experience of Waverley Council in relation to planning proposals, which can be more significant in the scope and scale and effectively changing the local planning instrument, is they would tend to have much greater impact especially if they are on the edges of Centennial Park. That is the basis for that concern in that respect.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Really you are making sure that council has the ability to have input into that as it goes through?

Mr KYRIACOU: I think it is the acknowledgement that it is a fundamental consideration in terms of the impact on the park. There is that onus on the proponent and the council; or it could be a State agency that may have some involvement through a State policy or a State significant declaration. That is a fundamental matter for consideration in terms of its impact on the park. That also goes to the clause in relation to overshadowing. I think in our submission we suggest that there be a broader range of criteria that are considered in terms of the impact and the interface with the park in terms of those key vistas and view lines and the visual amenity and all of those things that happen on the edges of the park, which are still very important in relation to ensuring that we have that consistency and contribution to the landscape and qualities of the park.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: This is a question for both of you to answer in respect of your perspective. The cross subsidisation issue, in terms of the financial arrangements proposed in the bill is something that has generally raised concerns from stakeholders. Do you have views specifically about what protections you would be looking for in the bill?

Mr PARKER: Having had a look, I would have to take that on notice to be more concrete in terms of what that should look like. Speaking more broadly, it is vague and it is up to the discretion of the trust around how they operate. Yes, it says that they need to give priority but there is no greater guidance around what that should actually look like. To be totally honest, from a local government perspective while there is language around the prioritisation of funds for specific parks, it sets up a mechanism in order to facilitate it. You look at that and you go, while the view is to prioritise it and setting up a mechanism in order to facilitate it there is clearly an intention to do so. At a broader level, if there is any intention to raid trust accounts and transfer them to others there needs to be a publicly given rationale as to why and the need for doing so. There needs to be, as I suggested, some form of formula or mechanism as to why they are doing so and how that is going to operate. There needs to be some public accountability regime where the public can actually see what is going on and the rationale around that. A specific provision I am sure, and we would have to take that on notice. I look at that and I go, it is being set up for that purpose even though the language is around prioritisation. Why else put it in there?

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Thank you all for your submissions and your attendance today, and for your history. Both councils have a long history of supporting green open space. I do not know which council wishes to address it first. The conditions of consent that were attached to the Sydney Football Stadium development required a green travel plan. There was originally one put forward by Arup, the traffic consultants, which spoke about reducing the reliance on private vehicles and was very conscious of the car parking being removed from Moore Park. That is required to be updated and in place six months before the Sydney Football Stadium reopens. Can any of you shed any light on where that is up to and what role you have had in that?

Mr WOODBURY: I could not tell you where it is up to. We have already mentioned that we would have to take on notice any involvement that we have had for any consultation they have had with us on that. I am aware of that need to take that on notice.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Are you aware of the conditions of consent that require that to be in place six months before the Sydney Football Stadium opens?

Mr WOODBURY: Personally, so the organisation would be aware of the conditions. Our position has been the car parking should be removed immediately because we have already got light rail that has been in operation for a few years. That takes huge amounts of people. With its capacity we do not believe that there is need. The move to encourage private usage by low-cost parking is just something which encourages it. You will always get vehicles to go there if you encourage them. You need to look at the model to make it reasonable, not only just for the convenience of the locals around it but also the traffic jams and the travel times taken to get out of there in private vehicles. It is much more efficient to do it through the public system.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Free transport rather than subsidised car parking should be part of agreed travel planning, surely?

Mr WOODBURY: Certainly you need to encourage active use. We have great pedestrian links now down to central, as well as the mass transit.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: I do not know if Randwick has anything to say on that? I have one question on the community consultation committees. Does Randwick have a view about the conditions of consent?

Mr KYRIACOU: I cannot recall exactly the conditions of consent for the Sydney Football Stadium. I do note, however, that green travel plans have been a component of those State significant developments and certainly that has been the case for major developments around Randwick. It is certainly something that would be

a necessary component of any such development. Usually they have gone to some measures, such as integrated ticketing and the like. We will take that on notice and provide a response to that. It has been the consultative committee as well that council has participated, but I have not had direct participation in that.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: I draw both councils attention to conditions D14, D15 and D50, which really set up the need to update the green travel plan and to put in place specific event management protocols. Could I just quickly ask about the community park trust. I know, Mayor Parker, you raise that in your opening, your concerns about whether they were robust. A number of submissions have criticised them quite robustly and said that they do not have decision-making power and cannot access resources. They are not attached to a local management structure of the park. Do you think they are the kind of issues that we should look at?

Mr PARKER: I think it is definitely worth further investigation. If you look at the current Centennial Park and Moore Park Trust arrangement, while it is not a huge component at least under the current arrangements there is one trustee who is elected by the majority of the committee. From my understanding under the new regime that is not there. Additionally, and going into it in just a little more detail, in practice the current members of the Centennial Park and Moore Park Trust are now also the Greater Sydney Parklands Trust members. I look at that and go, that is a clear dilution of the local attention and the ability for them to be responsive to the individualised community consultative committees when they are spread much more thinly. It is clearly not there. There is also the reduction in terms. I do not think it is a huge thing, perhaps two years. Whilst, yes, it does get turnover it does prevent the community members from really getting up to speed as to the nature of the parks: You finally find your feet and then you are already rotated out. There are some good components in there.

I think the First Nations inclusion makes a lot of sense. It could probably be strengthened a little bit but, look, I do not really think it is adequate. To give you an idea. There are community parks and they are owned by the community and they are loved by the community, and more robust community involvement makes a lot of sense. The standardising of the actual committees, I do not think it is too much of an issue—unless there is some disagreement from Mr Kyriacou. I do think that the overall structure could have greater community input. And that is definitely something, when I was going through the other submissions, that was raised in multiple submissions across from many areas as well.

Mr KYRIACOU: Yes, I reiterate what Mayor Parker has said in that respect. I guess in terms of strengthening, going back to the issue as well of the funding and how that is provided for. I think one of the weaknesses in the bill and we have seen this on other occasions, it is not having regulations as well. I think a lot of those matters could be addressed through regulation.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: I have a question for Mr Woodbury. In your statements about Moore Park car parking you base a lot of weight on the light rail and the public transport exits from the precinct. Is it not true that with the opening of the new football stadium it will be possible to have 100,000 people at these major sporting events at the stadium and also the SCG and the crowds at the Entertainment Quarter. The survey work seems to show that up to 50,000 of those people would come from western and south-western Sydney. Given that these events finish late at night, whether it is a Swans or white ball cricket matches, rugby league these days, it is just not practical for people living in west and south-west Sydney to be using public transport that gets home well after midnight. There are obvious safety concerns for women and children, especially given that the sports are trying to attract more young families. The convenience and the time management and the safety of having the parking on the grassed area at the front of those grounds is absolutely essential.

Mr WOODBURY: I disagree with the premise that if you encourage more car parking for these major events that people will get home quicker. Already there is gridlock at the end of large events and it can take you half an hour to get not very far away, half a kilometre down the road. The safety of public transport. We have got high usage of public transport, which is the case after the events. It is a much safer environment than when you have got people late at night with small numbers on public transport. The city's rail network is actually a very good network. It links the light rail to Central Station, Australia's largest and highest use station, which has radial links to all of Sydney. It links to that within about five minutes of getting on at the stop. It is only two stops away. There are still capacities within the light rail system to get people onto heavy rail to take them to all parts of Sydney, whether it is late at night or whatever time it finishes, or prior to opening. Providing car parking would just incentivise more vehicles to come in and for the gridlock to get worse.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Have you ever tried to exit Moore Park precinct by public transport at 11.00 p.m. to get to Campbelltown or Camden, for example, and compare that to how much faster it is to go by car?

Mr WOODBURY: Personally I have not done the comparison.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: I have done that on scores of occasions, like many of the families who live in outer western Sydney. It might take 15 or 20 minutes to get out from those parked areas on the grass, but we are talking 60- to 90 minutes time difference. If you live at Leppington and you have to get the light rail and change late at night at Glenfield and then get the train to Leppington, compared to the convenience of getting out after 15 to 20 minutes onto Driver Avenue and then the Eastern Distributor—away you go on roads that are fairly empty at the time of night—we are talking huge time differences. Do you really expect young families, women and children, to be on the public transport at 1.00 a.m. in the morning when they could have the convenience of their car getting them home so much earlier?

Mr WOODBURY: That is your statement. I am taking that as a statement.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: It is my experience. Maybe I should declare an interest. I am a regular user of the car park area and I am there with many tens of thousands of families from outer western and south-western Sydney. Mr Woodbury, have you ever tried to get out of the Entertainment Quarter car park when both the stadiums are chock-a-block? There are horror stories of people taking hours on end to get out of the Entertainment Quarter multistorey car park. We need extra parking not less, in that precinct. People will always choose for late-night events to have parking—use their car—and the Entertainment Quarter car park is a shemozzle.

Mr WOODBURY: I think that actually demonstrates that the more people we can get onto public transport the less congestion we will have for those who do use cars.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Does the city council welcome the statement by the alliance of Moore Park sports that rather than having unprecedented legislated banning of parking on the grassed area, they would want to negotiate a solution over time. I thought that was a big statement of goodwill. Has the council taken that up?

Mr WOODBURY: The city's position is for the removal of on-grassed area carparks that are used. We support the removal of those immediately. And we have for many years.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Does the council accept that all over New South Wales parking on grassed areas for sporting events is just commonplace? Every young sporting family would do it, park on grass somewhere in Sydney or in regional New South Wales. Why should we have a unique unprecedented legislated banning of on-grass car parking just for the inner city?

Mr WOODBURY: I think the traffic congestion and public transport dynamic is slightly different in the inner city than it is in other parts of New South Wales. Congestion and the spaces are contested much more highly because of the demands, the local demands for a range of uses. I do not accept the premise that this area should be compared with other areas that you are suggesting.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: What are the usages you have got for these areas around Kippax Lake and the Hordern Pavilion that you have not already got in the thousands of acres of inner city open space recreation areas in Moore Park, Centennial Park and Queens Park, spaces that other parts of Sydney would not have in their backyard? On the occasional times that these spaces have got cars on them for the major sporting events what are you missing out on, particularly opposite the Hordern Pavilion? It is a space just 150 metres wide bordered by light rail now, as you pointed out, and also Driver Avenue. How could it ever be usable recreation space that people go to ahead of all the other spaces, the vast spaces of Moore, Centennial and Queens parks?

Mr WOODBURY: I think your question kind of highlights if we want to change those spaces in a dynamic of the public parklands in that area, that keeping car parking just keeps more of the same of that deadpan area that nobody wants to hang around in for passive recreation because it is just a hard desolate area. What the city proposes is to actually do consultation with the community as to what it desires and requires. That is the process that should be followed. I was asked a question as to what we propose. We would like for the State Government to go to the community and ask the community what it wants, and let us get a great outcome. Let us get something that is going to work 24 hours a day rather than assigned and sterilised for a use that occurs only at peak events.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: You have no alternative use in mind. You are going to do community consultation. What could the inner city residents want to do in that Hordern Pavilion space, which is so limited, and some would say because of the light rail dangerous, for active or even passive recreation that they cannot already do in thousands of acres at Moore, Centennial and Queens parks open space recreational areas?

Mr WOODBURY: I think my address demonstrated the need for more passive recreation area. There will be 90,000 extra people in the next 10 to 20 years on top of the already dense area.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: What are they going to do opposite the Hordern Pavilion that would not be happening already in the thousands of acres that you have available to you?

Mr WOODBURY: I think it is up to anybody's imagination as to what could be done there. I do not want to put what my view is. I think we should be going to the people and working out basically embellishment of the parkland. It would be parkland. It was bequeathed as parkland for the people. It was not bequeathed for car parking.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: It is parkland when there is no parking, isn't it? You can walk the dog, you can do whatever you like.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: I have a fresh line of questions. Normally councils prohibit activity and get a list of permissive users in a park. I actually like that structure.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: You would. You would, you do not live in outer western Sydney, you live in Woollahra. I am sure it is due to being on the light rail or your Uber, or whatever you do.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: It is good to see you, Mark.

The Hon. LOU AMATO: I have just a couple of questions, if I might.

The CHAIR: Who was that? Lou, do you have a question?

The Hon. LOU AMATO: Just going back to the parking at Moore Park that council is to remove. What impact will that have on people with disability? The other question is in relation to the costing. How will it impact people of a lower socio-economic background? My first question is to get back to what Mr Latham's saying, it is quite correct. If you come from the south-west it is very difficult. If you get past Camden, you go into the Southern Highlands and so forth and try to get public transport to come to the city. How is council addressing these issues? Have they considered those issues?

Mr WOODBURY: Firstly, council is not the proponent of the current proposal with the stadium and the parking, the 1,500 carparks that have been proposed. Also council does not have care and control of Moore Park. To be honest, it is a bit rich you are asking council as to what it proposes to do in detail when we do not have control of those. It is quite clear from the commitments that were given previously from the amended bill as it stands at the moment, that it is proposed to remove that car parking. And the justification for that is from the traffic studies that have been done previously. The city supports what is currently in the amendments but wants to go further to not remove—one has a delayed removal by the end of 2023, is my understanding. We are proposing that it should be removed immediately.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: There is one critical issue we have not heard about, which is our unsolicited proposals which will affect the Carsingha \$2 billion development. I was hoping that we would hear the position of both councils on whether or not the provisions in the bill which require an open tender for any leasing of greater than 10 years, are important in terms of the public or not? If you think that is possible I will try to get a response from the City of Sydney and Randwick in that order.

Mr WOODBURY: What I can say is that the city always supports transparency in the proposed uses of public land. I would leave it at that.

The CHAIR: Any further questions?

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Does Randwick have a view?

Mr PARKER: Mr Kyriacou, do you have any input on that? Or, I can answer it.

Mr KYRIACOU: Certainly council does—in terms of its own practices in relation to tendering—believe that there should be a high level of probity and transparency in any decisions made with government funds.

The Hon. SHAYNE MALLARD: Thank you for coming in today. It is good to see you, Mr Woodbury, after a few years. I was formally a councillor for the City of Sydney, so I know Kim well. It has been the Holy Grail of the community around the Moore Park area for decades to remove car parking from the playing fields at Moore Park. I was a councillor there for 12 years and it was always an issue with the community and State and Federal MPs. There was a campaign for it. The opportunity to put 1,500 spots, maybe it should have been more if it could have, to counter the loss of the surface parking for those limited times is a good opportunity. That is why the Government's policy in this legislation is to remove the parking in stages. I welcome that.

My question is more about the opportunities that come from the economies of scale for the bringing together the different parklands. I was on the Centennial Park and Moore Park Trust board—I will put that on the record too—before I was in Parliament. I went through the now reverse process with the botanic gardens. I did

see the economy of scale and the crossover of professionalism and efficiencies that occurred that way. That is one of the big objectives of this, I believe. Getting some feedback from councils and the opportunities they see for the economies of scale and efficiencies that we can get out of a large organisation. For example, the City of Sydney do you have some comments around that? Kim, do you want to kick that off, you have been through it.

Mr WOODBURY: I cannot talk directly for this particular one. I do not know the ins and outs of the economics of existing organisations. But what I would say, the city did have concerns about loss of local representation and the amendment. As it currently stands the city is thankful for some of the measures that we put in place to ensure that. We think that still needs to be looked at to ensure that local representation. That is the main issue for us as a local council, that there are local representatives who can have a voice in how the area is managed. Again, I understand the reasons why the State Government is looking to do that amalgamation for efficiency reasons. The devil is in the detail when you have these amalgamations, as to how it plays out. There are many factors involved. I probably cannot really comment on that. I want to point out that local representation and a local voice is important, and the transparency.

The Hon. SHAYNE MALLARD: I will pick up on the local voice bit. Do you think the community advisory board model will address that? The Centennial Park uniquely had a community consultation board or committee separate to the trustees and they did not really have a great deal of interaction, I have to say, as a trustee. You think that model, including the First Nations inclusion, which I think is really important, do you think that model going forward will address that concern?

Mr WOODBURY: It has the potential to address that concern. It really depends on how that plays out. We have seen in the past where there are different bodies, one reporting to another or providing information to another. How that information and those recommendations from one body to another body actually is considered and everything else, depends on the dynamic and the individuals at the time. There are opportunities, but there are certainly risks. Again, the devil is in the detail.

The CHAIR: We have come to the end of the questioning in the first part. I note, Mr Woodbury, you took at least one question on notice. The Committee has resolved that answers to questions taken on notice be returned within three days. The secretariat will be in contact with you in relation to questions you have taken on notice. Thank you very much for coming today.

(The witnesses withdrew.)

MATTHEW PEARCE, General Counsel, Inner West Council, before the Committee via videoconference, sworn and examined

HALL GREENLAND, President, Friends of Callan Park, before the Committee via videoconference, affirmed and examined

ROCHELLE PORTEOUS, member, Friends of Callan Park, before the Committee via videoconference, affirmed and examined

The CHAIR: Ms Porteous, would you like to make an opening statement?

Ms PORTEOUS: I will defer to Mr Greenland to make the opening statement, as we are both speaking on behalf of Friends of Callan Park. Then I will speak afterwards.

Mr GREENLAND: Thank you very much, Ms Porteous, and the Committee for allowing us to present this morning. I must start by acknowledging the special role the upper House has played in the history and protection of Callan Park. Almost 20 years to the day now the Callan Park (Special Provisions) Act was passed by Parliament and it has some key protections in it, which we owe to the upper House amendments back in 2002. I do want to acknowledge that it is a great role that the valuable upper House has played in the past. As you know Callan Park as an organisation for the last 20 years or so, has been campaigning to protect Callan Park from dismemberment, privatisation and commercialisation. In that process we have garnered extraordinary support from the community across Sydney and in the State. It is no accident that we have got so much support. Callan Park is a pretty special place, and those of you who have been there know this. Those of you who are yet to go there are in for the time of your life.

It is 61 hectares of heritage parkland. It faces north. It is on the harbour. It is full of wonderful history and heritage. It was carved out in the 1870s from Gadigal land for a humane mental asylum, precisely because of its beauty and tranquillity. That beauty and tranquillity lasts to this day and are the invaluable green lungs almost in the centre of Sydney in a [inaudible]. It is a great place of respite and it is enjoyed and valued. It lacks one thing, one important thing, and that is a trust to manage it. This bill that you have before you unfortunately does not grant that trust. It in fact goes in the opposite direction. This is despite the fact that a Minister in his introduction to the white paper that preceded this bill said this, I quote from that introduction now:

Any decision on the future of our parkland must be validated by the views of the community. They are the park users and the park experts. Their voice gives meaning to what we are trying to do.

Those are admirable and valid sentiments and yet this bill goes in the opposite direction. As far as Callan Park is concerned those park users save Callan Park, those park users are also the park experts. I believe that they have a right and would be pretty good at actually having a real voice [audio malfunction] because there is a model for a trust in the 2011 master plan with the old. Like our council that the community dropped 10 years ago, there is a model actually there. The Callan Park (Special Provisions) Act has section 6, clause 4, which allows the Minister to set up regulations for the trust—which has never been done of course. I want to conclude my opening remarks today by appealing to the mighty upper House, the invaluable upper House, that has served Callan Park so well in the past, to take up the challenge and to introduce into this bill a trust for Callan Park. For that matter, to restore the trust for the other parks and to also introduce one for Fernhill. Such a range of real community trust seems to me to chime in with the alternative model of the community based model of Professor James Weirick, who we will elaborate on later today. Thank you for listening and I look forward to the upper House continuing its positive role as far as Callan Park and the other parks are concerned. Thank you.

Mr PEARCE: Thank you, Mr Chair, and thank you for the invitation to appear before the select committee on behalf of the Inner West Council. In short, the council has provided written submissions on the draft exposure bill and the subsequent Inquiries submissions. Those two submissions are premised on the council resolution of 26 October 2021. and the resolved position of the council, which remains current today, is that the Act should not be changed and the Act should be retained in its entirety. That is the fundamental position with respect to the bill. The council's views are in terms of the protection of the Callan Park (Special Provisions) Act. Looking specifically at the bill and in particular the amendments from the Legislative Assembly, council must be retained as the consent authority for Callan Park.

The 50-year leases for Kirkbride, Broughton Hall and the Convalescent cottages are opposed. There should be no commercial uses at Callan Park at all. A trust should be established, and as Mr Greenland has pointed out it should be known as the Callan Park and Broughton Hall trust. More importantly, the community should continue to have public access to the recreational space, which is in fact Callan Park. The submissions for this inquiry dated 24 December 2021 raise matters which have been addressed, not been addressed, have been partially addressed. Mr Chair, as Committee members may be aware, and as a consequence of the local government

elections, there has been a change in leadership. As with the past body politic the current Inner West Council is committed to negotiating in good faith for a desired outcome for all parties, but more importantly for the community. Those are my submissions.

The CHAIR: Ms Porteous, do you want to say something? You need to switch on your microphone.

Ms PORTEOUS: Can you hear me now?

The CHAIR: Yes.

Ms PORTEOUS: If I could just say a few words. I will just preface that by saying, until 4 December I was the mayor of the Inner West Council and I have been mayor and councillor on inner west and like councils for the last 16 years. In December 2020 Callan Park was actually carved up into two pieces. Half of it was vested with the Greater Sydney Parklands Corporation. We knew nothing about this. It was done quietly. It was done without consultation with the public or the council. Half of Callan Park sits with the Greater Sydney Parklands Corporation. The other half sits with NSW Health. The Greater Sydney Parklands Trust Bill merges five of our iconic parks, as you know. It includes a carved up piece of Callan Park. Very concerningly, this bill works on the premise that all these iconic parks need to be self funding.

It provides the commercial leases, and allows some leases for up to 50 years in Callan Park. Fortunately we have had amendments to that in the lower House, and we commend those amendments. This bill also removed originally the protections that Callan Park enjoyed under the Callan Park (Special Provisions) Act. It opened Callan Park up for business. People go to Callan Park to get away from the stresses of the city. Callan Park uses should be consistent with that. Callan Park is a park, it is not an entertainment complex. What remains is the issue of the funding and I think this bill, to a large extent, seeks to address the funding of parks but it is very distorted. Look at Callan Park, for example. Council spent over \$4 million building five sporting fields in Callan Park. It still has care control and management of all five fields. These costs are borne by the council, they are not borne by the State Government. Councils across the State pay for their parks, the maintenance and upgrades of their parks, and they do not expect them to be self-funding. If councils can pay for their parks, so can the State Government.

What is left in Callan Park is the buildings, and there are a lot of them. Without doubt significant funding is needed. Why, because successive governments have kept kicking this can down the road. Just as the State Government funds our schools and hospitals so the State Government needs to fund our iconic parks. Commercialisation of Callan Park, or any of our other iconic parks, is not the answer. We oppose the Greater Sydney Parklands Trust Bill. It is bad policy for all our iconic parks and it is still devastating for Callan Park. What we need instead is a Callan Park trust, which enables local management and governance and uses local expertise to truly care for this treasured park.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: My question is first to Friends of Callan Park. There is the argument put against Friends of Callan Park that there needs to be long-term commercial leases in order to generate income to restore these public heritage buildings. Can you tell us your particular position on the commercialisation of Callan Park?

Mr GREENLAND: Thank you, David. I will deal with that and Rochelle might want to come in. What we have always said is that the buildings that remain at Callan Park can quite easily be leased. This is actually going on at present. Old repat D building that overlooks the waterfront oval, is currently out for tender. We know that the Balmain & District Football Club, for instance, is one of the leading tenderers. It has offered not only to pay a lease for that building but also to spend \$1 million on renovating and actually setting up a cafe within the building right down on the Bay Run, and so on. There is always the possibility of tenants actually moving in not for profits and actually taking over the buildings, and doing them up and using them and saving them from neglect and demolition by neglect.

As far as the major heritage buildings at Callan Park are concerned, which is Kirkbride, which covers five hectares and is the original asylum building, there are now negotiations well advanced between the Department of Health, NSW Health, and a consortium of NGOs to take over the lease and upkeep of that suite of buildings. That consortium is being led by We Help Ourselves, who already have a lease over Broughton Hall area at the western end of Callan Park where they pay a commercial rent and have done wonders in maintaining and so on. The short answer, I suppose, David, is that we do not need commercial leases in order to restore and maintain and look after Callan Park. The course we are now on will do that without commercialisation.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: One of the arguments that has been put forward opposing commercialisation and commercial leases with for-profits is that it actually creates a unique market for not-for-profits to be able to lease extraordinary public buildings—heritage buildings in an extraordinary place—

at a reduced rate. It actually creates an advantageous market for NGOs in what is otherwise a completely ferocious Sydney property market. Do you have any views about that?

Mr GREENLAND: I can only agree. It is a point the Minister also made in discussions with us—that that is what he was going to do and that he thought it was a good idea, as you say, in a ferocious property market, for having NGOs and charity. One of the bodies in the consortium is the New South Wales Cancer Council. Those kinds of bodies actually need the money for the good work they do, not for paying Sydney rents. It is a good point.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Thank you for coming online today. I wanted to ask a couple of questions. I think this is to you, Mr Greenland. I am unclear about the Friends position in relation to the current bill. My understanding is that you are happy with the amendments that were passed in the Legislative Assembly but, overall, you basically do not support the bill at all, or are you looking for—you said in your opening statement that you would like, essentially, a re-engineering of the current bill. I am trying to understand whether we need to throw the bill out altogether and start again, or is there a way to work through the issues? Across all of the submissions I think there is general support for the need for an agency that looks after parklands, but there is obviously a huge gap between what people see in the bill and what they want to see. I am trying to get a bit of a sense about your thoughts about the way forward on this.

Mr GREENLAND: As you know, a Greater Sydney Parklands agency already exists within the department and is already carrying out the functions and duties that are stepped out in this bill—for better or for worse. If the bill is rejected in toto then the status quo is maintained and Callan Park continues to be protected by the Callan Park Act. You then have a chance, it seems to me, an opportunity, to recast the bill—either the upper House does it or the Government does it—so that it reflects a federation of communities involved in the management of the parks and not this overwhelming commercial centralisation. So I do think the bill has to be stopped and recast. Whether you do it or whether the Government does it—I do not know how those mechanics would work. In the process of recasting it, yes, bring in a Callan Park trust, which I think the Labor Party, for instance, is supportive of, as you probably know.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Mr Pearce, I know that there has been a change with council and, obviously, it has been [disorder]—yes, and it has been quite recent. This is a bit of an unfair question but do you expect that—I would anticipate that there would be some additions to council's view. Do you know when council will be considering this issue or if they are? The time is ticking on the upper House's consideration of this bill.

Mr PEARCE: Ms Sharpe, I am unaware of whether council will be considering the bill at all. There is nothing anticipated as I can recall in the meeting agendas for the next month. That does not mean that something can not be submitted to the agenda on an urgent basis. But at the present moment now my recollection of the meeting agenda is that it does not include any consideration of the bill. Can I just say that, as I said in the opening statement, the council's position is that the bill should not be changed and should remain in its entirety. The real issue that the council has, which has not been addressed through the amendments from the Legislative Assembly, is the deletion of section 7 (1) of the Act, which is the unfrozen issue.

The council's concerns are that the planning controls should remain frozen and those planning controls also include the Leichhardt Local Environmental Plan 2000. If there is a deletion of section 7 (1) this leaves the door open for new planning controls to be imported and regulate Callan Park in terms of planning policy. It may well be the case that there could be a State environmental planning policy, which may be enacted to prevail over the Leichhardt Local Environmental Plan. The position is that nothing is anticipated at the moment in the council meeting, but that does not mean it may not occur. Equally, the big issue for the council is that the local environmental plan for Callan Park works. The amendment regarding section 7 (1) of the Act is the concern, which will cause the local planning control, which has worked in the past, to be superseded.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Thank you for that; that is actually very helpful.

Ms PORTEOUS: Can I just make a couple of comments on that? Obviously, I was mayor of Inner West Council until 4 December. Council opposes the bill; they want this bill to be thrown out. Council has always unanimously supported the Callan Park Act in its entirety and council has always unanimously supported the establishment of a Callan Park trust. So there are some very solid things that council has always agreed on across all political parties, and I expect will continue to. There is extremely strong support for Callan Park across the inner west community and, I would say, across the Sydney community as well.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: The issue of Kirkbride—an absolutely beautiful building—is that the longer there is no-one in there the worse it is for the upkeep, especially since the College of Fine Arts [COFA] left. My concern, which I am sure you have given some consideration—and the NGO proposal I think is a good one—is that I am worried about the capacity of not-for-profit NGOs to be able to fund the heritage upkeep of

buildings like that. They are very expensive, as we know, to look after. I am wondering what your thoughts are about that.

Mr GREENLAND: I understand that and it is a very good point. What has happened since the school of arts left two years ago, of course, is that NSW Health has spent considerable funds in actual maintenance and renovation of Kirkbride. There has been a lot of work going on and it is looking better than it has looked for the last 10 or 20 years. But that is a real concern. Landlords usually have some responsibility to look after their properties and, given that the State Government is a landlord, part of it will fall on them, but I am sure that is a consideration of Property NSW as they negotiate with the NGOs. But it is a real concern. I am sure it is not an insurmountable problem.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Just briefly, I have a question to both the council and Friends of Callan Park. With a proposal like that, which has a health focus to it, there is a really positive heritage outcome then because we have an adaptive re-use that reflects the history of the property as well. Do Friends of Callan Park have a view about trying to ensure—if we can—any adaptive re-uses responsive to that history of public health and what is council's position? I might go to Friends of Callan Park first.

Mr GREENLAND: We have always been supportive of mental health services and NGOs being on the site. It goes to what the local member calls the moral heart of Callan Park. I think it is a tribute to the local community that they support the continuation of NGOs and mental health services—especially mental health services—on Callan Park itself. The NGO proposal for Kirkbride, yes, it chimes in perfectly both with the Act and the sentiments of the community and the council.

Mr PEARCE: Mr Shoebridge, council supports that view as well. There is one reservation and that is the concern of some regarding the proposal for 50-year leases and licences, which relate, obviously, to relevant premises and Kirkbride is one of those relevant premises. If it is used for, say, arts and cultural events, there is a section—I think it is section 6 (6A) of the Act—through the amendments in the Legislative Assembly, which allows for the possibility of commercial use. The concern is that the relevant premises such as Kirkbride would fall into a commercial use of some kind, but it is open for interpretation there. Even though there is a suggestion for an open tender process for these licenses and leases for not-for-profit organisations—that is fine—the issue is there is no parliamentary oversight. That seems to be removed from any consideration of licences or leases related to the relevant premises like Kirkbride.

Mr GREENLAND: Can I just add to that? I think that is quite correct. For most of the properties on Callan Park, any lease over 10 years must lay on the table of both Houses of Parliament for 15 sitting days and either House can disallow it. That allows for real public surveillance and protection of what happens to that very valuable property. But in the case of Kirkbride, Broughton Hall and the Convalescent Cottages, leases over 10 years and up to 50 years can be just made by the Minister and the Government without any parliamentary oversight. That has been removed from the oversight provisions of the Callan Park Act. I thank Mr Pearce for reminding me, and possibly Committee members, of that very dangerous amendment.

The Hon. SHAYNE MALLARD: Thank you all for coming in and giving your submissions. I know I am not going to change your mind—your position is very well known and well entrenched—but I am going to put to you the countering point, and I would like your observations from it. I think Ms Porteous was commenting on this in regards to opposing the so-called commercialisation of Callan Park, which I think exaggerates the term. As I said before, if you did not hear, I was on the Centennial Park and Moore Park Trust for some years before I was a member of Parliament. The fact is that there is commercialisation of Moore Park. There is a golf course and there is a driving range, which is 60 per cent of the operational revenue of Centennial Park/Moore Park. There is an equestrian centre, which went to tender and is commercially run, and there is, of course, the restaurant, which includes a function centre that does weddings, and a kiosk, which is very popular in Centennial Park.

Those are very important components of the revenue of the park, not just relying upon Government revenue. The alarm bells are ringing—and Ms Sharpe sort of touched on this—in regards to the deterioration of Kirkbride. It reminds me of the deterioration of the Queen Victoria Building and the brave decision that Frank Sartor took as lord mayor to do a commercial arrangement with a Singaporean company that could actually invest the money to maintain that building and keep it going. That has been a great outcome with full community access. I am putting to you that some level of commercial activities within the context of a park like Centennial Park can be compatible with community access and use, and help support the financial viability of the parkland. Would you like to comment on that, given those examples I just gave you?

Ms PORTEOUS: I think the flawed premise on which this whole bill falls is that element of self-funding of parks. Parks should not be self-funding. The fact that you have heritage buildings in Callan Park, as in some of the other parks as well, is a blessing. It is something that should be taken on board by the State Government and properly funded. As I said in my opening statement, this is something that has been continually kicked down the

road by successive governments of different political persuasions. Nobody has ever taken on—if there is an issue with some of the buildings on Callan Park at the moment that is an issue about the fact that when work should have been done it was not done. It needs to be done now and it needs a government that is courageous enough to do that work and to actually show that they do deeply care about retaining the heritage of New South Wales, which is essentially what Callan Park is.

If you look at the council situation, there are many buildings that are owned and leased out by council. Generally the lease agreements on all of those buildings require that council does the restoration work and the important maintenance work. To be quite honest, I do not think that we would be wanting leaseholders to do the heritage restoration that would be required on any of our buildings; it is too important to get it right. Council is the best authority to do that. It is a very odd situation where we have councils stepping up again and again to do things that in fact the State Government should be doing. There are about 160 buildings on Callan Park. Many of them are in a reasonable state but some are not. In fact, some are even slated to be removed. But the ones that do need work should have that investment from the State Government and then let us make sure that we get good not-for-profits in there delivering the kind of services that are needed by the community, both the local and wider community.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Just a question to the Friends: In your submission you have really spelt out the argument against commercialisation and the lack of protections in the bill. I want to turn to your attitude to that individual issue about potential commercial uses combined with the arts. One of the reasons for that was, as I understood it in the Legislative Assembly debate, for example, to allow music festivals. Laneway festival has been a very popular use in the past. What attitude do you take to that specific use after that discussion? I am also interested in some more detail about the positive vision you have for Callan Park. What other uses would you actively like to see?

Mr GREENLAND: Yes, the amendment does specifically allow for music and artistic events of a commercial nature to take place. It has always been our position that they have always been allowed under the Act if they were in association with, promoted by or sponsored by not-for-profits. We had the Laneway music festival for seven or eight years before it outgrew Callan Park. Those so-called commercial uses—it is the same with cafes and weddings, for instance, and the writers centres and so on—of a special nature have been allowed under the Act before. The amendments clarify that and more specifically state it. That is true. Given that council is a consent authority for such activities, the community has a real say. That is not in our mind at present a clear and present danger or problem.

As for our vision for Callan Park, I suppose it has been spelt out in the master plan back in 2011 and, more recently, in the landscape structure plan for Callan Park—that is, a combination of wonderful parklands; the restoration of heritage buildings, principally for NGOs; and the reintroduction of mental health services in Callan Park. There are some there already but there is scope for more. Given the perennial and congenital mental health crisis we have in our society, those kinds of services are needed and Callan Park and the community of the inner west are places that welcome such spaces. So that, in general terms, Mr Graham, is the vision.

Mr PEARCE: Mr Graham, can I just add to that? The commercialisation is obviously opposed through council's resolution last year. But in terms of a check and balance on commercialisation of the relevant premises, particularly regarding arts and cultural events, there seems to be something missing in the Callan Park Act as a consequence of the amendments, particularly for planning controls—all the additional interpretational definitions. When I look at section 7 (9), it defines things like community facilities and educational facilities but, for example, it does not define arts or cultural facilities. That is an issue. In terms of definitions, they can be used to narrow the scope of commercial uses and control what commercial uses could be applied in terms relevant premises. There is also no definition for food and drink facilities, nor health facilities. So, as has been put in the submission to the Legislative Council, section 7 (9) needs to be broadened in terms of certain definitions, which have now been imported as a consequence of the amendments from the Legislative Assembly.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: So that I am clear on council's position—similar to the Friends—for something like Laneway, you do not see that as a use which is ruled out? In fact, it has been very popular.

Mr PEARCE: Correct.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: But you are making the point that, despite the fact this has gone through a green paper and a white paper process, there is still a real vagueness to the way this bill is structured around commercial use?

Mr PEARCE: Correct. The vagueness can be corrected by importing some definitions into the Act.

The CHAIR: I do not think any questions were taken on notice. If that is the case, we will wrap up questioning for now. Thank you for coming and we will resume the hearing at 11.00 a.m.

(The witnesses withdrew.)

(Short adjournment)

BRAD BUNTING, Deputy Mayor, Blacktown City Council, before the Committee via videoconference, affirmed and examined

KERRY ROBINSON, OAM, Chief Executive Officer, Blacktown City Council, before the Committee via videoconference, affirmed and examined

DONNA DAVIS, Lord Mayor, Parramatta City Council, before the Committee via videoconference, sworn and examined

BRETT NEWMAN, Chief Executive Officer, Parramatta City Council, before the Committee via videoconference, affirmed and examined

The CHAIR: I now welcome our next witnesses. Ms Davis, would you like to start by making an opening statement?

Ms DAVIS: Thank you very much, I would. Open space provision and quality is a critical issue for our communities across Greater Sydney, particularly in western Sydney. Our population is growing at twice the rate of New South Wales and based on benchmarks we are already facing a deficit of over 212 hectares in open space in our city. The current population of approximately 257,000 people will escalate to around 445,000 by 2036. It is good to see the State Government taking some initiative to address funding challenges and grow Sydney's regional parklands; however, we need greater assurance and clarity on how the site-specific needs and priorities of individual parks will be addressed through the new governance structure.

Parramatta Park was established in 1858. It is one of the oldest public parks in the world, it is World Heritage listed and welcomes over two million visitors every year. It is an integral part of our nation's history and the identity of Parramatta. It sits at the centre of some of the most intense growth and developments in Sydney. On its borders are the Parramatta CBD, the Westmead Health and Innovation Precinct, the Cumberland Hospital Heritage Precinct, Parramatta North proposed redevelopment, Parramatta Light Rail, Metro West and the Riverside Theatres redevelopment. The significance of Parramatta Park and its context is critical when assessing and determining the future management of the park. We need local representatives with the right experience, diversity, influence and commitment to Parramatta as a place to ensure balanced and effective decision-making. That is something that is absent at the moment in the current structure.

We also need to ensure that the management and administration of Parramatta Park gets the dedicated attention and resourcing needed. A good example of that is the delayed inclusion of Wistaria Gardens. You may recall that as part of the transfer, Wistaria Gardens was part of the deal with securing Parramatta parklands for the new pool. But we are still waiting for Wistaria Gardens to be incorporated into Parramatta Park and to find out whether there will be any additional funding to help support that additional space. The objectives outlined in the vision for the Greater Sydney Parklands [GSP] are positive. The ability for the trust to take on new land and set up long-term funding solutions appears to be a useful mechanism for increasing Sydney's open space and facilitating improved interface opportunities at an individual park scale.

For Parramatta Park the strategic opportunity to expand its northern boundaries to incorporate the world-class Cumberland heritage precinct, Parramatta Female Factory heritage precinct and Wistaria Gardens would be regionally and nationally significant. The natural fit of incorporating the national heritage-listed Parramatta Female Factory in the park would be a game changer for the city of Parramatta and for western Sydney as we build our reputation as a destination. It would also provide so many other economic opportunities. Whilst this type of outcome would be extremely positive, there is also concern over the lack of clarity around how the trust will make some of these key decisions around the future of GSP estate. This includes examples such as defining supplementary land for disposal or other purposes.

We need to ensure GSP estate decision-making is aligned with the strategic priorities and needs of each park's local context. These decisions can have cumulative impacts on our parks, and we need to ensure that they have public oversight and scrutiny to retain the integrity of our existing parklands and their purpose as public space. As you are all aware, Parramatta Park has a chequered history of land being siphoned off. We have two clubs, a high school, a car park, a pool and the prospect of a stadium and a hotel being built on the parklands. This is not new to us; we have experienced this before. We cannot, as you can see from the size of our growth in this area, afford to risk losing one blade of grass. In summary, the bill is missing detail in several areas which are critical to understanding its implications and effects on managing the needs and priorities of individual parks such as Parramatta Park.

Key examples include the establishment, make-up and influence of the community trustee boards; community oversight on the determination of supplementary land or its disposal by the GSP trust; and transparency on long-term leasing and licensing. The significance and value of our park is linked to its history, its

location and its context at the heart of a region undergoing so much growth and development. As a central component of our city and local identity, we as a council feel we need to ensure that Parramatta Park's management is best placed to both protect and grow its legacy in the face of all of this change.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Mr Robinson, would you like to make an opening statement?

Mr ROBINSON: Councillor Bunting will be.

Mr BUNTING: Mr Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to this important inquiry and answer questions on behalf of Blacktown City Council. I tender the apologies of our mayor, Councillor Tony Bleasdale, OAM, who is currently on leave. Our consideration of this matter began in May last year with the release of the Government's Greater Sydney Parklands white paper. Council then endorsed submissions prepared by officers in respect of the white paper at its meetings in June and August. The key concerns raised in council's submissions related to (1) management options for the parklands, (2) membership of the proposed community trustee boards, (3) creation of new parks to cater for rapid population growth in Sydney's north-west, (4) funding and finance and (5) development within the Western Sydney Parklands.

Our submissions raised the concern that unplanned and opportunistic commercial developments in the parklands were having a serious impact on nearby established businesses in legitimate commercial centres. As an example, council's modelling predicted real and significant impacts on the nearby Rooty Hill and Rainbow shopping precincts from the then proposed Eastern Creek Quarter retail development. This district level shopping centre opened last year on what was meant to be parkland. In developing the centre, the State gave no regard to the impact this unplanned centre would have on those businesses, which had legitimately invested, based on the retail hierarchy contained in council's planning instruments. Council's concerns have not been addressed by the draft exposure bill for the Greater Sydney Parklands that was released for comment on 5 October 2021. In fact, the release of the draft exposure bill raised more questions and concerns for council than it answered.

The release came less than two months before the local government elections and the associated council caretaker period within which councils are barred from making substantive policy decisions. With the caretaker period beginning in November, councils had less than a month to consider the draft bill, draft reports, publish and circulate council business papers and consult with the wider community and stakeholders. This was impossible. The Government's time line made it impossible for councils to meet the stated objectives of the Government's own adopted community participation plan. In short, the Government's approach was very far from best practice, prevented legitimate stakeholder input and was not open and inclusive, nor timely or meaningful.

As such, Blacktown City Council submits that the consultation process should be reactivated and appropriate time made available so that all the objectives of the community participation plan can be met. This would allow the newly elected councillors to appropriately engage with stakeholders and the community. Councillors would then be able to conduct informed debate regarding the merits of the bill and provide submissions reflective of community interests and concerns. Blacktown City Council has also resolved to reaffirm its concerns as outlined in its previous submissions. Council's chief executive officer, Mr Kerry Robinson, OAM, will provide more detail on council's concerns and submissions. Thank you, Mr Chairman.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Thank you for your submissions, and congratulations, Lord Mayor Davis. It is lovely to see you there. Can I just ask about the amendments that were put and the local consultation—so-called trusts—that have been put into legislation? What is your view about the adequacy of those in terms of protecting a park as critical as Parramatta Park?

Ms DAVIS: Thank you. I will refer to Mr Newman if I do not cover this properly. I think our biggest concern is that, first of all, it is very rubbery and vague around what the make-up of those community trusts will be and what role they will have, if any, because there is nothing really in that draft bill that confirms that they will exist and be put into place. But if they do, what is so important for us is to ensure that the council and other local community voices are heard on those trusts because the current model that is operating does not really allow for that. It used to, but now that we have the Western Sydney Parklands, Parramatta Park feels very much that we do not necessarily have a local voice. That is not detracting from the fact that there are very good administrators there who are employed by the Government to look after the park, but in terms of a relationship with the community and with key stakeholders outside of Venues NSW, there is very little opportunity for the community and the council to be involved in decision-making. I think that is imperative for any new structure that is considered.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Councillor Bunting?

Mr BUNTING: I agree. It is very important that council has a say in regards to the structure of this. We feel in Blacktown that a lot of the development is going on is going on in the Blacktown area rather than spread out over the different council areas. A voice from the local area is very important when it comes to decision-making going forward.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Are you satisfied with the powers of those community trusts? They are not decision-making bodies; they are not trusts as we have understood them in the past. They are effectively consultative committees, are they not? Do you think that if we are going to have those trusts—and given council has a core role, which I hear is your united position—they should be decision-making rather than consultative bodies?

Mr BUNTING: Decision-making, yes. I feel that council needs to be part of the decision-making, not just somebody that is going to give you their ideas of what the community is. It is important that as elected members of our area we are part of the decision-making.

Ms DAVIS: Can I just add that I think our council has made that fairly clear in our submission as well. The community trustee boards—their establishment, make-up and influence—need to be able to have substantial input, and that needs to be part of the legislation. If that is not actually enforced in the Act and it is something that is determined at a later date, that does not give us any assurances.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: There is a very real concern about funds being generated somewhere like Parramatta Park or another part of Western Sydney Parklands and then being allocated somewhere else. I know your submissions touch upon this—Parramatta's does in particular. Do you want to speak to the adequacy of those protections—if you could call them that—in the legislation and whether you have any other solutions to that?

Mr ROBINSON: Thank you for the question, Mr Shoebridge. The Western Sydney Parklands is unique in that the legislation says that 2 per cent of the land should be set aside for commercial development, which will fund the operation of the parklands. Council fundamentally objects to that funding model. We see no reason why parklands in the east of the city should be funded by the general fund, whereas parklands in the west of the city should suffer retail development and industrial development for that funding. Notwithstanding that, should that model still stand, it is council's clear position that those funds should not be used as a government slush fund to top up Treasury's liabilities in relation to Fernhill or other parks. That was conceived by Minister Sartor to be a funding source for the Western Sydney Parklands in the three local government areas [LGAs] of Blacktown, Fairfield and Liverpool, and thus it should remain if that flawed funding model is to be retained.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Parramatta?

Ms DAVIS: This is a real quandary for us at the moment. Parramatta Park, as you know, is now part of Western Sydney Parklands. The financial security is really from Western Sydney Parklands as they are now located in Blacktown and other LGAs—not in Parramatta because we have our own challenges with funding our own park, particularly given the World Heritage nature of the site and the need to protect that site and preserve it and the many regulations around doing that. The one thing that is important is that Western Sydney Parklands as a whole should not be a cash cow for other parks in other parts of the city. When you actually look at the model of funding for the parks in the east it is very different. I appreciate that this is actually looking at a funding model but I do not think they have reached the right—that we have got to the point yet that it will work for everybody. I already know that more than 2 per cent of the Western Sydney Parklands is being utilised when you actually look at what has been earmarked for further development and for further commercialisation. We cannot risk that happening to Parramatta Park at all. As I said, every blade of grass counts. I do not know if Mr Newman has anything else he would like to add.

Mr NEWMAN: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I might just pick up Mr Shoebridge's point and add to that. I think the challenge you have identified is that the bill puts in place a structure which puts at risk hypothecation of assets or funding from one trust to another, which I think is the question you are raising. But it does that without also providing the certainty of what will be the funding model for all of the trusts and parks going forward. The challenge we face at the moment is you see the hypothecation risk without clarity on the funding model.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Congratulations, Lord Mayor Donna Davis. It is very good to see you and well done on your election. I have a couple of questions. I wanted to go back to the 2 per cent issue with the Western Sydney Parklands, which is a very unique model. I know there is a lot of contention around this. Perhaps to Blacktown first, I want to confirm that the 2 per cent that is there goes back into the Western Sydney Parklands. That is not being used for consolidated revenue at this point, is it?

Mr ROBINSON: That is our understanding, Ms Sharpe.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Do not worry, I am going to check with the Minister this afternoon on this, too. Great, that was my understanding as well. There is contention that the 2 per cent has actually essentially already been met and there really is not any room for that. Is that the case?

Mr ROBINSON: We have asked the CEO of Western Sydney Parklands Trust to advise us in relation to this. She assures us that there has not been more than 2 per cent set aside for development and some of the land which has been set aside for development has not yet been developed. I cannot verify that.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Right, yes. I think there has been some suggestion that 2 per cent is about 105 hectares and there is already 150 hectares that is currently operational. Is that right?

Mr ROBINSON: That may have been a submission made. I cannot verify that.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Right, okay. Thank you for that. It is a very particular issue. I wanted to follow up—Blacktown touched on this in your submission and I know Lord Mayor Davis also touched on this—in terms of expansion and the role of a greater parklands body in expansion of parks. Perhaps to Blacktown first, could you talk about the aspirations of the council given the tens of thousands of people moving into the area and the allocation of green space into the future? Could you just talk us through what you hope to do and whether you think this bill is strong enough on one of the focuses of any new body, if it was to exist, to expand parkland?

Mr ROBINSON: Council's submission outlined that there is no detail provided on how the Greater Sydney Parklands trust will operate in terms of identifying or planning for open spaces as the city grows. The white paper does not establish how local government can be involved in the creation and management of the parklands or indicate how we would work with the GSP trust and the community trustee boards. In short, Blacktown council is of the view that a core responsibility of the Greater Sydney Parklands ought be to identify, plan and fund new or expanded regional open spaces to serve the needs of a growing city.

One such opportunity would be to expand the Western Sydney Parklands further along Eastern Creek to the north of the M7 motorway within the North West Growth Area where those parklands would complement the State's proposed rezonings of the precincts of Marsden Park North and West Schofields, which will accommodate thousands of new homes and bring tens of thousands of new residents into Blacktown city. We think there is a strong role for the GSP to play in thinking about what the future of regional parks across the metropolitan is.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Thank you for that. I know that your submission touched on the original planning for that growth corridor, which actually has quite extensive planning—which is a good thing for sports and parks facilities—but that the number of people expected to come in is much greater than that original planning. Can you tell us what the quantum of that is?

Mr ROBINSON: Thank you for the question, Ms Sharpe. The original planning that was done for the North West Growth Area has grossly underestimated the actual development which will occur. We have been tracking that very carefully over the past decade, and the rate of development which is occurring is roughly twice the density which was planned. The consequence of that is that across the North West Growth Area more than 200,000 people will move into Blacktown city. The consequence of the inadequate planning is that we have a deficit of open space; we will have the need for additional utility services, which those utility organisations have not planned for; and we have road congestion which will not be adequate given the planning which was made.

All of that, Ms Sharpe, if I can say, is in part a question which goes to another really important challenge that growth area councils have in this State, which is that the State Government precludes us from levying developers for community facilities buildings. So that incoming population of more than 200,000 people has no funding for a library, has no funding for a community centre and has no funding for aquatics. That 200,000 people is a local government area bigger than the City of Fairfield. It is something like the scale of the shire of Sutherland and yet this State Government has proposed no funding source for appropriate community facilities buildings. That is an outrageous impost on the community that is moving into Blacktown city.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Thank you. I think it is a good to get an idea of the scale. It is very big. Councillor Davis, in your opening remarks you touched on the opportunities with the Cumberland precinct. Could you talk a little bit about that expansion? From the Committee's point of view, we have to make recommendations. I am pretty sold on the need for there to be really strong planning for future expansion of parklands. Do you want to touch on what Parramatta's aspirations are there?

Ms DAVIS: Thank you, Ms Sharpe. As I mentioned earlier, we have already recognised a deficit of over 212 hectares of open space in the city of Parramatta. Unlike Blacktown—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Sorry, could I stop you there? The 212 hectares—can you give us the formula for how you get to that number?

Ms DAVIS: No, I will have to take that on notice, sorry. We are one of the few councils that has actually done a very detailed community infrastructure strategy and has identified what the shortfall is going to be as we move into the next 15 to 20 years for our city. That is where these figures are coming from. Unlike the Blacktown LGA, where there are brownfield developments but it is predominantly greenfields, where we are it is brownfield

so we do not have that additional green space that we can set aside any of that land for parks. Therefore, the opportunity to expand into the northern boundaries of the Cumberland heritage precinct and Parramatta Female Factory is one solution to expanding that parkland, making it accessible to our existing and future communities and also, at the same time, protecting those very delicate areas.

In the Cumberland heritage precinct we have wonderful gardens that date back to the same period of time as the development of the botanic gardens in the City of Sydney. The female factory is one of the Australian convict sites, as you would know, so it has a relationship with Old Government House. It has a natural place in Parramatta Park and, with the push for it to be World Heritage listed, it would make perfect sense. So there are a whole lot of logical reasons why that would be a really good outcome for our city as we expand to the west of the park as well as to the north and the east. There are very few other opportunities in our city. We do have Camellia, which is the proposed master plan site at the moment. That is to the south of James Ruse Drive but, of course, that is a long time away and, even then, the initial master plan for that area fails to deliver on open parklands and space as well. So this is a really good example.

Touching on what Mr Robinson said about funding, I think this also cannot be seen in isolation with the infrastructure contributions and the reforms that are being discussed at the moment because we have very real concerns as councils that with any changes to those contributions we will lose the ability to have access to funding for our community infrastructure, including our libraries, our public spaces and our sports fields—all those things that anyone in the community would expect to have. I do not know if this is something that is commonly discussed but I really do think that this bill and what is happening with that reform go hand in hand. They should not be seen in isolation.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: The proposal around that Cumberland heritage precinct makes a lot of sense to me, particularly the hopeful World Heritage listing—once we actually finally get a nomination in for the female factory. Has the council engaged the New South Wales Government about that and what has been the response—not the World Heritage part of it but the actual expansion of the park?

Mr NEWMAN: Thank you, Ms Sharpe, good question. Yes, the council has been working since the inception of the New South Wales Government's announcement of the proposal for a master plan strategy and a new innovation district at North Parramatta or Westmead. The council has continued to work with and be briefed by the New South Wales Government on progress of that master plan, including intended land uses for that precinct together with how the New South Wales Government may well collaborate with the many and varied stakeholders involved in appropriate management not just—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Yes, there is a lot going on there.

Mr NEWMAN: —on the site but also with the public spaces and community facilities. At this stage I think we sort of sit and wait for the New South Wales Government to put forward its proposed master plan and scheme for the precinct to enable us to formally respond.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I might just jump in on that finance question. Obviously, one of the points that a range of the submissions have made is that funding is crucial. It is also true that it is not the sort of thing you would usually put in a bill so it may be that the legislation itself does not deal with the funding issue. But I am interested in how transparent the is funding for the various parks at the moment. As councils, how much oversight do you have about what the current expenditure is or what the future plans are over the forward estimates for the Government's plans for spending in relation to these parks?

Mr ROBINSON: Mr Graham, perhaps I could answer that. At the moment the Western Sydney Parklands Trust publishes its set of accounts and we can see clearly revenue and expenditure. We have a good working relationship with the CEO of Western Sydney Parklands Trust and its officers. We meet quarterly to discuss projects and funding for those projects, and we thank them for that. Part of the challenge, however, with the bill is a lack of clarity as to how the funds will be separated and, Blacktown council asserts, maintained, within the Western Sydney Parklands. I reiterate what I said before: Council's view is that those funds should not be dispersed across the metropolitan area but were only ever intended for the operation of Western Sydney Parklands and should be protected for that purpose. More generally, the funding model is flawed and we should not be developing parks in order fund their operation.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Thank you. Parramatta—Mayor Davis?

Ms DAVIS: I think that Mr Robinson has pretty much answered for us as well. The annual report is really where we are guided in terms of what the funding is. As I mentioned previously, now that Parramatta Park is part of Western Sydney Parklands, there is some benefit to Parramatta Park in terms of the operations and that, again, is reported to us by the CEO and staff because there is that opportunity to share across the parklands. We know that Parramatta Park has been struggling financially. While Mr Newman may be able to speak a little bit

more about finances, something I would say is that one thing we have all been talking about since this pandemic is the importance of green space and open space so that we have those areas for our health, whether it be for mental health or, in this case with the virus, it has been our physical health. Therefore, those parklands should be funded the same way that the Government funds education, public hospitals and public roads. It is part of what should be expected by any community—to be funded by their government. I think that is a real challenge for us—the fact that we are bowing and scraping to get the money and we did have to combine with the Western Sydney Parklands to secure the funding that was needed. So I do not really know if this bill necessarily addresses everything that needs to be.

Mr NEWMAN: I might just add, Mr Graham, the point I was trying to make to Mr Shoebridge. I agree with your comment upfront that a bill is not necessarily the appropriate place for funding models or trusts or public organisations. I think the challenge I was trying to identify before was that the bill sets up the opportunity or the ability to hypothecate or reallocate funding across the different parks and trusts. It is then very difficult to assess whether or not that then puts at risk the financial position of any of those trusts until you understand what the funding model is for the entire portfolio.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I think that came through strongly in a range of the submissions, so thank you for that point. I might just also ask about the fact you have both made the case that we need more parklands, not less, and it is true that we would be in a better position if there was a voice in the Government arguing to increase the parkland across Sydney. I would find that an attractive idea. Some submissions have said, "Well, look, that can happen anyway without these changes with the existence of the Greater Sydney Parklands." I wonder if either of you have a view about that question.

Ms DAVIS: I will just start by saying that in our submission we talked about supporting the establishment of the green-blue grid committee to advocate for our longer-term vision for quality parklands, not only for us but across Greater Sydney—the connectivity of those parklands—and making sure that things are done in a less piecemeal way but also done so that we can actually achieve good outcomes for across the LGAs. So I think that is really important and we need more clarity and more confirmation around what the Government's vision is for that and what our role as councils will be. As you know, we are on the ground and we have that expertise and knowledge from being in that position. I think we have so much to add to ensure that that works well.

Mr NEWMAN: Yes. Thank you, Lord Mayor. I would just add to that by saying that the Lord Mayor touched in the beginning by saying our population is not dissimilar to Blacktown's. It is going to double over the next 15 years from 250,000 to over 450,000 people, or is forecast to. But that will mean for the city of Parramatta there is a need to deliver over 100,000 dwellings. The difference, probably, between the city of Parramatta and Blacktown and probably more consistent with other LGAs—medium and high-density LGAs within Sydney—is we have a defined limited amount of public space and open space. For us, it is going to be all about better managing, better funding, and having better facilities into our existing public spaces. This bill should represent an opportunity to do that.

Mr BUNTING: Before Mr Robinson takes over, can I just touch on that he has already mentioned how overpopulated we are going to be in Blacktown, especially in the north-west sector. As developers come in and blocks of land become smaller and smaller, it is more important now that we make sure that we have enough open space for the people to be able to get out, to be able to exercise, to be able to take their dogs for a walk and so forth. It is important that we are looking at more green space, not just what we have, especially in our north-west sector. I am sure the CEO wants to comment further.

Mr ROBINSON: Thank you, Councillor Bunting. Perhaps to be very specific in the answer to Ms Sharpe's earlier question, we need more than 300 additional hectares of open space to accommodate that extra overpopulation which is moving into the North West Growth Area. That is exactly what the deputy mayor has pointed to. Mr Graham, as to your question, the open space network in the metropolitan area—and I should state, for the record, that I am a planner by professional training—is a historical accident. It is in no way strategic and it in no way matches demand with supply, if you will. It is a historical accident of what were previously commons, what were water catchment areas, what is flood-prone land. The Western Sydney Parklands, as much as I love it, was in fact inserted into the 1968 Sydney Region Outline Plan as a utilities corridor, as a way to get power lines across the east-west thrust of urban development. It was not set up to be parklands, but credit to those who have created it as parklands.

Council's view would be that it makes sense for someone to coordinate the planning for open space across the metropolitan area, clearly in conjunction with councils, so that there is a coherent strategy for that district-level open space. Council is at the moment planning for a district netball facility to serve the half million population of Blacktown, as it will be in a couple of decades time. That district facility, which will serve so many netball

players—more than 20,000 of them across the metropolitan area of Blacktown city—is struggling to get funding for what is an appropriate level of service for a district-level facility that will have metropolitan-scale competitions because of the limitations of the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal [IPART] in what we can deliver under developer contributions.

We are also struggling, Mr Graham, because this State Government owes Blacktown city \$250.1 million in a scheme called the Local Infrastructure Growth Scheme, which it arbitrarily turned off before paying the councils which are due that money. So, Mr Chair, all of this goes to Blacktown council's view, as the Lord Mayor has pointed to, that the relationship with the State Government goes to failed policies and failed funding for recreational and essential community resources across western Sydney.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Thank you.

The CHAIR: Further questions?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I think that is time, Mr Chair.

The CHAIR: We have hit time. It is too.

The Hon. SHAYNE MALLARD: We won't interrupt the love-in, the Labor love-in.

The CHAIR: It is amazing how time goes fast when you are having fun. Thank you very much, everybody. I do not think we heard any questions taken on notice. We will now end this session and start another one. Thank you. Thanks for coming.

Mr BUNTING: Thank you, Mr Chair.

Ms DAVIS: Thank you.

The CHAIR: Now we start all over again.

(The witnesses withdrew.)

SUSAN STEEDMAN, Alliance for Public Parklands, and Member of the Executive, Friends of Callan Park, before the Committee via videoconference, affirmed and examined

MICHAEL BARKLEY, Member, Alliance for Public Parklands and President, Friends of Fernhill and Mulgoa Valley Inc., before the Committee via videoconference, sworn and examined

JEFF ANGEL, Director, Total Environment Centre, before the Committee via videoconference, affirmed and examined

MARGARET HOGG, Co-Founder and Chairperson, Saving Sydneys Trees, before the Committee via videoconference, affirmed and examined

The CHAIR: I welcome our witnesses, Ms Steedman, Mr Barkley, Ms Hogg and Mr Angel. Thank you very much for attending. Perhaps starting with you, Ms Steedman, would you like to make a short opening statement?

Ms STEEDMAN: Yes, I would, thank you. I address the Committee on behalf of the Alliance for Public Parklands: a parklands advocacy organisation representing the concerns of thousands of citizens from Maroubra to Mulgoa, particularly users of the five iconic foundation parklands in the Greater Sydney Parklands [GSP] portfolio—the 6,000 hectares encompassing Centennial and Moore Park; Fernhill Estate; Parramatta Park; Callan Park and Western Sydney Parklands. Collectively, Alliance members have volunteered thousands of hours discussing and responding to Greater Sydney Parklands and this bill, which we strongly urge you to oppose.

We all understand that increased housing density and a crowded Sydney needs green open space. Who can disagree with comments made by Minister Stokes, "Mounting global research is clear—accessible green space offers immense health, social and economic benefits." The Alliance applauds the Minister's *50-Year Vision* document, which was intended to be a blueprint for the protection and enhancement of the parklands estate across Sydney. Unfortunately, the rhetoric is not reflected in the legislation you have before you.

The two major objections expressed in public feedback to the consultation processes have been sidelined. Specifically, as noted by Elton Consulting in their report, the two major concerns raised in the submissions about the GSP agency were in relation to: first, its overarching role and objectives—focusing on potential for the reduced protection, commercialisation or sale of public open space and parklands; and, second, future governance and decision-making in relation to potential impacts on local level priorities, participation and influence, including in relation to the amalgamation of parkland trusts.

The bill lacks clarity. How are "open space" or "parkland" defined? How should they be valued by Government and its agencies? The Alliance defines parklands as green open spaces with flora and fauna, habitat and biodiversity, and natural aspects that attract people, not built environments such as business hubs, hotels, stadia and carparks that create heat sinks instead of mitigating against climate change as parklands can. And, crucially, free access to these places materially improves the physical and mental health of the people who use them.

In discussions with Minister Stokes, the GSP was to be an overarching body to administer and advocate for the parklands and, in his words, "to get parks higher up the list with Treasury". The bill gives no commitment by the New South Wales Government to invest in parklands by way of recurrent funding; nor does it provide a framework for advocacy. It provides the Minister and the GSP Trust with extraordinary powers, including the power to compulsorily acquire land without parliamentary approval. It gives the trust sweeping powers to facilitate commercialisation and privatisation by stealth through long leases to private companies. This neither preserves nor protects the integrity of the parklands.

We appreciate the fact that a raft of amendments to the original legislation was unanimously approved in the lower House. We wish to thank all those, including members of this panel, who argued against, and ultimately rejected some of the more egregious elements of the bill. The Alliance rejects the model of the Greater Sydney Parklands Trust as outlined in the draft legislation. It is a model which lacks transparency and probity and locks out the community from decision-making and public oversight. It is a governance framework for exploitation rather than a framework for protection and enhancement of our parklands for the benefit of the millions of visitors who use and love them. We urge you to reject this bill and instead develop legislation that reflects a genuine commitment to our parklands and the people of Greater Sydney. Thank you for the opportunity to represent the community view.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Ms Steedman. Ms Hogg, do you wish to make an opening statement?

Ms HOGG: Yes. I would like to speak on behalf of, and to give voice to, those of our members and followers with regards to their parkland canopy, vegetation, green spaces and the connected wildlife. For those of

you who may not know our story, we date back to January 2016 when works began on the CBD and South East Light Rail, which commenced on the corner of Darley Road and Alison Road, Randwick on the Centennial Parkland side opposite the Randwick racecourse. What occurred in the early hours of the morning shocked and horrified the public of not just Randwick but of Greater Sydney and beyond. A historical Maidens Run, a tree-covered shared park, walk and cycleway with supporting wildlife habitat, was obliterated while the community stood by, trying to stop it. As the clearing moved to their Anzac Parade memorial trees, they gathered in defence and vigil to let the community know what was being done to their parklands. They stood for their trees.

They made appeals to all those they felt should or could stop this carnage. There was much media coverage of this community gathering—police presence, crowd control, protests outside Parliament House, ABC coverage and there were documentary films submitted by keep Sydney beautiful to the parliamentary inquiry that followed into the CBD and South East Light Rail and that brought encroachment into the public parklands under the questionable labelling of it as critical infrastructure. There is more on our Facebook page with videos and community comments to support this. The Centennial and Moore Park Trust itself also came under public criticism for not being able to stop this violation.

Public disapproval of the "Tibby" Cotter bridge, Kippax Lake, and Allianz Stadium's expanding footprint, the Carsingha consortium and the talk of high-rise development expansion there, Moore Park car parking and Events submissions all attest to the public's desire to keep their parklands out of the hands of commercial interests to protect, maintain and preserve them, with free public access and enjoyment and into the future. Anything short of this, we feel, fails the obligations. We then move to the Parramatta-Cumberland area and repossession of land occupied by a community public pool, critical infrastructure in the form of a football stadium which is now built and still no community pool some years on. While climate bears down on the community, western Sydney has been left destitute.

Clearing of Greater Sydney community protected landscape within Parramatta parklands is also not approved of by the public, who have spoken out as strongly as they have been able. Perceived changes to Callan Park land have received negative comments on our Facebook page as well. There can be no acceptance of any suggestion of obscurity in the public demand towards their parklands. The bill presented and the qualifications of agents appointed and the overriding powers bestowed to them, along with the lack of guarantees to the public and the public involvement mechanisms in the maintenance and accountability of them, leaves them exposed to the loss of control by the public and encroachment. That the Minister has seen fit to present this bill as such is not only unacceptably disappointing but must be seen as an indication of obvious or possible intention, and that is how it is being perceived by the public. In short, the public does not like it. This bill that facilitates a user-pays or cheque-book approach to these critical infrastructure assets does not meet what is needed. This bill that leaves the public out does not meet what is needed, particularly in this democratic country. Thank you.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Dr Barkley?

Dr BARKLEY: Yes. Further to Ms Steedman's introduction, the Alliance supports public parks as areas of land with grass and trees where people go to relax and enjoy. We do not support asset recycling or a Government agency, such as the GSP, acting as a de facto real estate broker, cannibalising green open space and purchased with taxpayers funds. As members of the Alliance we have no vested financial interests or ulterior motives in our parklands. Mr Chair, this bill could be the select Committee's unfortunate legacy to your grandchildren and your great grandchildren's development, health and wellbeing. The bill contains no strategy or mechanism for acquiring additional parklands. Its objects do not include consideration of funding strategies. We are concerned with the prioritisation and lack of safeguarding funds. We are concerned with the commercial recreational hub solicited by exclusive negotiations from a short-list created by the Western Sydney Parklands Trust at the discretion of the trust.

We are concerned about how the power, legitimacy of vesting compulsory acquisition in a trust which is the GSP Trust. Indeed there is not even mention of sports in the objects of the bill unless one concerns culture or recreation yet sporting is mentioned under the functions. The reference to the Government's *50-Year Vision* and white paper are not reflected in the bill. The public is being duded by this bill. It does not give the people what they want. We urge you to reject the Greater Sydney Parklands Trust [GSPT] model and reject the bill. Thank you.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Mr Angel?

Mr ANGEL: Thank you, Mr Chair, and thank you for the opportunity. The Total Environment Centre has a very, very long history seeking to defend our public green spaces, and the debate is no less vigorous; in fact, it is even more important than it was decades ago. The core issue with this legislation is whether it allows the ongoing care, maintenance and improvement of the environment and public access. Removal of parkland by

transfer to another agency or long-term lease is theft from present and future generations. Does the governance set up by the bill, as amended, do enough to look after the community's parklands? That is the critical question.

Our response is no. Significant amendment and possible complete redrafting, including exploration by the Committee of alternative models, are required. The removal of the position of Minister for Public Spaces in the recent reshuffle—who should be responsible for such legislation and have a significant voice in Cabinet—is a very bad signal and should be reinstated as one immediate improvement in overall governance of the green space estate. Every public consultation of Sydney's future over the last 30, 40 and 50 decades, and the parks themselves, and the public use and consultation have shown very high value given to green spaces. And, of course, we have all seen the COVID inspired use of those green spaces. We urge the Committee and the Government to heed these long-held views and put them as the first priority in its recommendations. Thank you.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Questions?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I have questions. Thank you, everyone. Thank you for your submissions. They are all extremely helpful. Mr Angel, I just wanted to touch on a matter that has had very little discussion so far and many of the submissions really do not touch on this: The role of parks in biodiversity preservation within a city, the cooling effects that they have in relation to heat island effect, particularly in western Sydney, I am just wondering if you could take the Committee through the issues as the Total Environment Centre sees them, and perhaps, Ms Hogg, this is also one for you in relation to the environmental importance of parks.

Mr ANGEL: Yes, thank you. A large number of our local parks have very important remnant native bushland. As is obvious from the spread of concrete and asphalt across Sydney, these remaining pieces of bushland are incredibly valuable and in fact often contain species of national and international significance and rarity. The bush protection campaigns in fact one of the longest campaigns in Sydney's history, extending back many, many decades, and you have got to give credence to the fact that generation after generation of the community have said these areas are important. As native vegetation continues to decline across Sydney, those remaining areas become more and more important.

Sydney is undoubtedly going to be subjected to global warming. At the current rate we are going to have even more killer heat, particularly in western Sydney, and I do want to stress that when we get killer heat, that is not an exaggeration. People die when Western Sydney becomes too hot and people are unable to escape it, particularly those that are vulnerable. The vision of a green grid across Sydney is absolutely essential to making this city livable, particularly for future generations. While the concept of a green grid is mentioned in the legislation, there needs to be a great deal more work in order to achieve that. The environment of Sydney is something that is important not only because of itself but for economic reasons and for health reasons. One of the things we have been asking the Government to do for some time, particularly as it reviews Sydney's Metro strategy, is to give an economic value to the air conditioning that those trees give us, to the health that those trees and green spaces give us.

It is not just about short-term commercial development and the speculation about jobs and single-use entertainment facilities. This stuff is really, really important to people and we are really, really disappointed that the Government has not finished the job of this bill to meet people's expectations and, apparently, by de-prioritising public spaces by removing the position of Minister for Public Spaces.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Thank you. Ms Hogg, do you want to jump in there?

Ms HOGG: I think that we cannot under emphasise the fact that climate change is bearing down upon us and various species. The use of our parklands as resources, that will need to change and have an administration over them that is more based on an ecological preservation basis, cannot be overlooked. Appointment of certain agents under this current format is particularly worrying in that those trees and those landscapes are going to be the lifeblood of the city. We would sincerely hope that any point towards increasing new parklands means exactly that: new parklands that would come under the jurisdiction of what I would suggest is a re-formed new strategy of administration that will give those parklands the assets that they need to sustain the attributes that they give to the population.

The work that is being done in various universities across the country reports in terms of what Mr Angel was saying about the economic benefit and the deep omission—and it is becoming a major omission that needs rectifying—is that there is, within our cost-benefit analysis, no attributable dollar value to trees. Yet our Health budget keeps going up and all of the scientific links towards those benefits and those essential public health issues are not reflected in our development processes and our cost benefits. Our parklands, obviously, are being looked at in terms of efficiency based on an economic climate of what they can get for use of the land rather than a true value given to that land and the attributes that it gives to public health. I will continue, obviously—along with Mr Angel and a number of other people—to push for that to happen because it is way overdue.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Thanks for that. I might hand over to others in the Committee and I will come back.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: My question—your submissions have touched upon it already—is that there are a number of issues that arise from the funding model. One is the fact that funds generated in one park, there is no ultimate protection on where they will be used, which causes concerns for everybody about their local park being used as a cash cow for everybody else's park, but the other is the model of setting aside 2 per cent of western Sydney parklands for basically economic exploitation for car parking to fund parks. I do not know, Ms Steedman, if you wanted to start in terms of a response to that model and the mindset that has produced that funding model.

Ms STEEDMAN: Yes, thank you, Mr Shoebridge. We have a fundamental disagreement with the legislation because there is no funding commitment from the Government to the improvement or enhancement of our existing parklands, let alone any business case for how the acquisition of new parklands will be achieved. Our contention has always been, as I think was just very well expressed by the other two speakers, that our parklands are a need, not a want. I also take this opportunity to say that I think the preoccupation this morning with the single issue of the car parking at Moore Park diminishes the potential impacts of this inquiry itself because the interests of big sport and multimillionaires like the Carsingha proponents are well served.

This agency was designed, according to Minister Stokes in discussion with him, to provide a bigger voice for the parklands within Treasury. So, where is the Government funding commitment to this? Why do parks have to pay for themselves? I am not an expert on the Western Sydney Parklands model—Dr Barkley can probably speak more to that—but you have heard the concerns of the councils in western Sydney that those parklands are being further and further encroached on by developments, by car parks and business hubs rather than preserving what are the lungs of the inner west. When Bob Carr purchased in these lands, they were never to be developed. I hope that answers your question.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Yes, it does.

Ms STEEDMAN: Maybe Dr Barkley would like to elaborate.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Dr Barkley, public roads, apart from tollways, are not required to pay for themselves. Why do we have this position from the Government that parks have to pay for themselves? Dr Barkley?

Dr BARKLEY: Would you repeat your question please?

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Can you speak to the funding model? The funding model in this is 2 per-cent of western Sydney parklands can be set aside for economic exploitation to provide funds to the parks. Can you speak to that as a model?

Dr BARKLEY: Yes. I believe the figures seem to be very rubbery, but it seems as though that 2 per cent has been exceeded and the way in which those funds have been generated raises questions, too. I mentioned in my introduction about the Government and the agency, the Western Sydney Parklands Trust, acting as real estate brokers where they are acquiring land that the owners have previously tried to sell. They were prevented from selling unless they sold it to the trust, which turns around and leases it to private enterprise who then makes a motza out of it and returns—I guess the last figure that we saw was \$3 billion in leases, over a third of the leases, to Greater Sydney Parklands.

We have seen no business case whatsoever being presented for the Greater Sydney Parklands Trust and there are shortcomings in safeguarding how those funds are used. For example, I believe the Water Board in its accumulated funds were re-directed to Treasury. The truth is, if that happened in the Greater Sydney Parklands Trust, well, what's the sustainability in that for the Greater Sydney Parklands Trust model?

Mr ANGEL: Can I just make a brief comment? I remember when the western Sydney parklands legislation went through under Labor many years ago. We are stuck with a certain amount of commercial development that is there now and I think the community is saying, "No more." You know, it is not like we are starting history again and saying, "Oh, here's a clean slate for some more commercial development." There is enough so we just need to start focusing on the more important long-term values of these parklands and funding them because they return a net livability benefit and a net economic benefit to the community.

Ms HOGG: If I can just add to that one as well:

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Ms Hogg, it would be of benefit if you spoke up. You are coming through very quietly.

Ms HOGG: I am sorry. Just to add to that situation that is again putting emphasis on why this bill and a new bill are so important. Two years ago, when we were under our drought conditions, Centennial Park ran out of water. At the time the CBD and South East Light Rail and what had happened to the trees, the figs that had been touched on Anzac Parade, they needed help. We sent out letters to all of Parliament and eventually Mr Stokes arranged for water to be given to Centennial Park to be allocated only for a certain amount of time—luckily the drought broke in that stage—to actually help those trees and get through. We then arranged a meeting with the Centennial Park Trust and the Botanic Gardens and whatever to actually discuss the state of the park at the time, and it was quite dire.

They then informed us that they needed water, even though their ponds were failing them, things in infrastructure had actually interfered with the way that the water actually flows in and can be stored within the parks. They need more water, they need more facilities, to actually dam what waters they can when they can to keep that park healthy. The park is in distress and if they are now looking at a format that actually says, "You've got to be able to pay for water to maintain the park", which is basically the way it is, there is desperate need for a new format that actually does fund the parks and not have them self-funded. It is just ridiculous and it is running out of rope. It is quite dire.

Ms STEEDMAN: Could I just make one more comment about the funding? We have heard since the beginning of very early discussions with the Minister and the GSP people or board that there has been a vague idea about the establishment of off-park business hubs that would generate revenues to support the parklands. In the GSP agency's submission to this inquiry they say:

GSP notes that in a separate process, the NSW Government is investigating funding mechanisms to put GSPT on the most sustainable footing for the future, with the aim to provide additional funding to the Parklands estate without increasing commercial activities in the parks.

Surely this is something that should have been done before the legislation was introduced. Also, in that particular submission from the GSP agency it says:

For example, the establishment of off-park business hubs would generate revenues that could create significant new income streams for long-term protection and enhancement of the Parklands, without effecting ecological, historical or recreational values of parks.

To me, that is an admission that on-park business hubs and other built structures do materially affect the ecological and park-like values of those spaces.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I have just a follow-up question to the Alliance. Look, I think you have really spelt out these views very strongly in your submissions and you have clearly been I think the most active group around these issues, as this proposal has really united a set of local quite disparate groups. I am interested, though, in: Do you see some value in a body being able to advocate for funding or advocate for more parklands across Sydney? Acknowledging what you have said about the difficulties with the current model, is there a better way to do that?

Ms STEEDMAN: I can answer that. We would commend—yes, there are better ways. That is our point. The legislation needs to go back to the drawing board. We did agree with the Minister's vision. We still do. This is just not a way to enact that vision. We would commend to you Emeritus Professor Weirick's alternative model, which makes the argument that the blue-green grids—which is, you know, a concept that nobody disagrees with and it is absolutely necessary—needs to take in all parks, not just the five that have been identified in this Greater Sydney Parklands authority's remit—and he and others who are expert planners and experts in park management should be allowed to make suggestions to create legislation that will actually achieve the Minister's priorities and do that important advocacy work, which clearly is essential if we are to regard parks as a public good alongside transport and infrastructure. As I said before, the reducing of this discussion to an argument about parking on grass at Moore Park just speaks volumes to the vested interests that are at stake here and—

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I did think—

Ms STEEDMAN: —and how little regard they have for the entire strategy and vision.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Yes, and thank you for mentioning that other submission, which I did find really useful—the idea that we are talking about five parks here but there are a number 20 parks, nearly 10,000 hectares, or parkland in Sydney that we are not talking about here and that is not been coordinated. Mr Angel, I might just ask you that same question, given that you have followed these issues for a long, long time. They are inherently local issues. Is there some sort of role for central advocacy for greater parklands for greater support for parklands in Government, and how should that happen?

Mr ANGEL: Well, clearly the appointment of a Minister for public spaces was recognition of that. It was a reflection of the then Premier's priorities, which I hope are going to be retained by the current Premier. I have a suggestion: That the Committee should create a range of criteria that this legislation should meet, whether

it is accountability, environmental preservations, sustainability, public access, local voices, urban heat mitigation, et cetera, and then contrast a range of models and try to do some additional work on which model best meets most or all of those criteria. Clearly, the Government might have done that when it issued its first consultation documents. There might be something inside the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment [DPIE] where they have done some assessment of different models, but, clearly, the flaws in the current legislation require a broader framework in which to assess and compare to other ways of governance for these parks.

I do not disagree that a bigger voice is required for the green spaces and that may or may not be achieved by a bigger entity that goes right up through into Cabinet and has very significant advocacy and protection force against depredations by other agencies or some of these absurd commercial proposals, but that would be one of the criteria that you would assess various models by.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Thank you.

Ms STEEDMAN: I might be able to speak—

The CHAIR: Mr Latham?

Ms STEEDMAN: Sorry.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Thank you, Chair. I have two questions directed to the Alliance, if I could, please. What is the Alliance's view about the amendments that were carried in the Legislative Assembly, put forward by Mr Greenwich and then carried for the establishment of community trustee boards for all parks? Does this not negate the argument about economies of scale? I have to say that I was supporting this bill until this amendment was carried because it takes us back to square one. I never supported the car parking proposal at Moore Park, but the rest of it in terms of economies of scale I can see the sense of. But do we not lose those economies and we are back to disparate targeted management of these things with these community trustee boards established at each and every one of the parks? It negates the original purpose of the bill.

Ms STEEDMAN: I could speak to that, I think. Thank you, Mr Latham, for your question. I think the community trust boards, as described in even the legislation's second reading of the bill, the second version, do not mandate community trustee boards for each park. They mandate a community trustee board, singular. There is no discussion about how those community boards will be constituted, whether they will have representatives of council, how appointees to those boards would be nominated. But the bigger issue for us—and this is one of the issues I spoke to in my opening address, was the lack of community voice in any of this. References in the legislation to an umbrella trust and associated trust are completely misleading. The [inaudible] for Centennial Park and Parramatta Park have been disbanded. Fern Hill does not have a trust. Callan Park does not have a trust. The board of the Western Sydney Parklands Trust is the board of the Greater Sydney Parklands agency and presumably will be for the Greater Sydney Parklands Trust.

The idea that any local or hard-earned intelligence about the unique aspects and assets of each park can be addressed by a board that is common to all is a nonsense to us. If the Minister was genuine in his commitment to community involvement, why would he, as he did in the first instance, suggest that the Inner West Council should be removed as a consent authority for Callan Park? That further removes the democratic rights for citizens to have a say over parklands in their own areas. Yes, we do agree there is a need for an overarching voice, but the position of that agency should be to advocate for the funding and they should take notice of what each individual park's needs are and not attempt a one-size-fits-all approach, which is exactly what the Minister said he would not do.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Yes. Well, you have raised a good point there because Greenwich amendment No. 2 is headed in bold print, "Community trustee boards to be established for all parks". But it is true what you have said that when you look at the actual detail of the amendment that has followed new community trustee boards, it is not for all parks at all. Anyway, they have still lost me. On my second point to the Alliance, there is nothing in the bill for south-west Sydney. One of the anomalies in all this talk of a city inside a park is that in south-west Sydney we are talking about, and we are talking about vast local government areas of Liverpool, Campbelltown, Camden and Wollondilly, there are no State Government parklands. There is the Mount Annan Botanic Garden, which is massively underutilised and in need of reform, but what do we do to overcome this anomaly? I would have thought Stokes, in putting this bill forward, should have had an eye out for south-west Sydney where many more people live than the type of the inner-city focus that is being delivered and debated.

Ms STEEDMAN: Well, I would absolutely agree with you and commend to you Professor Weirick's submission, which points that anomaly out amongst others. But also, you know, the issue that we are concerned about, even with the current configuration of the parks under this authority, is that Western Sydney Parklands makes up the vast majority of these 6,000 acres and the potential for further commercialisation of those lands to

fund parks in other areas of Sydney is a real concern for us. Professor Weirick is the last witness appearing at the inquiry today and we believe some of his suggestions will address that question that you have just asked.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Thanks very much.

Dr BARKLEY: Also there is no strategy within the bill for acquiring additional parklands, which would directly affect south-western Sydney and Wollondilly.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: I suggested to the Minister, and he did nothing about it, that the logical thing for a State Government parkland is to take over the management of Lake Gillawarna, currently under Bankstown council, and Chipping Norton Lake on the other side of the Georges River under the management of Liverpool council, and amalgamate those two with the access walkways, a walkway bridge across the Georges River, to link the two. That would be a substantial gain for State Government managed parklands in south-west Sydney because, other than that, there is nothing. Anyway, we will keep pushing that. Thank you.

The CHAIR: Are there any more questions? It seems there are no more questions. Thank you very much for coming today. I do not think there were any questions taken on notice. We will now retire for lunch and come back at 1:15 p.m.

(The witnesses withdrew)

(Luncheon adjournment)

MICHAEL WATERHOUSE, President, Saving Moore Park Inc., before the Committee via videoconference, affirmed and examined

VIVIENNE SKINNER, Vice-President, Saving Moore Park Inc., before the Committee via videoconference, affirmed and examined

The CHAIR: Would either of you like to make an opening statement?

Mr WATERHOUSE: If I might make a brief opening preliminary observation, we appreciate the opportunity to talk today. After my observations, Vivienne Skinner will deliver our opening statement. Legislation can never cover every eventuality, so when considering amendments to the bill we encourage the Committee to think in terms of the two overarching principles we have suggested in our submission: firstly, the need for high levels of transparency; and, secondly, the need for effective interaction with, and accountability to, local communities. Together these can be the guardians of the Greater Sydney Parklands.

This morning we lodged a briefing note dealing with parking on Moore Park. I believe it has been distributed to you and I now seek your permission to have it tabled. It seeks, firstly, to correct what we see as significant flaws in the Venues NSW submission; secondly, to highlight the local community's need for a more equitable solution; and, thirdly, to suggest how the needs of both the sporting codes and the local community might be addressed in a fair and equitable manner. I will now pass over to Vivienne Skinner to provide our opening statement after which we will be happy to take questions.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Ms Skinner, you will have to turn on your microphone. It is still not working. I do not know what is going on.

Ms SKINNER: You can hear me now?

The CHAIR: We can hear you now, yes.

Ms SKINNER: Thanks so much. Thank you, firstly, to the Government for announcing the phasing-out of parking on Moore Park, we urge all members to support this aspect of the bill. I will raise something strange and it concerns the submission from Venues NSW. I am lucky enough to sit on the Community Consultative Committee [CCC] for the new stadium. What we discuss is confidential, but if you refer to the publicly available minutes of the last CCC on 30 October, we discussed the Green Travel Plan. In those minutes, Julie Shires, the Group General Manager of Infrastructure Development for Venues NSW, confirms the plan for the complete removal of EP3, which is the area across from the Hordern Pavilion, once its new carpark opens. So, as recently as late last year, Venues NSW and Minister Stokes were in total lock step about the removal of cars from the parklands. Yet now in its submission, Venues makes no mention of a Green Travel Plan and is demanding our public park be retained as a parking lot. It is as if they have got the \$1 billion stadium—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Sorry, Chair. I can barely Ms Skinner.

The CHAIR: Yes. I am having trouble as well. We had a bit of that this morning already. Is there anything we can technically do about that?

Ms SKINNER: My volume is sort of up. That's better.

The CHAIR: Yes. Maybe if you could lean a bit closer to the microphone, Ms Skinner, that might help a bit. There is nothing we can do at this end, unfortunately.

Ms SKINNER: Is that a bit better?

The CHAIR: Slightly.

Ms SKINNER: Slightly? Gosh, okay.

The CHAIR: Maybe speak up? Maybe yell? That might help.

Ms SKINNER: Possibly. I will speak up. Do you want me to back-track slightly?

The CHAIR: That is better. Project, project.

Ms SKINNER: Do you want me to start where I began?

The CHAIR: I think so.

Ms SKINNER: Okay. Thank you very much. Thank you to the Government for announcing the phasing-out of parking on Moore Park. We urge all members to support this aspect of the bill. I will raise something strange and it concerns the submission from Venues NSW. I am lucky enough to sit on the Community

Consultative Committee [CCC] for the new stadium. What we discuss is confidential, but if you refer to the publicly available minutes of the last CCC on 13 October, we discussed the Green Travel Plan. In those minutes, Julie Shires, the Group General Manager of Infrastructure Development for Venues NSW, confirms the plan for the complete removal of EP3, which is the area across from the Hordern Pavilion, once its new car park opens.

As recently as late last year, Venues NSW and Minister Stokes were in total lock step about the removal of cars from the parklands. Yet now, in its submission, Venues makes no mention of a Green Travel Plan and is demanding that our public park be retained as their parking lot. It is as if they have got the \$1 billion stadium, the \$3.7 billion light rail with a dedicated stadium stop, the new multimillion-dollar car park, and the \$38 million Albert "Tibby" Cotter Bridge, and they have got everything they asked for, so let us forget past agreements, and go for the lot. This, honourable members, feels like nothing less than a land grab.

Let's look at the facts. If parking at Royal Randwick is included—and it was offered as an option to patrons at the recent Test—the loss to overall parking is a paltry 10.2 per cent. Surely the Green Travel Plan will cover that? If I was heading to the stadium, or the Opera House, or indeed popping into David Jones [DJs] in the city, I would love nothing more than to nose my bumper bar up to the front doorstep. But we have to choose what is fair and what is most important.

At Saving Moore Park, and for the 4,000 people that support us, we choose the park. We know this because we conducted a public survey a year ago. We showed them the *50-Year Vision* image that you should have before you today and asked them what their priorities were. They wanted a proper, beautiful park with more tree plantings, and walking paths and barbecues, and an Indigenous interpretative site, and flower gardens. They wanted more playing fields for kids. I do not know whether you know that a recent report done by the city found a desperate lack of training fields for kid's sport, and 96 per cent wanted cars off Moore Park.

If this pandemic has shown us anything, it is that green space matters: to sit among trees, relax and escape the noise of the house or the apartment. Density levels surrounding Moore Park almost equal Hong Kong. The people living there might not have the loudest voices, but they matter. Moore Park is their backyard. It could be something special if the 2016 Master Plan would ever become a reality. But none of this can happen if Moore Park remains a car park with cars destroying its tired old surface. Thank you. That is our opening message. We are now happy to take questions.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Questions?

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Yes. I have questions.

The CHAIR: Please go ahead.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Thanks, Chair, and apologies to Ms Skinner because the audio for me was dropping in and out, so I am only directing the questions to Mr Waterhouse because of audio reasons. But Ms Skinner mentioned to ban the parking so that people can sit among the trees and relax. The parking there must be just a handful of days each year for major sporting events and there are trees there now. What is stopping the local residents from sitting among those trees and relaxing right now, or using the thousands of acres of open space and parkland—facilities that the rest of Sydney would look at with envy—the rest of Moore Park, Centennial Park, and Queens Park precinct? What is really stopping people from using those areas as well as the existing facility? It seems strange to me, given the paucity of these parklands in south-west Sydney where there are none whatsoever.

Mr WATERHOUSE: There is certainly a paucity in this area of Moore Park. What you do have to appreciate, Mr Latham, is that the population growth on the western side of the park is going to result in this area having the densest population of any urban area in Australia and even denser than Hong Kong. The demand has grown exponentially in recent years and will go on growing exponentially. In terms of the question of how the area that is currently or has been used for car parking is concerned, the problem that arises is because of the damage that is done by cars. You mention that it is only used for a handful of days a year. I think Venues NSW figures are 65 days or thereabouts a year, but bear in mind that not on all of those days is all the car parking used and we have provided statistics in our submission which will give you a fair indication of the demand and how people park.

One of the issues that has arisen is that a lot of the people choose to park on the park [inaudible] even if the Entertainment Quarter car park is largely empty, or at least half full, so there is a personal preference rather than an outright demand associated with using it. But the damage that is done, not least of all in wet weather, by cars over time compacts the soil and it also means that those fields cannot be used for playing fields for people, students, and the local community. As Ms Skinner mentioned, there is a dire shortage of playing fields in the area. You could say that we have a surplus of them, but in fact we do not. There is a dire shortage of them. So the space that is there is needed. We cannot cram everybody around Kippax Lake, which is the obvious area for passive

recreation. There is a need for other areas of passive recreation as well as active recreation. It is the whole mix that needs to be developed.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: In terms of sensible urban planning, we would expect the centre of Sydney to big population densities, would we not, on the basis that you have good access to jobs, facilities, the harbour all the magnificent sporting facilities at the Sydney Cricket Ground [SCG], a new football stadium and the Entertainment Quarter? Try living in Claymore and see how you go with any of that. You would expect big population density. Why should this area alone, for all the many thousands of places in New South Wales where people can park on the grass at sporting events, adult and junior—why would we legislate special, unprecedented legislation for protecting an area as puny as outside the Hordern Pavilion bordered by Driver Avenue and the light rail, when you have got thousands of acres elsewhere in Moore Park, Centennial Park and Queens Park? There is a huge backyard for this population growth.

Mr WATERHOUSE: It is not thousands of acres. It is not thousands of acres.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: This is just sort of being spoilt, isn't it?

Mr WATERHOUSE: No, it is not being spoilt. If you go back to the 1930s, which is what Venues NSW suggested we all do, they talked about car parking occurring back in the thirties as if, somehow or other, the passage of nearly 100 years is irrelevant. In that time the SCG has fundamentally changed. There are only two stands left that were original. Everything has changed there. The world is changing and part of that growth or change is the growth in the urban population to the west of the park. Moore Park is the park that is closest to the centre of Sydney, other than of course Hyde Park, and there is desperate demand for that. We saw this during the pandemic. We saw people flooding out into the parklands because it is their backyard. This is where people need to be and want to be and, whether it is for passive recreation, whether it is the kids kicking a football around or whether it is more serious junior and community sporting events, there is terrific demand there. It is not a question of, "Do we have it better than somebody else?" The fact is there is a desperate need here and there is an alternative. And that alternative is Randwick racecourse. On those few days a year when there is a double-header, for example, then there is an option there that will in fact remove a lot of the problem.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: In understanding the capacity of the grounds, we have got the new football stadium set to open in which on some nights there would be 100,000 people, probably half of them from western and south-west Sydney in the two facilities—the new football stadium and the SCG. Does your Moore Park protection group understand the vast difference in using public transport to exit that area, say, at 11.30 at night and using your car, because the difference is about 90 minutes for people living in the outskirts of Sydney. It is just unacceptable, isn't it, that young families would be expected to get the light rail, or you say a shuttle bus, to Randwick? So they get the light rail, wait for a train at Central after midnight, change trains probably at Glenfield to get to places like Oran Park and Leppington and Harrington Park, get to Leppington station and then do another 25-minute drive to where they live. You would not do that yourself, in that all the Moore Park residents have got the luxury of walking to and from these venues. Try a 2½-hour public transport journey—late at night, women and children, dangerous, risky, completely unacceptable.

Mr WATERHOUSE: Mr Latham, nobody is suggesting that people should not drive or park. Nobody is saying, "Let's get rid of all car parking." We are talking here about a 10 per cent reduction at the time when you are going to have a Green Travel Plan. A Green Travel Plan is designed to change people's behaviour at the margin. Nobody suggests that we are suddenly going to move from 35 per cent, which is the figure that the Arup produced for Venues NSW and Infrastructure NSW as to the average percentage of people attending events—it is 35 per cent. And nobody is suggesting that these people are going to suddenly drop away and we are going to get 2 per cent or something like that. Of course there will be a need for car parking. Nobody is suggesting there should not be some. We are talking about, at the margin, is a 10 per cent figure. That is all we are talking about—a reduction in 10 per cent. You are blowing it up into a much bigger issue than it is.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Thank you for your answers but can I just say I have never heard of this Green Travel Plan and I can assure you on the outskirts of Sydney the travel plan is simply to get in your car and go from A to B, and for decades we have been doing that for the Moore Park car park. And you try and move 50,000 people at 11.30 at night—that parking is essential.

The CHAIR: Thank you.

Ms SKINNER: Can you hear me now?

The CHAIR: Further questions? Ms Skinner, you want to make an answer?

Ms SKINNER: Yes, I was going say that the Green Travel Plan was not just dreamt up by us. The Green Travel Plan is a statutory requirement of the new stadium. By law, they must produce a Green Travel Plan

and show what it is going to do to encourage changes in driver behaviour. So no one is suggesting that we get rid of all the parking. What this travel plan will do is include things like integrating ticketing so that people can use the various existing venues and get into their sporting grounds all on the one ticket. It is going to smooth the whole process. So I do not think you need to worry that there are going to be people who are severely deprived with access to the stadium. And, by the way, getting out of the park at Moore Park on the grasslands is never easy. That can take ages. And just finally, on the damage to the park, people have reported back to me that the damage during the test recently was really quite severe. You cannot have a proper park when it is just churned up mud for ages.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Penny?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Thanks very much for your submission and your supplementary submission. I actually wanted to go back to your original submission and stop talking specifically about the car parking. I think that has been well canvassed. I was interested in your submission because you are one of the organisations who is not completely against the bill and you have some very specific suggestions about how that could be improved. I am just wanting to really just get you to talk to the Committee about the key aspects that you think need to be done to improve the bill.

Mr WATERHOUSE: Perhaps if I lead off and, Ms Skinner, if you would come in after me. The key aspects of the bill—there are a lot of things which are a concern. For example, the Community Trustee Boards—it is interesting the word "trustee" is in there because they are purely advisory and there are in fact no trustee responsibilities whatsoever, but we would like to see them take on the role and become effective trustees, if you like, on behalf of the local community so that you have one for Centennial Parklands, for example. And they have certain responsibilities, for example, in developing plans of management. They should be very much involved in interacting over that. But they are also a vehicle for communicating with the community.

At the moment you have a Community Consultative Committee for Centennial Parklands. Most people in the community have no idea this exists. It is set up under legislation but it was set up at a time when there was no such thing as social media, no such thing as the internet; it goes back into the seventies and eighties. And as a result it is completely archaic. There is no communication of anything that happens in the Community Consultative Committee to the wider community, and we see the community's role as being very much an interactive role. You have a community trustee board that has certain responsibilities—for example, providing advice on plans of management. If that advice is not taken, then Greater Sydney Parklands Trust have to explain why they have not taken that advice. So it is not just purely advisory—it is advisory but with feedback and that feedback is public and the community have an opportunity to influence the way the thinking is occurring on the Community Trustee Board. So it is a two-way process.

And, as well, we have an idea that we believe it is important to have a regional or local senior manager responsible for the parklands. At the present time there is no capacity. If a problem comes up in Moore Park the only person really that we can go to is the Chief Executive of Greater Sydney Parklands. Now, that is not feasible as long-term solution. Recently we had a dog attack a swan and kill a swan in Kippax Lake, and it caused a lot of community angst. The only person we could really communicate with on this was the Chief Executive of Greater Sydney Parklands. That is not good enough. What you need is a senior local manager who is responsible to the Chief Executive but also has a dotted line, if you like, to the Community Trustee Board so that they work in harmony together. That way you have meaningful community interaction and involvement both ways with the administration and management of particular parklands. We are not just talking Centennial Parklands; we talking about this for all of them like that. So that is a major area.

The other area to touch on—and it is here and it is there and it is all over the place—is the issue of transparency. Whether it is Alex Greenwich's proposal or the amendment that he has moved that any lease that is more than 10 years be subject to open tender, whether it is annual reporting by the Greater Sydney Parklands Board, whether it is communication by the Community Trustee Boards to the community, there needs to be a free flow of information backwards and forwards between the local community and the parkland in their vicinity. We believe this is critically important.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Thanks for your submission and all your work up to date. Could I ask you specifically about the Carsingha unsolicited proposal? What is the position of your organisation on that unsolicited proposal?

Mr WATERHOUSE: We support both the amendments moved by Alex Greenwich. For Centennial Parklands it reduces the maximum term of the lease from 99 years to 50 years. Can I just park that 50 years and come back to it in a moment. The other part of it is that there be an open tender process, which we strongly endorse. The taxpayer is rarely served well by decisions made on major leases such as this one behind closed doors. So we very strongly believe in transparency on this.

Coming back to the other issue—whether it is 50 years or not. I talked to a former investment banker this morning and I said to him, "How would you go about assessing what a reasonable term is for a lease, for example, for the Entertainment Quarter?" And we talked it around a bit and he said that certainly something that is 99 years—if you are doing an assessment of a major capital expenditure project, then the net present value of the revenue stream beyond 50 years is minimal and is meaningless. It does not change your investment decision. So therefore from that point of view, yes, we support that. Is there a case for making it 10 years as some people have suggested? There, we would believe that you cannot get a payback within a reasonable time frame on a major capital expenditure project, such as the Entertainment Quarter revitalisation would be, if it is as short as 10 years. Somewhere in between 50 and 10 is probably where it ought to be but if I can just suggest—and it is this chap's suggestion to me—get the Committee to seek advice from an actuary about what is a reasonable period for this because—

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: I understand the discount for future income. Most corporations would write as basically zero any income after 33 years in terms of its current net present value. I understand that. What about the Carsingha development itself? There are a number of sporting codes that have backed in the Carsingha development. Carsingha obviously has some very senior mates and friends behind it, putting their proposal forward. What do you know of it and what is your position in relation to it?

Mr WATERHOUSE: We do not like the idea of a 20-storey tower. We think that is a massive overdevelopment of the site. We do not see that as being necessary. Having said that, there clearly is a need to have a flow of people through there on a daily basis. So there clearly needs to be some sort of development—something that would bring people in to work every day. And then they would use the facilities that are available there. So we do see having, if you like, a development which provides for people to work on a daily basis in the Entertainment Quarter. One element of the proposal is to extend the car park by another two storeys and we would support that because that would of course make it even easier to overcome this problem of car parking on Moore Park. So that is a plus.

The designs that we saw—and we are going back now 18 months, I suppose, or maybe more—indicated some very good sight lines and travel lines through the Entertainment Quarter and we saw this as being a positive step in the right direction. So there were pluses. They certainly were not all negatives. The big one certainly is the size of the building. The other is, of course, the thing that we touched on and the length of the lease—99 years is way too much. So they were probably the two main objections that we had. But certainly we would like to see, and we can certainly speak on behalf of the local community—the Entertainment Quarter is very run down, it is not well patronised and we would like to see that change. But what is the price we have to pay for that? That is the question.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Do you support that, if there are any major changes to that, it should be part of an open tender or an open design competition?

Mr WATERHOUSE: Absolutely. It should be.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: One is an open design to rethink what that space—that part of public land—could be. And the second one, once open design—would you then want an open tender process? What are your thoughts on that?

Mr WATERHOUSE: I am not suggesting that the Government do the design and then put it out to tender. So I am suggesting that you have different architectural firms, if you like, who develop different concepts and perhaps there is a short list of two or three of those and then they are put out to tender and you see what comes out of it. And that is not dissimilar to the way Sydney Football Stadium was selected. So I think that is a pragmatic way of proceeding. But certainly, whatever happens, it has to be open and there has to be the opportunity for the community to comment on what options are being put out there.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Any more questions? Otherwise, I think we have reached the end of questioning right now. I do not think there were any questions taken on notice. Thank you very much for coming Mr Waterhouse and Ms Skinner. We will start the next session. Thank you.

(The witnesses withdrew.)

DANNY TOWNSEND, Chair, Alliance of Moore Park Sports, Chief Executive Officer, A-Leagues and Chief Executive Officer, Sydney FC, before the Committee via videoconference, affirmed and examined

TOM HARLEY, Chief Executive Officer, Sydney Swans and Member, Alliance of Moore Park Sports, before the Committee via videoconference, affirmed and examined

KERRIE MATHER, Chief Executive Officer, Venues NSW, before the Committee via videoconference, sworn and examined

MAX MOORE-WILTON, Chairman, The Entertainment Quarter, Carsingha Investments, before the Committee via videoconference, sworn and examined

MICHAEL HODGSON, Joint Chief Executive Officer, The Entertainment Quarter, Carsingha Investments, before the Committee via videoconference, affirmed and examined

SAM ROMANIUK, Joint Chief Executive Officer, The Entertainment Quarter, Carsingha Investments, before the Committee via videoconference, sworn and examined

The CHAIR: Thank you. If we could just get those that want to to give me a short opening statement, starting with you, Mr Townsend, perhaps.

Mr TOWNSEND: Thank you, Chair. Thank you for the opportunity to engage in this Select Committee today as part of the inquiry into the Greater Sydney Parklands Trust Bill. My interest is on behalf of the Alliance of Moore Park Sports [AMPS] colleagues, our league and our football club, and that interest centres on the accessibility and experience for our patrons attending the Moore Park precinct. Just by way of background AMPS is an alliance that represents 11 organisations, five professional clubs and six governing bodies that call the precinct home. We represent over 2.5 million sports fans from all over New South Wales. We collectively serve over 145,000 club members and we employ over 1,000 staff and many more employees indirectly through match day and the like. Our club's and major events' target demographics are young families and those from all across Sydney and regional New South Wales, depending on the event.

Sydney FC specifically is the most successful football club in Australian history. We represent over one million fans across greater Sydney. We have called Sydney Football Stadium home for the past 16 years since our club's inception and we are currently in the final season of the four-season displacement period whilst the Sydney Football Stadium is redeveloped. We have got an enormous climb ahead to re-engage our lost members and bring them back to football. Sydney FC take representing our city very seriously and in doing so encourage sport from all over Sydney and importantly all demographics but, importantly for us as a sport, there is a huge young participation base. Those young families are most critical to the success of our football club and our sport. Engaging those families and making access to our wonderful new stadium and the precinct as seamless as possible is really important, given driving and parking is their preferred mode of access for that cohort.

The Greater Sydney Parklands Trust Bill mandates the immediate removal of parking on grass at upper Kippax Lake, also prohibiting parking across grass throughout Moore Park East from 31 December 2023. AMPS members and Sydney FC have made it clear in good faith that we support the long-term staged removal of parking from green space and had an agreement with Ministers that this would be in consultation with all stakeholders affected. The understood agreement prior to the release of the Greater Sydney Parklands Trust Bill was that either removal of green space parking would only occur if a like-for-like solution could be provided in the precinct with similar utility to sports patrons. In keeping with that commitment and understanding, we encourage the Select Committee to remove from the bill any reference to on-grass parking being an offence on Moore Park and focus the bill on the consolidation of the trust whilst we collaboratively manage the staged removal of parking from parklands. Thank you very much, Chair.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Mr Harley, do you want to make a short opening statement please?

Mr HARLEY: Yes, thank you, Chair. I greatly appreciate, like Mr Townsend, the opportunity to present to this Select Committee as part of the inquiry into the Greater Sydney Parklands Trust Bill 2021, as a representative of AMPS but also as the Chief Executive Officer of the Sydney Swans. I will specifically provide comment on two matters concerning the bill in its current form: car parking and the revitalisation of the Entertainment Quarter. By way of background the Sydney Swans are a professional Australian Rules Football team that competes in the men's Australian Football League competition and, from November this year, the Australian Football League Women's Competition. Whilst founded in 1874 in South Melbourne, we relocated to Sydney 40 years ago this year and we have called the SCG and Moore Park home for the entirety of our Sydney existence. We are fortunate to have multi-generational support across Australia and, during the past 40 years, we have galvanised support by way of fans and members right across greater Sydney and regional New South Wales.

Currently it is our job to represent over 1.2 million verified fans, and we currently have over 50,000 members making Sydney Swans Sydney's most supported sports team.

Reflecting the strong and diverse fan base of the Swans, the club's average home crowd attendance in 2021 was 27,000—this despite the impact of COVID. Prior to the COVID pandemic, this number was close to 32,000 or 33,000. And given the vast diversity of our fan base, it is our focus as a club to cater for all of our fans travelling from all over the State. Post-match surveys conducted after every home game detail that one-third of our crowd drive to the game, 12 per cent of our crowd bring children between the age of 5 and 12, and 31 per cent of our attendees are over 60 years old. The very limited and not easily accessed disabled car spaces are also exhausted. The Greater Sydney Parklands Trust Bill in its current form makes parking on grass at upper Kippax Lake illegal immediately whilst also prohibiting parking on grass throughout Moore Park East from 31 December 2023, as pointed out by Mr Townsend.

It should be noted that the Sydney Swans are tenants of GSP and currently enjoy a strong relationship with current management as well as previous management under the auspices of the Centennial Park and Moore Park Trust. Further, the Swans have been, and continue to be, supportive, as Mr Townsend alluded to, of the Moore Park Master Plan, which includes the progressive removal of on-grass parking. In the spirit of this relationship and associated goodwill, we believe that the removal of parking should only be done once a mutually agreed process, time line and solution are in place and agreed to by all stakeholders, including AMPS, the New South Wales Government, Transport for NSW, New South Wales police, Greater Sydney Parklands, the Entertainment Quarter and the local community. As such, we urge the Select Committee to remove from the bill any reference to on-grass parking being an offence on Moore Park and focus the bill on the consolidation of the trust.

Specific to the Entertainment Quarter revitalisation project, the Swans support the Entertainment Quarter's project and hence its submission to this inquiry. As mentioned previously, the Sydney Swans are tenants of Greater Sydney Parklands. Our new training, administration and community home within the Royal Hall of Industries will open and be operational from November this year and represent an enormous engagement opportunity as the gateway to a much needed revitalisation of the Entertainment Quarter.

Of key interest to not only the Sydney Swans but also community sport is the refurbishment and return of the Showring oval to a community sports field, which will provide industry-leading multipurpose space for female athletes and their pathways as well as local club training, competition and outdoor events. We are concerned, as a tenant of close proximity to the EQ, that the late amendment to the bill relating to the term of lease will in effect kill off any significant investment in the EQ and, as a result, the enormous potential of the EQ will be lost, along with valuable green space, which is much needed. This bill is concerned with green space. The plans for EQ address this issue with a new Showring plus significant passive recreational space for the community. Further, and linking back to the car parking matter, there is a clear pathway forward which includes increased car parking in the EQ precinct as a solution moving forward. I therefore ask that the Committee consider removing the amendment to the bill to allow for the advancement of community sport for generations to come.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Ms Mather, do you want to make a short opening statement?

Ms MATHER: Thank you, Chair, and thank you for the opportunity to speak to the Committee today. Venues NSW certainly understands Greater Sydney Parklands' 2040 master plan for Moore Park and the key objective to progressively remove on-grass parking and supports the greening up of the parklands for community and sporting field use. We have been an active advocate for changing patron behaviour to achieve that objective and reduce the reliance on cars. We have been a vocal advocate for more and more affordable public transport. We have actively promoted public and active transport to attendees. We have invested in integrated ticketing to make it even more affordable for people to actually come by public transport. We have invested in more training fields for the Swans and the Roosters, removing on-grass parking to do so. And most significantly we are investing in a new underground onsite car park to enable removal of 1,000 on-grass car spaces at EP2 or the northern end of Moore Park, which we have worked on collaboratively with all government agencies, particularly the Greater Sydney Parklands team, and which will deliver a great community outcome.

With that same level of collaboration across all government agencies, we could achieve a similar outcome for the southern end of Moore Park. We were not aware of the legislation to remove those remaining 1,100 event day spaces at the southern end of Moore Park, known as EP3, until it went to Parliament. So it has proceeded in the absence of knowing the effect its removal will have on a number of key groups of stakeholders of the SCG and Sydney Football Stadium [SFS] sporting and cultural events, including the elderly, disabled and families who for various reasons are not able to use public transport due to reasons of disability or practicality. The southern end car park, or EP3, particularly serves attendees from the south and west of Sydney, and as far out as Wollongong and Katoomba and the south-west. While those 1,100 spaces may represent a small number of

attendees, by virtue of the proposed change in the legislation, their ability and right to attend would be legislated away within two years.

Compared to other stadiums around the country, there is significantly less parking for a stadium here at Moore Park, and yet there are two significant venues at the precinct, and relative to other stadiums it is not proximate to heavy rail or metro. Attendances are very important to SCG and SFS, which support an estimated 4,000 jobs, in normal years over 100 events and 1.5 million-plus fans and contribute around \$700 million in direct and flow-on economic impact to the economy. We are grateful for the opportunity to present the case for those stakeholders who have been overlooked here today. We are here to work collaboratively on a solution. However, it needs time to work through that, to see the successful implementation of the various transport initiatives that are actually already underway, and the legislation should not remove EP3 before a sensible accessible alternative is in place before its removal. Thank you.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Mr Moore-Wilton, do you want to make short statement on behalf of your people up there? Or would someone else like to?

Mr MOORE-WILTON: No, I will make it. Can you hear me, Mr Chair?

The CHAIR: Yes.

Mr MOORE-WILTON: I am just getting a bit of—anyway, I can now make it. Firstly, thank you for the opportunity to appear before this Committee. Carsingha Investments holds the lease over the site at Moore Park called Entertainment Quarter, which I will refer to as EQ. The lease expires in April [inaudible]. Sorry, I am getting—

The CHAIR: Are you getting feedback or something?

Mr MOORE-WILTON: Yes, I am getting feedback. I apologise.

The CHAIR: Do you want to log in again, perhaps.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: I am not entirely sure the headphones are working. I think you probably need to just focus on that.

Mr MOORE-WILTON: Yes, you have heard me up to—yes, can I just [inaudible].

The CHAIR: If you have got a written statement, would you like to table it?

Mr MOORE-WILTON: No, I will make it. I am just going to move to another site. If you will just bear with me for one second, I will be back.

The CHAIR: Yes, no problem.

Mr MOORE-WILTON: Can you hear me?

The CHAIR: That is good. That is very good.

Mr MOORE-WILTON: Firstly, I apologise to the Committee for wasting its time with this and I hope now I can proceed. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before the Committee. Carsingha Investments holds the lease over the site of Moore Park called the Entertainment Quarter, which I will refer to as EQ. Our lease expires in April 2036 with an option to renew for a further 10 years, meaning that it is 24 years remaining on the lease. Despite our best intentions, since the government's vision in 1995, the precinct has never lived up to its expectations. This has been because of a fragmented approach commercially combined with an overly restrictive regulatory framework.

In 2019 Carsingha submitted an unsolicited proposal to government, who agreed that the revitalisation of EQ was of sufficient interest in concept form to warrant progression to stage two of the unsolicited proposal process. For two years now Carsingha has been working on a plan to transform EQ into Sydney's premier sport, entertainment and media district, in consultation with the government, existing tenants, and community and resident organisations. We propose private investment of more than \$2 billion in total which would complement the substantial public investment that has already been made by government in the world-class adjacent sport and transport infrastructure to meet modern community needs. To not match this government investment to properly integrate EQ to its full potential would be a missed opportunity for the people of Sydney for the future. All of this is at risk if this is bill is passed with the amendments that were made in the Legislative Assembly at the last minute.

The proposed legislation would terminate current unique selling proposition negotiations. It would take us back to square one and stop any major capital investment in EQ probably over the remaining lease term and certainly beyond. I have read comment this morning of a "David versus Goliath" battle, pitting developers and sporting codes against local residents and activists trying to protect parklands. This is not our intention. We want

a win-win situation for developers, residents and tourists and for the State. The EQ site has historically been used by the Royal Agricultural Society for a wide range of activities over 100 years. Our proposal does not reduce public parklands but in fact adds additional green space to the current site. Moreover, Carsingha's plans would provide substantial benefits to New South Wales, generating up to 17,000 jobs.

We would increase the green space in the precinct by over a hectare. We would open up access with over \$100 million invested into increased pedestrian laneways and cyclepaths, and I was very pleased to hear community representatives saying they welcomed that. We would revitalise the Showing for community wellbeing and club sport, with a particular emphasis on female participation. We would create a new rooftop urban farm with sustainability education facilities, create new facilities to grow the music performing arts, film and TV sectors, which are critical in our post-COVID recovery, and we would improve the game day sports experience, including hopefully being part of a solution to the Moore Park car parking issue.

I would urge the Committee to take into account what research and community Sydney has shown is likely to occur. In September 2021 independent research by Taverner Research Group highlighted that there was strong support of over 70 per cent from both locals and greater Sydneysiders for a master plan with only 5 per cent across these two groups opposed to it. Since then we have taken considerable time to liaise and communicate with our stakeholders and with user groups. We have substantially amended the proposal that we have put forward. There is no 20-storey office building in our proposal that we wish to put to government. We recognised that there needs to be additional full-time employment on the site as has been recognised by community groups, because people need to come and use the facility on a day-to-day basis, not just intermittently when a major sporting activity or some other entertainment is involved. That is a fact of life. This would provide a major and vibrant continuing entertainment precinct for a very wide range of people and for a very broad group of users into the future. Thank you, Mr Chair.

The CHAIR: Thank you very much. Questions. Penny?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Thank you, and thanks for your submissions and we will hope that the tech works on the way through here. I have got a couple of questions. One is, we have had evidence today—and I think maybe this is to you, Ms Mather—which is about the requirement for the Green Travel Plan that is part of the stadium development. Can you give us an update on where that is up to and how that fits with the current discussion?

Ms MATHER: Thank you, Ms Sharpe. Yes, a draft Green Travel Plan has actually been prepared. It was prepared in collaboration with the City of Sydney, with the police, with Greater Sydney Parklands, with Transport for NSW and with the input of our community consultative community. A key tenet of the Green Travel Plan is the reduced reliance on vehicles. We know we actually get higher customer service ratings, or customer experience ratings, when people actually travel by public transport, so that has been very much the thrust of our plan. But it is a plan that includes a comprehensive number of strategies to drive a modal shift in patron behaviour. It includes everything from, say, increased bike parking and end-of-trip facilities to improved pedestrian signage and improved pedestrian circulation, all to drive more active transport. We have got electric vehicle charging stations and so on.

The plan is currently with Transport for NSW for consideration and, once they have actually signed off on it, then it will be submitted to the department of planning for their consideration. So that is the time line and process associated with that. I did mention in my opening remarks about our new car park. So this is on the site of the existing at-grade car park at the Sydney Football Stadium. So we worked with all of those same agencies to look at how we could actually take the parking off the northern part of Moore Park—so EP2. So it is about 1,000 spaces into that structure. So that will actually go underground and a parkland is actually being created on top of that car park, so we are actually creating another 3½ hectares of green space. And, of course, the new stadium is completely permeable, so it will not have the old, black gates that previously prevented the public access. So it will be a really wonderful facility to promote that level of community access and circulation.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: That's great. Can you just clarify for me the time frame for the new car park?

Ms MATHER: The new car park—so it is going to be done in two stages. The existing car park is actually part of the construction compound so the first stage of it is expected to be open in line with, or around, the time of the opening of the stadium and the second stage will be about a year later.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: What is the current time frame for the opening of the stadium?

Ms MATHER: The Government committed to have it opening for the National Rugby League final series, so that is in September of this year.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: This year, that's right. I just wanted to clarify that. Thank you. And the Green Travel Plan—in terms of dealing with EP3, does it specifically contemplate removal of car parking off that part of the park?

Ms MATHER: The requirement in the planning documents was to consider the Moore Park 2040 master plan, which deals with the progressive removal of parking on Moore Park and so there are a range of transport initiatives that are designed to change patron behaviour and encourage less of a reliance, if you like, on cars.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: But just to be clear—I am just trying to get an understanding of the time frames here. Everyone is saying that there is an agreement that long term you want car parking off these spaces, but there is obviously resistance and concern given the time frames within the bill, so I am just trying to understand. Does this mean that the time frame to removal is 2040?

Ms MATHER: It did not contemplate a time frame for EP3.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Okay, thank you. I have got just two more questions and then I will hand over to Mr Shoebridge who I know is very keen to ask some questions and I am sure Mr Latham is too. I just wanted to understand why the Randwick racecourse option is not considered a good option. I am not quite sure who to direct that to. Maybe Mr Townsend? I am not sure. Who wants to answer that?

Mr TOWNSEND: I will have a shot at it and, Mr Harley, feel free to jump in. One of our key pieces of feedback through surveying our members and our patrons is the ability to get our young families into the precinct quickly and easily, and the issue is largely centred around the time of these events. The majority of matches played in precinct will end after 10 o'clock at night and lining up to put those patrons, those families, on public transport to get out of the precinct is just something that they are just not willing to contemplate. Granted though, we are very grateful for the investment that has been made in the light rail. It has been fantastic for a lot of our patrons to access the precinct easily and affordably, but ultimately that significant cohort of fans that we need to solve for is those young families or those with disabilities that are just unable to get on that public transport at that time. Now, the problem with Randwick—and we have tested it before in a double-header situation a few years ago—is that you have to get on public transport in order to get to Randwick racecourse in order to use the park-and-ride facility there, and unfortunately when it was trialled before the take-up was very, very low.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Sorry, just to stop you there—was that before the light rail was operating?

Mr TOWNSEND: Yes, it was. It was before the light rail.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: So it has not really been tested, then.

Mr TOWNSEND: No, it has not been tested with the light rail in place but there were shuttle buses that were running back and forth which essentially were providing the same reasonably close transport option, but getting onto that public transport was what turned those patrons away and I think that is the concern we have about not having an adequate solution within walking distance of the precinct.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: [Disorder] because your view that the Randwick [disorder] proposal was never—is just not acceptable. Is that your view?

Mr TOWNSEND: Sorry, you just broke up through that.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Yes, my apologies. I am not quite sure what happened then. Just to be clear, then, your position really is that Randwick is not a viable option?

Mr TOWNSEND: I do not think it is a viable option in its entirety. I think the solution here—and we have said this all along at AMPS—is we need a multimodal solution to accessing the precinct and unfortunately I do not think the Randwick racecourse option is going to completely solve the car parking issue we have, particularly for that cohort of patrons that I talked to. I do think there will be some patrons, particularly as you say with the light rail in place—the take-up if we trial again will be better. I cannot guarantee that but it is probably likely to be better, but I still do not think it will solve the problem we have.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Ms Mather, it looks like you have a—

Ms MATHER: Thank you. I could probably give a more recent experience to supplement what Mr Townsend was saying. So probably the most recent significant event was the cricket test. We continue to make everybody aware that Randwick racecourse is an alternative but actually my understanding from Randwick racecourse is that no one actually availed themselves of it during the test.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Thanks for that. I have got just one more quick question and then you can jump in, David. You have talked a lot about disability access and access for elderly people, which most people

would accept need to drive and be able to do that. How much additional disability parking is planned in the master plan? I am not sure who can answer that. You can take it on notice if you do not know.

Ms MATHER: Maybe I can answer that in relation to the number of seats actually at the SFS. So in the old SFS I think there were something like 22 accessible seats. Now it will be 649. So we need to provide significantly more accessible parking. So it is not just the accessible parking. And so the new car park will have 1,500 overall spaces, but it is also the drop-off area for people with accessibility needs. So that will be significantly improved as well.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: That is it for me for now.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: I thank you all for your attendance and your participation today. To Venues NSW, you are required to have that updated Green Travel Plan signed off six months before opening. That means you have got to have it—under the condition of consent, that means by March, is that right?

Ms MATHER: That is right—yes, six months before opening. So it should be on track to actually achieve—we are required to lodge it six months before. So it has actually been through all the steps. It is with Transport for NSW for consideration and sign-off but they have also been involved in the development of it so I believe we would be on track to achieve that timetable.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: So I would ask you to provide the Committee with a copy of it in its current form, which obviously would be of assistance to our consideration about parking issue? I do not think that would be a difficulty would it?

Ms MATHER: I do not have a problem with that.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: And you are required to have, I think, an event car parking management plan in place three months before the stadium opened. Both of those documents have to expressly consider removing parking—admittedly over time—from the grassed areas in Moore Park. Where are you up to on the event car park management plan?

Ms MATHER: Both of those are in process.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: I would ask as well, could you provide us a copy with the event management plan as well?

Ms MATHER: I think they will be at too early a stage. So I do not have a problem with actually providing you with the Green Travel Plan. The other ones might be just too early because I think Infrastructure NSW are actually preparing them. So I would need to establish the status of those with them.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: A question to you, Mr Moore-Wilton, and, again, thanks for your attendance today. I think we would all agree that the Entertainment Quarter is not flourishing. It is not doing what it was designed. This is not what was promised on the box when it was handed over in 1995, is it?

Mr MOORE-WILTON: That is correct.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: And Carsingha, in one form or another, got the lease in 1995. Is that correct?

Mr MOORE-WILTON: Yes, that is correct.¹

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: I have had a number of people contact me very, very sceptical that, if Carsingha has had it for 26 years and it has not worked, why is it that we would allow only Carsingha to put a proposal about the future of the Entertainment Quarter? Why wouldn't we open it up to other people, given it has basically been a flop to date in Carsingha's hands?

Mr MOORE-WILTON: Fair question. Firstly, I need to correct my answer. The lease was first held by a group when the Fox Studios complex was dismantled, in a sense. They lost a significant amount of money, I think, for the first two years and then it was put to market and Carsingha purchased it. The reason that, as we understand it, the project went broke was that the conditions of the lease were overly restrictive. Now, we knew that—Carsingha knew that—and has been seeking ever since to try and find commercial solutions to make the lease work commercially. We have found that there is very limited ability to do that because of the restrictions on the purposes that it can be used for and the way in which approvals under the State environmental planning policy

¹ In [correspondence](#) to the committee dated 28 January 2022, Mr Max Moore-Wilton, Chairman, the Entertainment Quarter, clarified his evidence.

[SEPP]—it currently applies SEPP 47. So that currently we are saying that Carsingha has a lease that is really not fit for purpose if you want to develop a commercial entertainment quarter. We have found that over the years, now that we have been operating it, and this unsolicited proposal is designed to come up with a new, much more flexible proposal that would still meet the needs of commercial residents and commercial reality.

Secondly, why would you not open it up to public tender for 10 years? The reason is because we have 24 years of the lease remaining. This would involve surrendering the current lease, which does have value and it would mean, in fact, giving no value at all to the work and experience we have had and the value of the lease we have. It is a totally uncommercial proposal.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: So you are basically saying you will hold the State Government hostage for the next 24 years, holding onto the lease with a poor outcome rather than open it up to a public tender process. You will basically squat on a substandard use of public space for a quarter of a century. Is that the position?

Mr MOORE-WILTON: I am not saying any of that. What I am saying is that we would act rationally as any rate holder and businessperson in New South Wales would act if they have a lease—given in good faith, negotiated in good faith and paid for in good faith. You are not suggesting, are you, that we should not act in good faith with the Government or vice versa?

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: It is not good faith that is in question. It is about the manner in which the negotiation happens. You see, Mr Moore-Wilton—

Mr MOORE-WILTON: No, let me say, in your question you said we would be squatters. There is no suggestion of that, and I take exception to that. Carsingha represents some of the most successful businesspeople in this country, let alone the State.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: I am not suggesting you do not have successful businesspeople with good connections behind you. Of course you do. But what is so special about Carsingha's proposal—hotel, retail, some commercial? What is unique about it that another developer cannot bring to the table other than you hold the lease? What else is unique about it?

Mr MOORE-WILTON: What is so special is a sense that we are trying to put forward a commercial proposal that would benefit the State. You say, "A hotel—why would you put forward a hotel?" What have you got at Homebush? You have got a major sporting precinct with hotels to support it. But you are saying you do not need one at the major sporting precinct in the Eastern Suburbs.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Mr Moore-Wilton, I am not saying that at all.

Mr MOORE-WILTON: You are confusing me then.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: What have you got to fear from an open tender process? Is it the fact that there is actually nothing specifically special about your proposal and you want to protect that, and that is why you are avoiding an open tender process?

Mr MOORE-WILTON: What I am saying, Mr Shoebridge, is quite different. What I am saying is we have a lease, negotiated and granted in good faith. It has 24 years remaining, which has value. We have entered into a proposed process which the Government has had available to us. We have been involved in that for two years, involving considerable expense on our part. We have used considerable expertise. We are putting forward a proposal which has involved considerable consultation with the community and stakeholders. It is a proposal developed by people with a substantial commercial track record. Now, what you are saying, I suggest, is that all that should just be ignored and we should simply start again. I heard you say, "Let's put this out to a design competition." I mean, for God's sake. Let's get back to reality.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Let's get some reality, Mr Moore-Wilton. You have had it for over 20 years. It has been a flop in the hands of Carsingha. What comfort would we possibly have that the same people who have been managing it so badly to date would be the people to give a potential 99 year lease to it? Why would we go back and repeat the errors of the past?

Mr MOORE-WILTON: Mr Shoebridge, the negotiation that we are proposing under the unsolicited development proposal is a commercial negotiation between the State and Carsingha where commercial interests and State Government interests would negotiate a new proposal. The lease we purchased was a remnant of a [audio malfunction] failed experiment. And that was taken on in good faith. We have sought to manage it in good faith within the very restrictive conditions that apply and it is not delivering what the State hoped for or we hoped for. We are putting forward a proposal to remedy that. I give it no more sinister purpose than that. There are always alternatives to go and invest in something else. There is no point in reinvesting or putting lipstick on the pig. The pig has failed. We want to renegotiate. We want to do it in good faith and in a way where the community

benefits. It is sound common sense. We do not want to overdevelop the site. We do not want to put a 20-storey building and we do not want to alienate any additional green space. I can assure you we are not looking for a battle over this between green and non-green. We are looking for a proposal which the stakeholders and community will see as a benefit to Sydney for the future. We do not want to fight.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: I think my time has expired.

The CHAIR: I think your time is up. Mr Latham, do you have questions?

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Yes, thanks, Chair. My question is to Mr Townsend or Ms Mather or Mr Harley in terms of what I think is your active goodwill in offering up a negotiated solution to the parking issue in front of the Driver Avenue sporting venues that does not require a legislative ban but rather a long-term, sensible negotiated position. What have you got in mind in detail? Because, talking to the city council and also the Friends of Moore Park, they are wanting to keep all the parkland just as parkland and no car parking component. Would you agree that the area in front of the Hordern Pavilion has no practical open space sporting field usage going forward because it is now bounded by Driver Avenue, Lang Road and the new light rail? We do not want cricket players or footy players chasing balls onto the light rail tracks and also Anzac Parade just behind the light rail. So it is a limited area which really can only have a practical use of parking. Wouldn't it be desirable to get a two-, three- or four-storey car park on that land to address the parking issue that we have got and to then beautify either side of the Kippax Lake to meet the requirements of the residents?

As an outsider to the area, but a user of the facility, that seems to me to be the common sense approach. The Hordern Pavilion space which is only what 150 metres across until you get to the Light Rail now is very limited. That looks ideal for some sort of established built parking facility, freeing up the capacity either side of Kippax Lake which has got a bit of potential there for a sporting field. I think they want flower beds and trees to sit under to relax, an Indigenous Interpretation Centre—we have not got many of those. You can do something to Kippax Lake as a trade-off for the land in front of the Hordern Pavilion. Is that the sort of approach you would like to take?

Mr TOWNSEND: Thank you for that. Of course Tom Harley will jump in. Yes, I think we are looking for solutions anywhere in the precinct that makes sense. I think EP3—that paper you were referring to, Mr Latham—is absolutely a compromised green space at the moment. From what we understand there are some contamination issues on that point as well which make using it for sporting facilities challenging. There is definitely there, and other areas that have been considered in the past, like Moore Park west and building beneath that and then beautifying that as green space on completion. There are a number of other solutions in Moore Park Golf Club and around the area, equally some of the proposed solutions around EQ, would be a function of that proposition that has just been discussed. We are open to working with various different spaces within that precinct and we think there are definitely viable solutions there that should be explored before any rash decision is made to remove that green space parking and compromise the ability for a lot of Sydneysiders and regional New South Wales police bands attending that great precinct.

Mr HARLEY: Thanks, Danny. I might chime in as well, Mr Latham, if possible and echo Mr Townsend's comments and specifically the goodwill that has been established over a long period of time in working with the other key stakeholders in the precinct. We absolutely confirm and are also as committed to the Moore Park Master Plan as Ms Mather referenced the 2040 Master Plan which was the progressive removal of parking. I think that needs to be emphasised and tabled that we are open to that. And to Mr Townsend's point, I do not think, and I think it would be reasonable to say, that we have exhausted all of the potential opportunities or avenues to remove parking off Moore Park and the EQ Solution that has been tabled for further promotion and responsibility. We are certainly advocates of integrated ticketing.

It has been a shame over the past two years with the pandemic that we have not been able to maximise that process clearly with crowds and also with restrictions on Light Rail and Park&Ride. It really is a multi-modal solution to parking around the SCG and to keep prices down. The reality is we will not shy away from the fact that we are in the business of providing the best possible customer service to our fans and members and the cost to the end is important of just over \$2 million, as Mr Townsend referred to.

The CHAIR: We have come to the end. Were any questions taken on notice? I think there was one, was there not?

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: I think the Government has a question.

The CHAIR: Yes.

The Hon. SHAYNE MALLARD: Chair, can I ask a question?

The CHAIR: Are you going to run over time? Please. Shayne, are you there? I think he has disappeared.

The Hon. SHAYNE MALLARD: I am back. I am not sure what has happened.

The CHAIR: I am sorry if I missed you, Shayne. The service seems to be dropping in and out. He has gone again. We will have to finish this session, thank you very much.

(The witnesses withdrew.)

PETER DICKS, Director of Asset Management, Asset Management Branch, NSW Ministry of Health, before the Committee via videoconference, affirmed and examined

SUE-ELLEN DOUGLASS, Manager Property and Business Continuity, Corporate Services and Business Improvement Branch, NSW Ministry of Health, before the Committee via videoconference, affirmed and examined

The CHAIR: Do you want to make a short opening statement?

Mr DICKS: Yes, thank you. I will do that. NSW Health is generally supportive of the changes proposed to the Callan Park Act, particularly more flexibility in types of uses, within reason, of course and lengths of the leases for the last 50 years. From a NSW Health perspective, as owners and managers parts of Callan Park, to maintaining the historical heritage buildings on the NSW Health portion of Callan Park, for example, Kirkbride, is extremely costly and anything that can be done to alleviate those extra costs would be welcomed. Whilst maintaining the buildings is prohibitively expensive, we want to do the right thing and preserve them as best we can as nobody wants to see buildings neglected, especially such beautiful buildings. However, this has to be balanced by the needs of the NSW Health system overall and any dollars spent maintaining these buildings effectively takes money away from other areas where it could be spent on frontline health services. Whilst we are therefore supportive of any changes that could bring in additional revenue through higher rents on appropriate commercial use, for example, we have concerns about the way in which the bill was drafted could be interpreted to only benefit the trust and that it is somewhat ambiguous in parts.

The CHAIR: Ms Douglass—or did Mr Dicks speak for you as well?

Ms DOUGLASS: No, that was our combined statement.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Thanks for your appearance today. Obviously NSW Health is a critical stakeholder when it comes to Callan Park. We heard from the Friends of Callan Park earlier today that there is a proposal on foot involving the Kirkbride building—it was a priority in that regard—between health and non-government organisations [NGOs], as a kind of partnership, for the use going forward. Do you have any details about that?

Ms DOUGLASS: I will let Peter answer that one.

Mr DICKS: Yes, that is fine. There was a process followed, and NSW Health appointed Property NSW to manage that process to find a new tenant for the Kirkbride complex when the University of Sydney vacated. It vacated in May 2020. The process is still underway. The process is, in fact, commercial-in-confidence so I was a little bit surprised by the people commenting on specific appointments of certain non-government organisations and so on as being factual. It is a process that is still underway and has not been completed.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Perhaps, Mr Dicks, you can talk about it in the general, about the kind of options that are available for that extraordinarily important heritage building. Talk about the options that are available to NSW Health either through partnerships or the like with non-government organisations?

Mr DICKS: Gladly Mr Shoebridge. The options are really fairly limited and when that process started obviously the nets could not be cast very wide because of the Callan Park Act, and its restrictions in the usage types. The process followed the Callan Park Act to the letter but, as you can imagine, when there are such a narrow options of usage type there is not a lot of options out there. But we are following the process and there is a stage to be engaged in the next stage which will be more detailed negotiations with the prospective tenants. But you can imagine that with the buildings costing so much to maintain, particularly Kirkbride, it puts a huge burden on our health system to maintain those buildings which are heritage but not necessarily fit-for-purpose from a health service provision point of view. So we really have to make the best use of them that we can because we have them. They are a legacy.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Clearly options are available, you are actively progressing them but because of commercial-in-confidence reasons you are not able to give the Committee a full account of the options. Is that the position Mr Dicks?

Mr DICKS: That is correct, Mr Shoebridge. However, I just want to add that if we had more options like, let us say, 50-year leases, or some extension of the usage types—maybe a bit of food and beverage, performing usage arts—that would potentially give us more options whether that be now or maybe in the future.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Are there any issues about the drafting of the bill currently that you would want to bring to the Committee's attention? They may be unanticipated issues with drafting.

Mr DICKS: Sure, Mr Shoebridge. There are some areas where there was some element of ambiguity. For example, 6A grants the power to grant longer term leases only to the trust, the way we read it, but not for the rest of Callan Park which is not under the management of the trust. And as for those specified buildings, only the Convalescent Cottages are currently within the trust-managed area which is in precinct 1. Also the description of the premises is not really adequate and requires more detail. When you look at 6A as an example, the trust must not grant a lease or licence with a term of 10 years or more over Callan Park unless the granting of the lease or licence has been subject to an open tender process. That by implication assumes in that the trust would be approving all those leases, and not the operators like Health who operates on the other portions of the site, the other 21 hectares.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: I assume you would want the provision in Section 6A to refer to the whole of Callan Park and not just the trust—

Mr DICKS: There is correct.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: —in relation to land or buildings on Callan Park you would want it to apply across Callan Park? Is that right?

Mr DICKS: That is correct, yes.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Do you think that was an unintended drafting outcome?

Mr DICKS: I do think so, Mr Shoebridge, because I do recall conversations where we were told that the intent was for it to cover the whole of Callan Park, and not just the department's trust controlled area. It might just be a wording issue or a drafting issue.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Would it be fair to say that the limited pool of tenants and uses that are available effectively give NGOs a kind of cheaper access to these public buildings because they are not competing in a pool of competitors which involve for-profit commercial? That may have a negative outcome for NSW Health if you get less of a return. Does it have that benefit from the other side of the record: that not-for-profits have access to potential cheaper lease buildings?

Mr DICKS: It would because if you look at it overall we are all, as government agencies, required to get market rental for property that we lease out. Obviously the more prescriptive the playing field is in terms of what you can and are not allowed then that obviously would affect the rental income that you could get so NGOs specifically would be benefiting from that restricted use.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: It may rankle from a NSW Health perspective in terms of being able to get the maximum return for a building but does it create a little pool of cheaper property—in this case beautiful heritage—for the non-government organisations that are not for profit effectively?

Mr DICKS: It does. It could in that instance, yes. But if we had more options that is not to say that we would have to use those options but it would give us a bit of flexibility in terms of what it could be used and, therefore, NGOs, I would imagine, could also benefit from that by tapping into those extended usage types. Let us say, for example, performing arts. If you take the University of Sydney when it was there, it benefited from certain activities like the laneway festival. We did not get the revenue from that but it got the revenue from that. That, just by the way if I may mention, was allowed because the lease of the University of Sydney pre-dated the Callan Park Act 2002. It is not the way, I understand it, permissible currently which, I think, was stated previously. But it was only permissible because it pre-dated the Callan Park Act and, therefore, it could run those festivals. I am sure Sue-Ellen will correct me if I am factually incorrect there.

Ms DOUGLASS: No, you are doing very well with all the facts so far.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: There is no difficulty under current laws for a not-for-profit to run a cafe or another publicly facing element as part of their operations, is there?

Mr DICKS: From what I understand it is probably not, as long as it is not-for-profit. But not-for-profit would not generate revenue so again, the more they can generate from that, the more we stand to gain by a higher rental that could be achieved which supplements the maintenance.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Of course, as soon as it is opened up to the broader market the rental goes up, not-for-profit have greater difficulty in accessing it because you are required to maximise the return on land, are you not?

Mr DICKS: Yes, but the way I understand it was drafted the not-for-profits or the non-commercial use would get the first, I guess, bite of the cherry, if I can put it that way.

The CHAIR: Ms Douglass do you want to say something?

Ms DOUGLASS: I did have something to respond to that. Under our NSW Health policy, if we follow directions for commercial entities realised and market rates realised in our successes, we also have a policy that allows us to go to market under assistance grants. So we could effectively charge a market rent and then provide a market rental assistance grant which, to a NGO where their services contributes to the provision of health services in New South Wales, we are actually able to do that. They could compete in the market and receive a market rental assistance grant so they could be competitive in that respect.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: The cost of those buildings that we have talked about is a lot to look after. Do you have a ballpark figure in terms of what you expect to be the maintenance costs in the next 10 or 20 years?

Ms DOUGLASS: I can actually give you a ballpark figure. At the moment we are spending around about \$1 million per annum on just general basic maintenance and that is the stonework program to restore some of the buildings so that they do not collapse and to provide protection for the sandstone. That also includes security and grounds maintenance. This is only for the Kirkbride precinct. It does not cover any of the other precincts that we manage. They are separate again. At the moment we are looking at—and this is without doing anything to bring the buildings up to code or anything to make them fire safety compliant—approximately about \$1 million a year.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: And that is really just for the whole of the buildings where they are at?

Ms DOUGLASS: That is to stop them from collapsing and deteriorating and to stop people from breaking in and vandalising.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Do you have a figure for the entire portion of the building for which you are responsible, including Kirkbride?

Ms DOUGLASS: I could take that on notice and come back to you. I do not have costings for precincts for that. We have an arrangement with most of the NGOs there. They pay less rent and therefore they often manage some of the buildings themselves. We do major infrastructure for them.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Thank you. That is all. That is the only questions I have.

The Hon. SHAYNE MALLARD: I have read your submissions. Thanks for that. The maintenance and management of that property at the moment is coming out of the budget of NSW Health? Is that what you are confirming to this Committee?

Mr DICKS: That is correct, Mr Mallard. There is no special budget. It would have to come out of the same pool. Anything we spend, as an example, we had to refurbish the chimney at Kirkbride and we spent approximately \$220,000 on that. The chimney alone does not add anything to the delivery of any health services but it was a health and safety risk that had to be done.

The Hon. SHAYNE MALLARD: Are you planning demolition of the two obsolete buildings on the waterfront, for example, which I read in one of the submissions?

Mr DICKS: That is within the Greater Sydney Parklands Trust area.

The Hon. SHAYNE MALLARD: There are two bodies that run it. I would think it is inappropriate for NSW Health to be paying for it. Is it coming out of infrastructure health or out of the recurrent budget?

Mr DICKS: I would have to take that on notice.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: If NSW Health has a map of Callan Park on which you could identify the different precincts, would you provide the Committee with a copy of that?

Mr DICKS: Absolutely, Mr Shoebridge. We have a really good map that we can forward to you for reference.

The CHAIR: As there are no more questions we will call it a day. I think one question was taken on notice.

Mr DICKS: I think there were two. One referred to which budget it comes out of and the other was the approximate cost for the whole of Kirkbride complex to maintain.

The CHAIR: Thank you. The Committee has resolved that answers to questions taken on notice be returned within three days. The Secretariat will be in contact with you in relation to those questions that you have taken on notice. Thank you for coming.

Mr DICKS: Thank you very much for your time.

(The witnesses withdrew.)

The Hon. ROB STOKES, Minister for Infrastructure, Minister for Cities, and Minister for Active Transport, before the Committee via videoconference

KIERSTEN FISHBURN, Deputy Secretary, Cities and Active Transport, before the Committee via videoconference, affirmed and examined

MICHAEL ROSE, AM, Chair, Greater Sydney Parklands, before the Committee via videoconference, affirmed and examined

SUELLEN FITZGERALD, Chief Executive Officer, Greater Sydney Parklands, before the Committee via videoconference, affirmed and examined

The CHAIR: Minister, do you wish to make an opening statement?

Mr ROB STOKES: Yes, I will make a brief opening statement and perhaps the Chair of Greater Sydney Parklands might like to as well. Firstly, I thank all members for having me along this afternoon. This is an issue that I know we are all passionate about, Sydney's parklands that are a huge adornment to the city. It is so important to the city and I think experience of COVID and of lockdowns has re-emphasised just how important are parks for the social wellbeing in the city, the environmental wellbeing of the city and also the productivity of the city. These urban parks are now seen as what they are which are crucially important to everyone across the city. I think it is really important as well that, yes, we recognise the historical antecedents that established all these various trust Acts but in many ways we are dealing with quite Victorian legislation and it is the view of the Government and certainly my view that it is time that we modernise the framework for administering parks; to learn from world leading practice around the world where there are lots of consolidated urban parks models.

One of the key reasons we need to do that is we urgently need some sort of legislative architecture to add new parks into. So we are looking at some significant expansions in the north-west and south-west of Sydney as Sydney continues to grow. We are really at a crossroads. Do we go to the Parliament and try to establish more and more trusts with more and more back office and more and more administrative processes or do we bite the bullet and say we have all these parks across the city, why don't we instead envisage our city as being a park and bring the parks together so that we can get the benefit of a strategic management across the parkland assets but also balance this with a model that also provides from local participation through community trustee boards?

So that is effectively what we are seeking to do. We have been through a process of consultation to try to refine the idea put forward in the green paper, the white paper and the exposure drafts and now what was submitted to Parliament. We have amended it on the basis of submissions made by members of the lower House and now it is going through the parliamentary process in your place which is appropriate. The Government is very eager to work collegiately with everyone in Parliament to make sure that we come up with a model that we can all agree on—we can generally agree upon—because the intention here is to get a fit-for-purpose, open and transparent regime that ensures that all voices are appropriately listened to.

It corrects a very significant historical defect in my view that the existing legislation does not really allow for First Nations People and their perspectives to be properly understood and for them to be engaged in parklands that are very important to them, but also not just Aboriginal people but everyone across New South Wales to make sure that all those voices can be heard and that we have an entity that is responsible to report to Parliament regularly; that has clear financial accountabilities and also is through the blue-green committee that is proposed through the legislation to develop a vision for how we are going to expand our parks into the future. Because as our city continues to grow, and as more people live in higher density settings, the need for parklands is only going to become more acute.

That is certainly what is prompting us to put forward this bill. I know this morning there was some criticism about the fact that there is no longer a Minister for Public Spaces but can I say in my role now, certainly at Sydney Infrastructure I have always said parklands are a fundamental part of the infrastructure of a city. We need to recognise that our parklands are just as important as any other of the infrastructures that support the social, environmental and economic wellbeing of a city. That is why we need great, strong, clear legislation to protect and expand our parks.

Mr ROSE: Thank you, Chair, and your colleagues for the opportunity to appear today. I have been the Chair of the Greater Sydney Parklands Board since the agency was established in July 2020. During the past 18 months, the board has been meeting as the board of each of existing trusts under the existing legislation and we have exercised the powers and functions of those trusts under their respective legislation. Our submission sets out what we have managed to achieve in the past 18 months and so I think the submission speaks for itself in relation to that although I am happy to answer questions.

I want to emphasise two things today. The first is, as the Minister has just said, the proposed legislation creates a mechanism and some architecture for the expansion of the Parklands Estate. It does that by, as much as possible, seeking to extend the mechanisms, the operational mechanisms in the Western Sydney Parklands Trust Act into new legislation so as to apply to future parklands. The Western Sydney Parklands Trust has been established for 14 years and has been operating very successfully in that period. It provides a good example of the way in which its operational capability can be brought to bear in another location successfully, and that is in relation to Parramatta Park where the operations of Parramatta Park have been administered jointly under the Parramatta Park Trust Act but administered with the same team who work with Western Sydney Parklands Trust. So there is a model that shows that this approach, particularly this operational approach, works and it works in a way which allows you to expand an estate and by doing that to bring better stewardship, better care and better conservation to parklands for the benefit of the users of those parklands.

The second thing I would like to mention that has been already touched on by the Minister but it is worth repeating is that I want to emphasise just how important major metropolitan parks are as environmental, social and cultural assets for the city, and that has been emphasised I think during the past two years of pandemic when we have seen people using parks in numbers which we just have not seen before. These are important assets, not just for the people who live in the suburbs that adjoin them but for people right across the city. They need to be, and they deserve to be, thought about, planned for, cared for and connected in a way that reflects their wider whole-of-city significance. I think that is what Greater Sydney Parklands intends to do and what the legislation intends to do.

As the Minister mentioned, this citywide approach works well in lots of other cities around the world. It works well in Melbourne, London, New York and many other cities where they are trying to strike a balance between the interests of local users, which are very often immediate and very concentrated to a single park, and the interests of the whole of the city which requires longer-term thinking; thinking about people who would be using the parks if they could be, thinking about how demographics might change over time, thinking about how environment might change over time. So it takes a much longer term vision to be thinking about these very significant metropolitan assets in a co-ordinated way. So striking that balance between the local communities who are thinking about and care for their parks and the interests of the city as a whole, and of the citizens of the city, as a whole is what I think is the obligation of the Greater Sydney Parklands Board. I think the legislation attempts to strike that balance and achieves it pretty well. Thanks very much, Mr Chair.

The CHAIR: Ms Fishburn, do you want to make a separate statement?

Ms FISHBURN: I am fine, thank you, Chair.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Thank you, Minister, and thank you, everyone, for coming along today. I think the general consensus is that parks are important, we love them and we need to look after them. Minister, I want to clarify where all this sits within the new machinery of government changes. As I understand it, the greater parklands board currently is in Department of Planning, Industry and Environment [DPIE] and Infrastructure NSW and the Greater Sydney Commission was in the Department of Premier and Cabinet [DPC] and then the Western Parklands City Authority is going into the new cluster led by Minister Ayres. Is the Greater Sydney Parklands [GSP] Board moving into the transport cluster to follow you as the Minister?

Mr ROB STOKES: Thank you for your question. In relation to the machinery of government issues, that is a matter I will leave to others more competent than me within the public service to arrange. My job is certainly to lead this legislative process. Certainly I am relaxed wherever it sits within government but ultimately GSP is a discrete entity and can go where the Premier determines for it to go.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: So to be clear it is staying within DPIE and does that mean that you will be the responsible Minister for this piece of legislation if it is passed.

Mr ROB STOKES: All I can point you to is to examine the interesting allocation of Acts. I have had a separate conversation with Minister Roberts and we have agreed that this is an area that I should lead appropriately because it is in the area that I kicked off. We will see how that relates into a machinery government change that I understand is slated for later this year but that is more for the Premier.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Before we get into the nitty and gritty of this one of the clear issues that has been raised throughout the submissions and those kinds of things is the need for clarity within government in terms of who has overlapping responsibilities. It looks to me from these arrangements then that essentially planning, and actually planning for green space into the future, is now across three possible clusters with you not necessarily being the lead Minister, and with the expertise that is currently in the DPIE, I assume it is actually being carried through?

Mr ROB STOKES: You are asking me a question that I am not—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: To be fair, Minister, it is a question I did not think was going to be difficult to answer.

Mr ROB STOKES: It is not really mine to answer because ultimately these arrangements are not within my gift. But certainly I am the Minister accountable for this legislation, along with Minister Roberts. At some point in the future, as the machinery of government changes are worked through, certainly it would be my expectation—not expectation. I do not get right to expectation but certainly I would hope to continue to lead the Greater Sydney Parklands legislation and therefore appropriately the function should sit within my cluster being the Transport, Infrastructure a Cities cluster.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Just to be clear, that has not yet been ticked off?

Mr ROB STOKES: No. I just point you to the allocation of Acts and you can see there that at present there is a joint responsibility with the trusts in my role as Minister for Cities and I think the Minister for Active Transport as well, from memory.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Minister, that does not answer which cluster the Greater Sydney Parklands is in. Are you saying it is in DPIE currently but on 1 April there is not yet a decision about which cluster it will be. Is that correct?

Mr ROB STOKES: Not that I am unable to answer. Obviously these are matters for the Premier and it would be impertinent for me to suggest what he might do. So genuinely that is a question for the Premier and I have not had a separate discussion with him about this but I am more than happy to provide my view to the Committee which is I think it would be logical for the function to follow the legislation and that would put it in the cluster for which I am responsible.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I have a couple of questions. I am sure you want me to prioritise them. One of the biggest concerns from community organisations and the various people who have given submissions to this inquiry has been the loss of local input into what is happening with these parks. You would agree and I am sure you acknowledge that these parks are all functions of their own history as well. They all have their own quirks and those kind of things. But there is genuine concern around governance arrangements that really—you are calling them community trustee boards but essentially they are just community consultations groups, are they not Minister? Can you take the Committee to why you think they are not that?

Mr ROB STOKES: Well I disagree with your assertion that there is a reduction in community consultation. I actually argue that in terms of the bill these are increased. I will point you to the reasons as to why I suggest that. First, there is a requirement for the trust to prepare a consultation engagement plan in consultation with the committee to be approved by the Minister, to extend the community consultation committees right across the park network by requiring community trustee boards to be established for each of the regional parks. And then as a further improvement to the Centennial Park model which is, I suppose, the leading model across the parkland network, the bill requires these trustee board to be representative of the community, including First Nations representation and local government representation. At the moment the Acts do not even mention the role of local councils. This makes that explicit.

And additionally the range of issues the trust must consult on is set out in the bill and they are expanded from the Centennial Parklands Consultative Committee and the bill at law requires the trust to consult community trustee boards on plans of management as well as business and leasing opportunities. Of course, your question points to the paradox at the heart of the bill which is: are we going to seek to just continue the model where we had discrete parks operating ad mystically across the city or are we going to bring them together to operate strategically. What we are seeking to do through the model is to do both: to recognise the role of local communities but also recognise that there is a broader imperative to bring the park network together. I guess to provide a metaphor, in the same way as, for example, the National Parks and Wildlife Service looks after national parks right across the length and breadth of the State, that does not suggest that Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park is any more important than Mungo National Park and it does not suggest the two are the same in any way. But it does recognise that there is benefit in dealing with them holistically but still recognising—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: But just to be clear they have no decision making. The Trustee boards which essentially are consultative committees, they do accept that they are there for every area but they have no decision making role and they have no place on the central board.

Mr ROB STOKES: They have different functions, I think, is a better way to say it. I think I heard your question start with—and correct me if I am wrong—there was a reduction in community involvement in the legislation and that is not the case. It is definitely an expansion of community participation on what the Acts currently allow for.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I want to specifically deal with the Western Parklands issue. Ms Fitzgerald might be able to answer this for me. There is concern about, again the function of the Western Parklands. There has always been a supposed cap on commercial activity which is around 2 per cent of the parklands. There is very strong representation from Blacktown Council and I know the local member there has also had concerns. Essentially that 2 per cent has already been met but there are ongoing plans for more commercialisation within that park that will alienate more of the parklands for commercial activity. Are you able to provide to the Committee what Western Parklands see whether that 2 per cent has been met and how the forward planning for further development will impact on that?

Mr ROB STOKES: Yes, thank you. I might make a comment and then hand over to Ms Fitzgerald because she has got the operational expertise. My understanding is the plan of management for Western Sydney Parklands does, as you say, set aside 2 per cent of the park. That was always an understanding which is about 105 hectares for commercial activities, if you like, to work as a sacrificial anode or an engine room to finance all the other things going on at the park. That was the model that was selected for that park at the time. That is guided by the plan of management. As far as I am aware that plan of management is being followed to the letter and there is no exceedance over that 2 per cent, but to provide greater specificity I will hand over to Ms Fitzgerald.

Ms FITZGERALD: Thanks, Minister. This is a matter that we watch very closely, as you can imagine because it is in a plan of management that is approved by the Minister because we have made a pact with the community that 2 per cent is the upper limit for business hubs and because that 2 per cent is really what we have got to make this parkland sustainable into the future. We watch it very closely. I can confirm that at the moment we have got—and let me just read from my notes here—96 hectares, 6,518 square metres are under bid with hubs at the moment. That leads about 9 hectares still to go within the 105 hectares. I have not seen calculations that might have been made by Blacktown Council or others but clearly this is something that we watch very closely and we are still within that 2 per cent cap.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Thank you, Minister, for coming this afternoon. We genuinely appreciate it and we appreciate the submissions of other witnesses and their attention to detail. One of the concerns that has been raised is that, in fact, one of the largest of patches recently created parkland is somehow or other not caught up in these reforms, that being Millennium Parklands, Bicentennial Park and Newington Nature Reserve all at Homebush Bay which is some 430 hectares—bigger than New York Central Park. If you were having a citywide plan, given these are parks that are partly in place, newly created parks in some ways, right in the centre of Sydney, what was the rationale for not including them?

Mr ROB STOKES: Thanks, Mr Shoebridge, and thank you also for acknowledging the other witnesses who are here with me. It was remiss in my opening statement not to thank them for all the amazing work they have done. In Kiersten, Suellen and Michael you have people who are really determined to get a great outcome for the community and I am very grateful for their support. In terms of what we are trying to do with the Greater Sydney Parklands legislation is set up as Michael termed it, like allegedly the architecture to expand parklands into the future. So the parks you mentioned, yes, they were within my contemplation when we kicked this process off but there are a couple of reasons as to why at the time they were not specifically included. But that does not mean they cannot be into the future.

The reasons being—actually I noted there was a submission by Professor Weirick from the University of New South Wales who is an expert landscape architect who made a similar point as to why not all of the State parks were included. I think the reason goes to what the dominant and ancillary purpose of parks has been. As a part of the Sydney Olympic Park Authority, the Sydney Olympic Park has a range of uses, ancillary to which are community parkland and those sorts of things but they have some dominant purposes around sporting precincts. Another one I think he referred to was Mount Annan that has got a scientific focus and an ancillary usage obviously that are important opportunities for the park itself—

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: But those parklands that I put to you are not the sporting core—Homebush Bay. That is in a separate park. I am talking about those large areas of green open space. It is an extraordinary large amount of green open space with almost no community engagement, entirely run, by and large, I think, by the Olympic Authority, not exclusively. If you wanted to have a patch of parkland in the heart of Sydney—not a patch, a huge swage of parkland in the heart of Sydney—to bring in this authority, this seems a remarkable miss. They are not the sporting parks.

Mr ROB STOKES: Again, I am certainly not suggesting that they should not be. Certainly any amendment you want to put up I think we would strongly entertain it. This is about trying to find the right framework to include the parklands that are critical for the future of Greater Sydney so there was certainly no particular reason, other than they were managed already by the Sydney Olympic Park Authority—and that Act, as I recall it, is not elderly in any event. There is no reason why they cannot be—

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Actually, Minister, I could have led you astray. I am now recalling, I think it is actually with the department that has control over it. I led you astray, I think it is actually the department that controls that.

Mr ROB STOKES: Okay. So working with it not straight out of my knowledge, I will say to the Committee I am more than happy for those areas to be included too, I think it is a great idea.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: What has been apparent to me today from the witnesses we have heard, and from the submissions, is just how diverse the park estate is. The issues just within the Western Sydney Parklands are diverse from east to west and north to south in that patch of parklands. Parramatta Park is quite distinct from Centennial Park and they are both distinct from the more newly created parks around Homebush Bay. It is a really diverse park estate. Do you agree with that, Minister?

Mr ROB STOKES: Yes, delightfully diverse which is one of the great things about it.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Which gives strength to the argument that is coming from community representatives and the alliance that if it is so diverse well then you need some diversity in the management structure; that a one-size-fits-all management structure for such a diverse, historically, socially and environmentally diverse parkland does not fit neatly into a one-size-fits-all management structure. That is what is in your bill.

Mr ROB STOKES: I have a couple of things to say to that. I do not accept the characterisation of a one-size-fits-all management structure. They will all have separate plans of management. Again I would use the metaphor of the National Parks and Wildlife Service at which you could level the same charge. Yes, it is a unitary strategic focussed organisation that looks after a whole range of entirely diverse parks but no one is suggesting that that should be dismantled and each park be administered and managed separately. There are benefits of local involvement and also of State involvement too. I think the trick, and the paradox you are speaking to is the balance of getting that balance right.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: That is where I push back against your propositions in the bill. There does seem to be local community consultation trusts that do not have any decision-making power. There is an obligation to consult but no ultimate capacity to either direct resources or even sign-off on the plans of management. Did you contemplate a structure which had a distinct local role to take plans of management and local resource allocations at a local trust level and then a kind of over-arching co-ordinating role for the authority? Did you contemplate that federated structure, if I could put it that way?

Mr ROB STOKES: Yes I think I did. And this was at the heart of the discussions about which model to go with. But again if you localise it too much then the answer becomes more, why have a federated model at all? What are the efficiencies that you can get in terms of, you know, strategic management, consolidated procurement and all those things if all the parks are able to make or are empowered to make individual decisions about matters then what are the benefits—

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: You could easily have a central spokesperson for parks. You could have central procurement, central HR, central IT but allow for a more federated structure where the decisions about the plan of management and the allocation of local resources are done with a local trust or a local manager. You would get economies scale where they are achievable, you would have a voice for parks and hopefully a place government could direct funding to—I will come to that bit—but then you would also have the local decisions being made about the specific plans of management in the parks being done by empowered trusts, not consultative trusts.

Mr ROB STOKES: It is always open to you to put forward amendments to achieve those outcomes but my view is a couple of things. Some of these parks do not have any legislative capacity for communities to have a voice at all so this is a definite improvement on that. I think one of the challenges is that some parks in Sydney will have better access to have more powerful voices than others which is why it is really important that we ensure that we try to create a level playing field so that, while there are diverse forces and diverse needs that they are able to be advanced by a body that has interests across the whole city and not just for a part of it.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: I might just ask one more question. In relation to the acquisition capacity, it is very unclear whether incentives to acquire, for example, existing parklands—and we spoke about Homebush—or is it the incentive to have the economic clout to acquire wholly new parks and create new parks. In the absence of any regulations I do not understand myself what is intended in the acquisition capacity for a trust.

Mr ROB STOKES: I am happy to shed light on that in terms of second reading contributions and so forth to clarify these issues. I think firstly the power is there so it is enabling to allow that to occur. I think the

lived experience will be it will be a repository for parks that are acquired by government. Ultimately those parks will have to go somewhere. In some cases they will go to local government but some of these parks of regional significance to an extent that the State has an interest in running them and it may also be the councils do not have the capacity or do not want to look after parklands in which case there has got to be somewhere for those parks to go. I would imagine that the main responsibility for acquisition will be with central government but then once that land is acquired it has to go somewhere and the parklands being set up for there to be somewhere legislatively for that land to go and be looked after.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Following on from that acquisition question, Minister, it has been one of the key concerns of the Committee briefs. What is the plan here? It likes what you have said about new parks but they cannot really see the plan for that. What is the budget for new acquisitions at the moment? Looking ahead over the forward estimates what is the plan for purchases?

Mr ROB STOKES: I can certainly speak about the budget over the past couple of years. I think in the past couple of years we have put in about \$200 million into park management and administration. In terms of purchasing new lands—I do not want to pre-empt any decisions about allocations—certainly the areas we are looking at very strategically are to the north-west, significant additions to Rouse Hill Regional Park, as well as around Thompsons Creek and the South Creek or Wianamatta creek area because we are going to need a parkland for the Western Parklands City so that will be fundamental. For example, the West Invest Fund will be a funding source for those sorts of acquisitions. There are some existing funds that have been earmarked for future additions. I will also be beyond the forward estimates as well. What we are talking about here in the legislation is setting up the legislative architecture for that land, however it is acquired.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Yes, those budget issues will not be fixed in a bill. I am clear on that. But you agree at the moment in the mid-year budget update there is no specific allocation for Greater Sydney Parklands to acquire land? You are saying you will look elsewhere in government for those funds?

Mr ROB STOKES: No, I am not. I am just not pre-empting the budget process.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I have examined the budget and the mid-year review and there is no funding over the forward estimates. Do you agree with that?

Mr ROB STOKES: I thought you were asking me about the upcoming budget that obviously I am not in a position. I am not going to—

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: –pre-empt that.

Mr ROB STOKES: I am not going to comment because I have not looked into those issues but I can say that there are funds for acquisition of land and that there are strategic acquisitions that have already been identified and we need somewhere to put that land into. Fernhill is a good example. It was land that was acquired by government and we now need appropriate legislation to make sure that that parkland can be looked after for future generations.,

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: One of the attractive things about the proposal is that there would be somewhere to advocate within government for new parklands and the importance of parklands. It is clear that they are attraction. One of the views that has been put in submissions to the Committee is that the bill is not really required to do that and that could happen anyway with the role played by the Greater Sydney Parklands administratively. Have you a view you would like to put to the Committee on that question?

Mr ROB STOKES: I might refer to one of the other witnesses as well here but my understanding is the objectives of the bill call out this expansionary vision for the park for the agency and also the blue-green committee that is envisaged to actually do this strategic work and look at where there are opportunities, using the great work that the Greater Sydney Commission and others have done about the blue-green grid to look at where these acquisitions can be. Perhaps I might hand over to other witnesses who might want to add on to that point.

Mr ROSE: Thanks, Minister, I am happy to jump in. John, thanks for the question. As a board, what we have been doing is looking at the criteria that we would apply in discussions with government concerning the expansion of the parklands estate. There are a couple of ideas in this I suppose. The first is that the legislation gives us an advisory and advocacy role to government in relation to the expansion of the parkland estate as part of the implementation of the blue-green grid. We have that voice with government, if you like, around where it should be focusing and what it should be thinking about.

We also have, as part of the 50-year vision for parklands, identified how we ought to be thinking about parklands in a metropolitan sense. Who is going to use them and how that might change over 50 years? What are the climate stressors that are going to be on them? What are the other environmental stresses? How should we be thinking about water? How should we be thinking about how people get to parks? All these questions feed into a

set of criteria which we then apply to the very large existing parks that we already know about, the areas of the city where we think parks are going to be needed and where there will be large catchment areas, for want of a better term, of people who want to use those parks. We have developed that set of criteria and we would be proposing to use that if and when we have an opportunity to speak with government under the new legislation around the implementation of the future vision for parklands.

Going back to an earlier question around "Is there money for acquisitions?" and also the question around Olympic Park, one of the other things that is contemplated by the criteria we have established and I think contemplated by the Act is that Greater Sydney Parklands could administer parks that it does not necessarily own. It could provide the park management services to the Sydney Olympic Park Authority or to Placemaking NSW, for example, or that it could have transferred to it parklands which are currently sitting with someone else, and Callan Park is an example of how that has happened. We are considering how we would respond to the allocation of parkland to us or the creation of new parkland for which we would be responsible.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: No, thank you, that is useful. I might just finally ask the Minister, on that there has been quite strong but reasonably straightforward feedback from these groups. They want a stronger local say over their parks and some real assurances about commercialisation and cross-subsidisation. We will look to make recommendations; there will be amendments in the upper House. Are you open to considering further changes if that is what is required to get this bill through?

Mr ROB STOKES: Absolutely, John. Obviously, being a member of Government, I would love for us to control the upper House, but one of the great things for democracy about us not controlling the upper House is we have got to work collegiately with everybody. I believe if we all work together we can get some really great outcomes. There will be things that the Opposition and other parties have considered or are able to put forward that will enhance and improve the Act. I fully accept that, and wherever we can do that, let's do it. Speaking with the shadow Minister in the other place, he has already foreshadowed a number of things that the Opposition feels strongly about. I have indicated that we would be very happy to work with the Opposition on those matters and the same goes out to other parties and members.

My only sort of request is that we can work on it early so that we do not get into Parliament dealing with amendments at two o'clock in the morning. If we can resolve issues earlier, that would be better if we can because we can look through the unintended consequences. Sometimes there are amendments that might look good but when we have thoroughly investigated them they might have unintended consequences. The short answer of what I have just said is, yes, we would be more than willing to look at changes to the bill. Ultimately, we want this bill to stand the test of time, and for that to be the case it needs to be broadly supported by obviously a majority of members, but hopefully we can get everyone there.

The Hon. SHAYNE MALLARD: Minister, it is Shayne Mallard here. Thank you for coming along this afternoon. It has been an interesting day with all of our submissions. Just as an aside, when it goes the upper House, you do not want to go down the path of Campbell Newman. It does make us more in touch with the community. My question sort of flows from Mr Graham's and Ms Sharpe's and Mr Shoebridge's questions in regards to community consultation. Clearly it has come through—and I was a trustee, as you know, on Centennial Park—that the community wants to have a strong say in their local parkland. I think that is in the bill. I am interested in you expanding for us—because I do not really understand fully how it works—what this blue-green committee proposal is and how that engages community. I think it is linked to the potential expansion of parklands. Do you just want to outline what that means?

Mr ROB STOKES: Thanks, Shayne—a couple of things. To your point, I totally get where the community groups are coming from, and we all—and we should—feel passionate about our local parks. But we also need to recognise, and I think everyone does, that our parks, particularly our State parks, are owned by everyone in the community and need to be accessible to everyone in the community. It is that balance as well. Certainly, the locals are those who are most concerned and most interested in using the parks everyday, and so their input is really important, but it is also that we cannot have parks that are not accessible to everyone because that is the point of them.

In relation to the blue-green grid, that is really the strategic focus of the agency, and this actually speaks to part of the strategic point of what this is all about. I think the lived experience of existing trusts is they look defensively at the parks, which is appropriate—absolutely. There are all sorts of threats to parklands, and it is appropriate that they are defensive, but they tend to start at the fence and look in. They do not look the other way, and I think it is the connections between the parks and the opportunities to expand the parks. We are now in the stage of sophistication of the development of the city that that is what we need to look at next.

One of the things I feel particularly passionate about is, we have got a very modernist sort of approach to planning our city. We put the parks over there, the schools over there, the docks over there, the houses over there and

never the twain shall meet, and so people if they want to go to a park have to pack the whole family in the car and drive there and go to a carpark and pull everything out. If we can connect active transport links between our parks and make them more seamless and organic so people can access them through a whole variety of different ways, whether it is public transport or whether it is active transport, that is the next stage in the development of our parks linkages and that is what the green grid points to. All these nature strips, drainage channels, riparian corridors, all these forgotten bits of land, utility corridors that can actually usefully join some of these places together, that is part of the remit of the blue-green committee. But I will refer to the chair who will have more to say in relation to specifically the sort of assertive and expansionary vision that the parklands is really all about, and just moving beyond the defensive and moving into, how can we make these parks bigger and better?

Mr ROSE: Thanks, Minister. Mr Shoebridge, just thinking about your question I was thinking of this: If you take a trip, which I take pretty regularly on my bike, from Balmain where I live to Westmead where I regularly attend board meetings, you can cycle nearly the whole way and you are in cycleways and green space nearly the whole way. Some of that belongs to Greater Sydney Parklands. Some of it belongs to Olympic Park Authority. Some of it belongs to Parramatta Council. As you know, there are all these different pieces that you are going through.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: I have done the Cooks River many times. I know exactly what you are talking about.

Mr ROSE: Yes. They link up to produce a fantastic whole. One way to think about Callan Park is as a local park which has not actually changed very much in 30 years. Another way to think about it is as a really important piece of connective tissue in a corridor that runs essentially from Kurnell to the Blue Mountains and enables people to move across the city in these green and blue corridors. I suppose this is what I mean about striking the balance between the local and the metropolitan. There are things to be thought about for Callan Park and for other parks that are in these kind of networks which require thinking about how they connect to the other parks, to the local council parks, to the small parks, to the cycleways. How do they connect to each other? What would a day out look like for a family that was going between these different parks? How do we plan for accessibility for the people? Thirty years from now, how are we going to make sure that people who want to get from Parramatta Park to a park that is in Campbelltown, how do they do that and be shaded on their way?

Those are just questions that cannot be answered by a group of people who are focused entirely on one park within its own existing boundaries. For me, the opportunity of the network of parks is incredible for Sydney and the ability that this legislation gives the Greater Sydney Parklands to be the active voice within government for the stitching up of the blue-green grid, and to do that in conjunction with the Greater Sydney Commission, is to me the thing that really is to play for here, to create a set of interlinked parks which is a defining feature of Sydney and it is [disorder]—

The Hon. SHAYNE MALLARD: Is that the sort of bottom line here? It is a strong voice in the process with Transport for NSW and all those other very powerful bodies that we are putting parklands up that are equal.

Mr ROSE: Yes, so a strong voice at one end and truly effective local delivery at the other. I heard a lot of the evidence this morning from people around local control versus centralised control, and I think what happens is people are in some ways confusing deep and sincere and effective local community engagement and being informed by local communities about how they use the parks and want to use the parks at one end and operational expertise and governance expertise at the other end which is operating not at a local level but needs to operate and should operate at a higher level both to get operational efficiencies but also to ensure that really important things—fire management, water management, risk management—and the network are all connected in an empowering way for the future.

Ms FITZGERALD: Mr Chair, if I can also add something there to Mr Mallard's point about being able to bring big agencies like Transport and Sydney Water to the table. Since the instigation of GSP, I am already starting to find that those big agencies are keen to collaborate and work as partners with us. Mr Graham made the point that perhaps the legislation is not required to do that, and truly it has really started to happen, but there is only so far that those kinds of administrative arrangements can go. I guess what the legislation is doing is solidifying that role in legislation so that it does not rely on my personality or my network. It is not a personal networking, it is actually a legislative requirement, and I think things like the blue-green grid can actually bring Sydney Water and Transport to the table to make the network happen.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I have enjoyed the discussion about the blue-green grid. I think it is one of the most important things that the Greater Sydney Commission has delivered. We heard from local councils this morning, both Parramatta and Blacktown—and I think maybe, Mr Rose, this is one for you—and that sort of longer term planning around access to more parklands. Obviously brownfield sites in places like Parramatta is very different to the growth corridors in Blacktown, for example, and out to Penrith. Both the local governments

talked about their deficit in terms of open space. Parramatta talked about 212 hectares and I think Blacktown talked about 300 hectares. In the planning that you are doing, are you using the same method? Is there sort of some commonality around that idea that there is actually a minimum level of open space that needs to be required as these places get more and more dense? I am just trying to understand whether we are all working with the same sort of planning thinking in terms of translating what the parkland board is going to do versus what it can deliver in very different sites.

Mr ROSE: Thank you for that question. That is how we are approaching it. When we are looking at different parks, we are saying, "If this was not a park, what would the alternatives be for the people who live in this catchment area? What is the density of available green space in this part of the city?" In addition to thinking about that, we are thinking about: How will the change in transport networks change accessibility for people over the coming decade, for example? In 10 years' time, for example, Parramatta Park will have a metro station on both sides of it and a heavy rail station and a light rail station and so people may start using Parramatta Park in different ways. We are thinking about what is the future shape of this—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: And about 50,000 more people.

Mr ROSE: That is right, and we could pretend that that is not going to happen or we could plan for it or we could identify alternative places that those people might want to go so that if they start their day in Parramatta, they might end up somewhere else. The point is exactly as you have just stated it. Where are the deficits? Where are the people now? Where might the people be in the future? Where does the State already own land? Where are other projects going to produce land or produce opportunities for land? Ms Fitzgerald just mentioned, for example, that all of a sudden Sydney Water, which is thinking about its future catchment areas, is engaging with us around, what if those catchment areas are also parks? What if our reservoirs are also swimming places? These are the sorts of future-facing, demand-driven things which I think are very much built into our criteria. I should say, our criteria are very focused on the needs of western Sydney and not places where there is already a large number of heritage assets.

Ms FISHBURN: Minister, may I add something there? In relation in particular to western Sydney and access to open space, I think it is really important, and I am putting my old council general manager hat on. It is not just the volume of open space, it is the quality of the open space as well, and that is where there is a real benefit to joined up thinking in relation to the way parks work and operate together because councils for all the best will in the world are not going to be able to provide every single service within their council area. They are simply not resourced to do that. As Mr Rose detailed, it is thinking about strategically where can things go? How do people get access? How do you create a public transport and active transport network that allow people to really be able to experience everything that parks have to offer in a way that is not financially onerous upon local government and creates a really strategic and high-quality network of State-owned parks? I think that is where there is some real opportunity here.

I just want to pick up again on what Mr Rose talked about in relation to the active transport space. This is an enormous opportunity to create a recreational active transport network. We are quite good at building commuter active transport networks now because that is where Transport thinks—they think about commuting. In actual fact, in a survey of people in 2021—so amidst a pandemic—90 per cent of people who cycled in a week cycled for recreation purposes. There are some real strategic opportunities to get people out into parks with healthy lifestyles and to get them there travelling without a car for recreation-based purposes—so some great opportunities in the transport space as well.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I have got one last quick question, which is the issue around cross-subsidisation. Obviously the existing parks depending on where they are have differing views about all of those things but I think they are united in the view of real concern about the cross-subsidisation and the fact that under the current legislation it is really just setting up an account that would facilitate that with very little protections within that. Minister, are you able to give the Committee some idea of how you intend to deal with that issue which has come through very strongly during the inquiry?

Mr ROB STOKES: Thanks, Ms Sharpe—a couple of things. I think the first thing is we need to compare with what happens now, and what happens now is there is no special deposits fund and so, for example, money raised in the park at the moment could flow back to Treasury without any oversight of that at all.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Minister, I hope that is not happening.

Mr ROB STOKES: No.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: We had [disorder] stressing that it is not.

Mr ROB STOKES: No, it is not but it could, and I do not know whether it might have happened in the past, but the point is that is a deficiency of the existing system that this bill remedies by making it transparent. This is an argument by Treasury that hates hypothecation. Of course you want to spend money where it is raised, and I think the debate is largely hypothetical because all of the parks are effectively subsidised so effectively it is the role of the State to come in and provide allocations to other parks. But the legislation does set up special deposit funds for each park, and if for whatever reason a future trust may decide to allocate money from one fund to another, they would have to explain their reasoning because it would be transparent as to what was going on.

But to facilitate those transfers I think is just good flexibility. I cannot imagine the situation in which it would occur, but if it did occur, it would be transparent for everyone to see. Whereas at the moment, there is no transparency. I would argue that this is an improvement. The problem with leaving everything in every account is it does not allow necessarily for money to be spent efficiently, but it is good in terms of transparency. Perhaps from an operational perspective Ms Fitzgerald, if there is anything further to say on that point, might be in a position to add some more info.

Ms FITZGERALD: Minister, only to say that the legislation as it stands at the moment requires this future GSP Trust to prioritise spending on those parks that have either generated that revenue or else have received that grant from government. There is a requirement for them to prioritise to where the money was raised, which precludes everything going into one pot and there being no clarity about where it is being spent. The way the finances are set up, as the Minister said, sets that up in a very strong structure. I might also just say that on the plus side we have already been able to see efficiencies and savings out of the common administration. Where those savings have been generated, they go straight back into that park or customer-facing, frontline operational use as opposed to soaking up funds in duplicating administration and back-of-house costs. By bringing it together, you do actually get more money to return into each of the parks as well.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: It is true, isn't it, that the savings that you say you have found in the two years of operation is some \$600,000 through those administrative changes. I have got to say, given the experience of council amalgamation where in fact the obverse happened and it largely became less efficient and vastly more expensive for ratepayers, that efficiency argument might have been better in 2013 than 2022, do you think Ms Fitzgerald?

Ms FITZGERALD: These are real savings, Mr Shoebridge, that we have found. I have to say, the parks agency is not a huge agency. It has got a quite focused and contained resource and size. It is nowhere near the scale of even something like Hunters Hill I think. It is very easy to get efficiency in a small focused agency like that.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Could I ask you about the protections for local funds going to local parks. That is a real touchpoint in all the submissions. Not all of them but a good 82 per cent of the submissions are deeply anxious that their park will be tapped to fund other parks. Western Sydney is worried they are going to get tapped to fund Centennial Park. Centennial Park is worried they are going to get tapped to fund western Sydney. Callan Park does not have any money so they are not anxious. The protections that are in place are this prioritisation requirement. It is hard to see how that is a legal protection. There is no percentage; there is no requirement. It is really, at best, a very modest sort of verbal protection, not really a legal protection, Ms Fitzgerald, or have you had advice to the contrary?

Ms FITZGERALD: The lawyers have drafted it this way, Mr Shoebridge, to ensure that we can clearly and transparently pursue that aim and that objective. The other thing I think that it is coupled with is the requirement to report on that annually. I think annual reports are not always the most straightforward of documents, but with the legal advice that we have been given in that drafting, I think there is a specific requirement for that to be demonstrated.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: This again goes back to the benefits of potentially a federated model. There may well be compelling arguments why a proportion of the money generated in a park should be contributed to the greater good, but if those kinds of decisions were being approved by a local trust with local representatives on it, there would be far less of the suspicion and the anxiety that you are getting now and the fear of a future hunger games than we have now. Without those kind of local empowered trusts able to negotiate the local and the broader interests, you are going to continue to have these submissions. I will probably put that to you, Minister. It is more of a policy point.

Mr ROSE: You can just answer that from a governance perspective. The other thing I think that that anxiety does not pick up on is that in relation to Centennial Park, Parramatta Park, greater Western Sydney Parklands, the existing trust structures remain in place and the existing legislation remains in place and so decisions around expenditure need to be made in accordance with the objects and powers under those Acts. The board of Greater Sydney Parklands in deciding that it was going to spend Western Sydney Parklands Trust money

in Centennial Park would need to satisfy itself that that was an object of the Western Sydney Parklands Trust, which is pretty unlikely unless it was expenditure which was going to some target that had benefits for all of the parks. For example—

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Mr Rose, there is almost an irremediable conflict of interest there. If you are both a trustee for the broader park and you are a trustee for the narrower trust, you have got an almost impossible conflict of interest if you try to add funds from A to B.

Mr ROSE: I disagree. In fact, it is a very manageable conflict of interest. You can sit there and you say, "Whose money is this? What are our obligations in relation to spending it? Are we complying with those obligations?" You might have a desire to spend it somewhere else, but if you have an obligation under your legislation to keep it in one place, that is where you will keep it. I disagree on that, and we have I think over the past 18 months been very effective in making sure we are strict in the separation of decision-making which is specific to one park and the decisions which are specific to the wider network and to the achievement of efficiencies.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Minister, are you open to some additional protections in there so that for locally generated money there is a significantly higher threshold before locally generated funds are used in another parkland?

Mr ROB STOKES: I am obviously open to look at whatever proposals are put forward, but obviously I would need to be convinced on the basis of advice that they were necessary to achieve the protections that they were seeking to achieve. I take Mr Rose's point in relation to the protections in the existing legislation. That would seem like a fairly high threshold to cross, and on the basis of his advice I think the protections are already there. But I guess this goes to the fundamental point. The stronger you make the local powers, the weaker you make the central powers, and it is about achieving a balance. The more localised you make decisions, the more atomistic you end up making the parks and the less value there is in having this strategic body that is looking to try and—what is the saying—make the sum of the whole greater than the parks, which is ultimately what this is seeking to do.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Minister, can I ask about the Carsingha development. They gave quite strong evidence today that if the bill as it stands goes ahead, it would mean the unsolicited proposal is terminated. They would intend to sit on that lease for 24 years. That is an option for them; perhaps the most likely option I think is a fair way to characterise the view they put. The Government supported these amendments. What is your position on that question?

Mr ROB STOKES: That is very much over to you all. We were not in the position. As I have indicated, we are keen to get a bill through and a better administration across all of the parks, but I have said where I can do amendments but of course that means that ultimately we will want them to be amendments that everyone can agree with. I think [disorder]—

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: We will make the recommendations in relation to that Carsingha evidence. What is the Government's view? What is your view about the position they put in front of the Committee today? The unsolicited proposal is over and they will sit on that lease for 24 years.

Mr ROB STOKES: I think the best way to answer is to answer the previous question because I think they lend in. There are two parts to the amendment that the member for Sydney put up, and I think one is more important from a probity to transparency and good governance and public benefit perspective than the other. The one that I think is really an adornment to the bill is this idea that any lease of more than 10 years needs to be put through an open process and competitive process. I think that is the one that really matters. I think the lease term is actually the more arguable point. I think it is probably a good thing to provide more flexibility to go for a longer lease. Remember, just because the Act provides for a lease of 99 years does not mean that a lease of 99 years needs to be given and it would depend on the proposition that was put. But if it is over 10 years, it would need to be through an open and transparent process. I think that is the more important amendment. Again, the Government has supported the amendment, but I think clearly on the basis of the evidence provided this morning by Carsingha, the last thing we want is for that incredible opportunity to sort of not be taken up. If there was a view of the members to revisit that, I think that would be something [disorder]—

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I just [disorder]—

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: [Disorder]

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Sorry, David, I have just got one final question and then you are welcome to keep going. I just want to take you to your offer to identify other parks that might be added into this, and I want to mention one that I have raised with you before in another forum, that is the surplus land from WestConnex at

Underwood Road and Ismay Avenue at Homebush. This is an area bigger than Hyde Park. The locals want it as public land. It is now being transferred to Transport. They are concerned it will be sold along with much of the other land that has been sold under this Government. If I move an amendment to put that land bigger than Hyde Park into this parkland trust, will you support it?

Mr ROB STOKES: I have to take that on notice. Is this the Ismay Road—

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Yes.

Mr ROB STOKES: I think that has already been transferred from memory, but I will take that on notice. I will provide an answer on notice. This is an expansionary model to try and build on the parks. I guess the question there is, would that land be better managed by the local council being more of a local park or strategically managed as a statewide asset? That would be the question I would be asking myself. But certainly the Ismay Road land—

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Do you agree, given your view of parks across Sydney, it would be a total travesty for it to be sold?

Mr ROB STOKES: I think the answer to that is there was already a commitment made by me to the former member for Strathfield based on a commitment made by the Liberal candidate in the last election that that would be kept as parkland.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Minister, did I hear you correctly when you said it would be a tragedy if the Carsingha proposal was not taken up?

Mr ROB STOKES: No, you misheard me.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: To be clear, it is the note that I have taken here. If we are going to have open and transparent processes, an unsolicited proposal for some of the most prized public land in Sydney does not meet that open and transparent process test, does it?

Mr ROB STOKES: I think effectively what Mr Graham was asking me related to a comment that the Carsingha people had made this morning that I had not heard, but I was commenting in relation to that.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: I think it was Mr Graham's interpretation of the evidence rather than a comment.

Mr ROB STOKES: Okay. It was that it would sit there dormant for 24 years. If that would be the outcome, that is a terrible thing because it is a crucial piece of those parklands and it should be used for the community to enjoy. If that was the result, that would be a perverse result.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: The difficulty is that Carsingha has had the property for some 22 years and I think we can all agree that the Entertainment Quarter under Carsingha's management has delivered a pretty poor public outcome. It is well below its potential in terms of an amazingly well-connected, highly prized public space, isn't it?

Mr ROB STOKES: I do not want to comment on your characterisation other than to say I think—

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: That cannot be your end result. You cannot look at the Entertainment Quarter and say, "Yes, we want more of that." You are not saying that.

Mr ROB STOKES: I think there are opportunities to do all sorts of great things to activate the area and make it more attractive and to provide more opportunities for the people to get out and enjoy that incredible area. If this bill can help to facilitate investment by whomever that might be into a great opportunity, then of course we should look at that.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: But surely some things [disorder]—

The Hon. SHAYNE MALLARD: I will just do a quick point of order. I think it was corrected in the conversation before. They have only had the property for—

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Twenty-two.

The Hon. SHAYNE MALLARD: —10 years because I was on the board that approved the transfers. That must have been—I was elected in 2015—maybe 2013 that that happened. They said that date was wrong so I think it is about 10 years. They bought the existing lease.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: His evidence was from two years after the existing lease. That was his evidence.

The Hon. SHAYNE MALLARD: I will just clarify that anyway. I do not think it has been 23 years.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: But, Minister, surely if it is not working now, you do not go to the current management as the only place for alternatives for how it would happen and how it could be changed for the future? Surely that is what is crucial in this case about open tender and open process.

Mr ROB STOKES: I cannot comment on an unsolicited process, but what I can comment on is what the bill currently says and that is that any lease over 10 years needs to go through an open process. I think that is a great outcome, and that is the one I think we should focus on. I think the lease term is less important. If a longer lease term can get a better result for the public, then it should be a longer lease term. But provided that threshold point of it being an open and transparent process, I think that is the most important thing that was achieved through the amendment. If the upper House wants to look at the lease terms, the Government would be open to that.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: I am glad that has been clarified.

The CHAIR: Thank you very much, Minister. Thank you, Ms Fishburn and—who is the other gentleman—Mr Rose. Thank you very much.

Mr ROB STOKES: Mr Rose and Ms Fitzgerald.

The CHAIR: I note you took a question on notice, Mr Stokes, so the Committee would require a return within three days please.

Mr ROB STOKES: Wow. Okay.

The CHAIR: It is very quick. This is a quick—

Mr ROB STOKES: Efficient.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: You want us to be in a position early on this bill [disorder]—

The CHAIR: If you want us to be in a position—

Mr ROB STOKES: We will get [disorder]—

The CHAIR: —to do something to improve this bill, we are happy to do it.

Mr ROB STOKES: Thank you, Chair.

The CHAIR: Thanks very much.

(The witnesses withdrew.)

JAMES WEIRICK, Former Director of the Master of Urban Development and Design program, University of New South Wales, before the Committee via videoconference, affirmed and examined

The CHAIR: Would you like to make a short opening statement?

Professor WEIRICK: Yes, thank you, Mr Chair. I really thank the Committee for the opportunity to give evidence today. It has been a very long session. I have been privileged to listen to it since early morning. In my view the bill is mistaken legislation and should not be passed. It is mistaken because it is attempting to do two things badly: firstly, centralise control of five very different parks; and secondly extend that control over more open spaces of metropolitan Sydney. My submission is principally based on that second point as the intention of creating a network of public open spaces across Greater Sydney is to be commended but there is a better way of achieving this than the bill before the Committee.

On the first point, I fully support the principle of decentralised, community-based control of major parklands proclaimed by the Alliance of Public Parklands, supported by many submissions before the Committee and given in testimony today. On the second point, there is a pressing need for a coordinated, not an integrated, network of public open spaces across Greater Sydney. The bill attempts an integrated approach and fails. Many State-owned parklands remain outside the provisions of the bill. Notable examples include Millennium Parklands, recently discussed with the Minister; Mount Annan Botanic Gardens of course; many regional parks administered by the Parks and Wildlife Service; very large nature reserves also by the Parks and Wildlife Service; and indeed the national parks that are embedded within the urban matrix of Sydney like Lane Cove National Park, Georges River National Park or Sydney Harbour National Park.

Under the principle of decentralised, community-based control, complemented by specialist control of scientific and sensitive sites, the issue becomes one of coordination, not integration. This demands a different model to the poorly conceived mega-agency proposed in the bill. In my view what we need is a Greater Sydney Parklands council, not a Greater Sydney Parklands Trust. A Greater Sydney Parklands council should be established along the lines of the Heritage Council of NSW, as strengthened by the very effective inquiry into the Heritage Act by the Legislative Council at the end of last year. The Heritage Council provides a useful model for an expert and community-based Greater Sydney Parklands council that would have the power to set the standards for a network of public open spaces across the Sydney region, monitor its implementation and conserve its values. The vision for this network has been provided by the *Green Grid* study, which was done by some very wonderful students of mine of past years, by the Government Architects Office and Tyrrell Studio.

The problem with this vision of interlinked parks, reserves, riparian corridors and foreshore areas has been its implementation, principally due to fragmented ownership across government agencies and levels of government. The solution is not unified ownership. This is, I would suggest, impossible to achieve given all the interests of the various landowners. To the extent that the bill suggests this is possible under a parklands mega-agency, it is seriously misleading. They cannot even really bring the Millennium Parklands in at the present—the obvious thing to do. The solution is a planning and management system that works despite the fragmented ownership—indeed, a system that embraces fragmented the ownership under the principle of decentralised, community-based control complemented by specialised control of sensitive and scientific sites.

What I am proposing is a version of the current legislative controls for heritage items, which are disparate, and we have disparate public open spaces. These should be classified and listed in the same way as heritage items are today. Public open spaces need to be ranked as items of local, State, national or international significance under ecological, recreational and cultural landscape criteria—under those values, not under the ownership. In this way we may have open space owned by local government deemed to be State significant—like, for example, Chipping Norton Lakes suggested by Mr Latham earlier today—and vice versa we might have State-owned open space which is deemed to be of just local significance. The disparate public open spaces of Greater Sydney should be conserved and managed in the same way as all the disparate heritage items are conserved and managed through statements of significance, plans of management and integrated development consent procedures for State-significant sites at State and local levels.

The parklands council should be supported of course by specialist staff with appropriate qualifications and skills in the same way as the Heritage Council of NSW is supported by the specialist staff of Heritage NSW. The parklands council should be empowered to promote public participation in the identification, acquisition, planning, design and management of new parklands, greenways and reserves to realise the green grid concept for metropolitan Sydney. I urge the Select Committee to recommend rejection of the Greater Sydney Parklands Trust bill and initiate a consultative process to frame new legislation to establish a responsive, informed, community-based Greater Sydney Parklands council. Thank you very much.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Thanks very much for your submission, Professor. I have had a number of people in my ear saying, "That is an excellent submission; make sure you read that submission." Obviously you have done something right, Professor. Can I ask you if there are any opportunities with the bill to move forward and do more of a federated structure where you have some activities—maybe advocacy activities, some back office activities, maybe some other strategic planning activities—being done by call it a council, call it a senior trust, however you want to do it, and it has some of those ownership capacity and ownership powers but you have local trust structures which are empowered to sign off local plans of management, oversight the local management and approve where locally generated funds are going as well as perhaps maybe an oversight on leases. You have a kind of federated structure. Would that be an advance?

Professor WEIRICK: Of course. I very much support that idea, and I just sort of went over that first issue which has been raised by the Alliance of Public Parklands, which I fully support. I think what has been proven in today's testimony and in many submissions is just how passionate people are for their open spaces and how informed they are and how baffling it is to start working with a centralised mega-agency. The example of a dog attacking a swan in Kippax Lake was I think a very revealing moment of what is important to people locally, but behind that is a very deep understanding of what those values of parklands are. I think that to create one big centralised agency instead of small decentralised creative places is the wrong way to go. But there is a role for some specialist central skills as we would find in Heritage NSW on the heritage issues, and that is for sure. I think that, as you mentioned, Mr Shoebridge, earlier, there could be some centralised procurement, HR, IT and so forth which could achieve some of the efficiencies, so called, that the people think that big things provide but often of course they do not. But perhaps that is worth investigating.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: There clearly are some benefits in having an agency whose sole interest is parks and connecting the different parks and some of that sort of strategic planning. There are some benefits in a strategic planning agency—

Professor WEIRICK: Yes.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: —which is more than the Heritage Council does in the heritage space.

Professor WEIRICK: Correct. You are right in that respect. But, nevertheless, there is an expectation, because we have a Heritage Council, that there is an acknowledgement of the significance of heritage places. A council would I think also establish the significance of parklands at the big level. In fact the Minister and Mr Rose were mentioning just in the most recent segment of the inquiry—but I do not think they have actually got the mechanism in the bill to achieve it—they have got the blue-green advisory committee and then, as Mr Rose was saying if I understood him correctly, the trust itself will only be advising government on things. You have got an advisory committee advising an advisory committee instead of something with real power.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Again, in some ways, the role of the trust on the blue-green committee is closer to the role of the Heritage Council working with other landowners like Sydney Water and the like and other councils to actually build those connections. In some ways that role that is envisaged by the trust is actually more in line with a kind of Heritage Council model, isn't it?

Professor WEIRICK: Yes, but I do not know whether you can see that in the bill at the moment. I do not see that clear description of what that committee is and its powers in the bill at the moment. Perhaps—

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: I would agree with you, and if it is going to have that role, it should be articulated.

Professor WEIRICK: Yes, absolutely, and I think that that is the most important thing because unfortunately what has come across to the community is everything that has been talked about over the commercialisation of open space, and it would appear that the five parks chosen at the moment are the ones with the maximum capacity for commercial opportunities. The good part of the Minister's intentions is not obvious or not clear in how it is established, but what they have set up is how to make money from the parks.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Could I ask you on notice—there are only three days because we have got such a tight turnaround on this—

Professor WEIRICK: Yes, of course.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: —to have a look at the current community consultative trusts and have a look at if there is a set of kind of powers or additional authorities that those trusts could be endowed with that would take us in the right direction of going towards that more local management, strategic and the division between the local and the strategic. Would you mind looking at that on notice?

Professor WEIRICK: I will certainly take that on notice and endeavour to get that to you. I would have to consult some true experts in public policy implementation, but I will be very honoured to do that. Thank you.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: If I could just follow on at that point, firstly to thank you for your submission. I found it tremendously useful, particularly the point you made about the fact that while we are talking here about these five parks, you have named another 20 that under various forms of quite fragmented ownership—that is the nature of these institutions and where historically they have ended up in government—would deal with that coordination. I was interested—what do you see as the upside of that? If this went well—if that coordination did tighten—how do you see this working? What could be gained as a city?

Professor WEIRICK: There I am in complete agreement with Minister Stokes that what is definitely needed is to see the whole and I think it was mentioned earlier by Mr Robinson from Blacktown—who made I think a very powerful statement about what it was like to see what is happening, as it were and what has happened in the past—that what we have across Sydney is effectively a series of historical accidents and linking them up is going to be extremely difficult. It is a very visionary concept, the blue-green grid, but it has basically been in no more than a report and wishful thinking for five years. How do we implement that? I do not think it is going to be implemented by a mega-agency. I think it only can happen with cooperation with the existing disparate landowners.

I would suspect—maybe I am wrong—that the reason Millennium Parklands was not in must be some sort of internal bureaucratic turf war I think. I do not think that it is any sensible policy, and, of course, the Sydney Olympic Park Authority has been disbanded I think by the Government and the Minister did not quite seem to know that. How everything is run is very confused, and I am not sure that we will ever get a holistic single voice for every bit of green space in Sydney. What is needed is a system that encourages every landowner to manage their estate in a holistic way.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Let me put to you my concern about that. Firstly, I want to agree with you about that statement, although I think Mr Robinson actually said "a historical accident", but I think your description is more accurate. It is a series of historical accidents and enthusiasms over decades. It really is a product of a whole lot of bureaucratic arrangements and histories and local engagement—

Professor WEIRICK: Correct.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: —that we have ended up where we have ended up. Is the model you are putting, though, strong enough to overcome that history to overcome some of the strong bureaucratic inertia? What needs to be in place to actually coordinate this because in government these are precious places that I guarantee these agencies are very keen to maintain ownership and control of?

Professor WEIRICK: First of all, thank you for your question. I would like to honour all the great heroes of the past who fought for those open spaces both in the public sphere and the dedicated citizens of our city, and there were great visionary proposals. One of them which is not fully understood is the county open space system. Everybody sort of knows about the green belt idea of the Cumberland County Council, but under Sidney Luker and Rod Fraser they set up the county open space system and a lot of those fragments of reserve and regional park and so forth came out of that initiative which was carried on by the State Planning Authority [inaudible].

What I am saying is that what we do not have is a single set of statements of the significance of each of these great places and what are their values and on what basis do we manage them in the future and in what way do we watch over them against inappropriate development pressures. In that way—perhaps I am being a little bit optimistic—the heritage legislation in a sense does that. Ultimately, we have a statement of significance of why something should be conserved for future generations and I think we have got to make that commitment to do that for our green spaces because otherwise, as we can see, they are open to all sorts of attacks and it gives people in the broader community great fear that they are going to lose something they truly value but they cannot exactly identify what it is that they value. I think we start with statements of significance and list everything, get it into a schedule into the local environmental planning and so on and get it empowered within the planning legislation.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Returning to that question of "will that be enough?", one of the ways I would express it is a lot of the power of the Heritage Council comes from saying no. That can be a very powerful thing and that is really what you are advocating here.

Professor WEIRICK: Yes.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I mean, in some ways, the existing arrangements are much more centralised, more administrative, more based on the power of saying, "Yes, we are going to buy this or do that." Is there a role for both or do you think that your model really covers off on what is required?

Professor WEIRICK: That is a very good summation of the moral choices that we have as a larger community and how easy it is to say no to things and how hard it is to say yes and to marshal the horses and resources and funds to achieve that. You are absolutely right that this would not be an absolute mimic of the Heritage Council. It would have a much more life-affirming and positive vision because I think it is inspired by vision. I think the Minister has a vision and I commend him for it and I certainly commend everybody involved in the green grid idea.

Also, in previous governments, I think that ultimately when they moved to create the Western Sydney Parklands that was a remarkable thing for its time. I am not sure however that it is the model for everything else. That is what has got people concerned because the Western Sydney Parklands, as again I think Mr Robinson said from Blacktown, was actually a remnant of the green belt idea but it was simply an infrastructure corridor in the Sydney Regional Outline Plan of 1968. It has been cut up by motorways and transmission lines and gas pipelines and everything, and so inevitably there were some very residual spaces of land which [audio malfunction] values and so they thought, "Let's develop them to pay for the parks." But that is sort of an accident of that particular infrastructure corridor. It may not be the same situation in the riparian corridors out round a parkland city around the airport. I think that they are much more sensitive and do not lend themselves to hiving off areas.

Then, of course, again, I think the Blacktown submission today and also the Parramatta one were terrific, and there are unintended consequences from these commercialisation moves, as demonstrated by the Blacktown team that a new retail hub suddenly competes with the established retail areas in the existing neighbourhood. I think there are so many other factors involved in this particular model that have unintended consequences. I think let's start by saying what is significant and why it is significant.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Professor, is there a model? Is there a model around the rest of the world and other States and other Territories that you can point to which has been effective in delivering what we all want, which is parks that are there, protected for their natural environment, protected as places for public recreation? Is there a model you can point to?

Professor WEIRICK: I know I should be able to answer that question but I do not have that at my fingertips. I could once again take that on notice. What has been achieved in the past in other countries is quite extraordinary. The whole idea of an integrated parks system was put forward—actually Paris in the 1850s and 1860s, but certainly in the United States in 1869 and 1876. When you go to the United States and look at what they have established like, for example, the Chicago Park District and the Cook County Forest Preserves, they are based upon very specific property taxes where people pay to support the parks, whereas we are looking for largesse from the general fund, the State government, and the State government as we know can change from moment to moment and there is no obvious commitment to fund the care and conservation of the parks that now I think everybody is agreeing are a public good. I think there was a very fine statement by the former mayor of Inner West Council who said that it really should be like the hospitals and the schools of our community, that they are for our physical and mental health as well as biodiversity conservation, urban heat island effects, stream system, cleaning and so forth.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: One of the matters the bill does not deal with is that income base. One of the offers that has been put forward is hypothecating a proportion of stamp duty or other land taxes towards parklands. Again, if you have got any examples of that outside of Chicago where that works, I would appreciate that on notice.

Professor WEIRICK: I am not saying Chicago works; it is very controversial.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: At least they are getting money.

Professor WEIRICK: But at least each property owner knows when they pay their property taxes, which are quite high, that that is going to the Chicago Park District, whereas here we do not know. The funding models are very complex and that might require a whole year's research to come up with an alternative there. Wherever this was put together in the State bureaucracy there ought to be a position paper on funding. The green paper and white paper did not go into that at all, if I am not mistaken, and that is really where for public policy the buck stops and we should have seen what the State Government is really intending. That has allowed community groups to imagine the worst and raise the incredible response of the community which has come before your Committee.

The CHAIR: Thank you very much, Professor Weirick. I note that you have taken questions on notice and you will be required to give us a return within three days. The secretariat will be in contact with you. Thanks very much for coming.

Professor WEIRICK: Thank you.

(The witness withdrew.)

The Committee adjourned at 16:56.