

**Submission
No 3**

REVIEW OF THE GREATER SYDNEY PARKLANDS TRUST ACT 2022

Organisation: Penrith City Council

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Penrith City Council welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the NSW Parliament Joint Select Committee on the Greater Sydney Parklands Trust Act 2022 (the Act). In making this submission we confirm and reinforce Council's commitment to sustainable green spaces, heritage conservation, community involvement in planning, and the activation of parkland estates for public use and enjoyment.

Objectives of the Act

Penrith City Council supports the 7 objectives established under the Greater Sydney Parklands Trust Act 2022, which include:

- Maintenance and improvement of parkland estates
- Facilitating connection to Country for First Nations peoples
- Conservation of both natural and cultural heritage values
- Promotion of community use and enjoyment
- Increased opportunities for community engagement to shape responses.

These objectives are fundamental to the strategic management of public green spaces, at the same time as encouraging greater public use and benefit. They align with Council's own commitments, as articulated in local planning instruments such as the Penrith Green Grid Strategy, which aims to increase connectivity and open space for residents. Council notes that these objectives must be paired with a clear funding and resource allocation strategy (outlined further below) to ensure that they are actionable.

Need for Adequate Funding for Parkland Estate Development, Management, Maintenance and Activation for Public Use

In addition to maintenance of parkland estates, funding is needed for the development of facilities and infrastructure that enhance public access and enjoyment of these spaces.

Council's experience with sites such as Fernhill Estate (outlined further below) has highlighted the limited funding available to achieve the objectives as outlined in the Act. For example, at Fernhill Estate, additional funding is needed for:

- Conservation of natural and cultural assets, particularly noting this is a heritage-sensitive site
- Infrastructure projects that support increased accessibility and functionality. Fernhill Estate needs major and comprehensive infrastructure investment to support activation as a functional community space whilst preserving historical value
- Ongoing maintenance and landscape improvements to ensure a high standard of amenity.

Without such funding commitments, the objectives of the Act will remain aspirational rather than achievable. Furthermore, we recommend that the Act include mechanisms to periodically review and adjust funding levels based on evolving site needs and community expectations.

Specific Considerations for Fernhill Estate

Fernhill Estate, located in Penrith LGA, is a site of exceptional cultural, historical, and environmental significance. Fernhill Estate's truly unique qualities, including its positioning within the scenic Mulgoa Valley, require careful management that recognises and preserves its character and significance.

Council's vision is for Fernhill Estate to be preserved and celebrated through carefully planned activation that enhances public access while safeguarding its iconic attributes, being its scenic, environmental and heritage elements, along with its idyllic rural setting. The long-term potential of the Estate lies in its ability to serve as a multi-faceted asset for the region. It is envisaged as a premier tourism destination, attracting visitors to its unique historical and cultural offerings.

In addition, Fernhill Estate has the potential to become a year-round space for passive recreation, providing the community with opportunities to enjoy its natural beauty and tranquil environment. Furthermore, the Estate holds significant promise as a venue for events, balancing its historical significance with its capacity to support vibrant community and cultural activities.

While the intention to activate Fernhill Estate for the benefit of the community is understood, today it remains as a relatively untapped and underutilised community asset.

The opportunity to extend uses and visitation to Fernhill Estate requires thoughtful consideration to balance and minimise potential amenity impacts within the Estate and surrounding it. To increase visitation in any capacity will require development assessment processes and upgraded infrastructure (e.g. sewer), as well as a review of traffic and parking considerations.

Council's deep connection and interest in the future of Fernhill Estate is evidence through our ongoing involvement in the Fernhill Estate Community Trustee Board, and our provision of detailed feedback to government over several years on the future potential of the site.

Council calls on State Government to finalise key planning documents including the Fernhill draft Conservation Management Plan. This guiding document is critical to confidently move forward in planning and shaping the future of the site in a measured way. Preparation of a more detailed Landscape Master Plan is also required to inform specific future uses. Further, securing a long-term funding plan for this site is essential.

It is noted that whilst the Greater Sydney Parklands Trust Act 2022 does not specifically refer to Fernhill Estate, Section 16 of the Act refers to associated Trusts legislation, which includes the Western Sydney Parklands Act 2006, where specific reference is made to Fernhill Estate. In future, should there be consideration to consolidate legislation to reduce complexity, any amendments to the legislative framework should be tailored to Fernhill Estate's unique context, and will potentially require the inclusion of distinctive protections and provisions beyond those applicable to other parkland areas. In any consolidation it is critical to ensure that:

- Section 29 of the Western Sydney Parklands Act 2006, which specifically prohibits cemeteries and crematoria on the Fernhill Estate, is retained
- Local environmental protections, as outlined in the Penrith Local Environmental Plan (LEP) are maintained, being essential for safeguarding the site's scenic and heritage qualities
- Any proposed changes to legislation or planning for Fernhill Estate involve thorough community and council consultation to ensure alignment with local community priorities and expectations for heritage preservation and responsible use.



SUBMISSION

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For Further Information about this submission please contact:



Head of City Strategy, Penrith City Council

