

**Submission
No 10**

REVIEW OF THE GREATER SYDNEY PARKLANDS TRUST ACT 2022

Organisation: The Walking Volunteers Inc.

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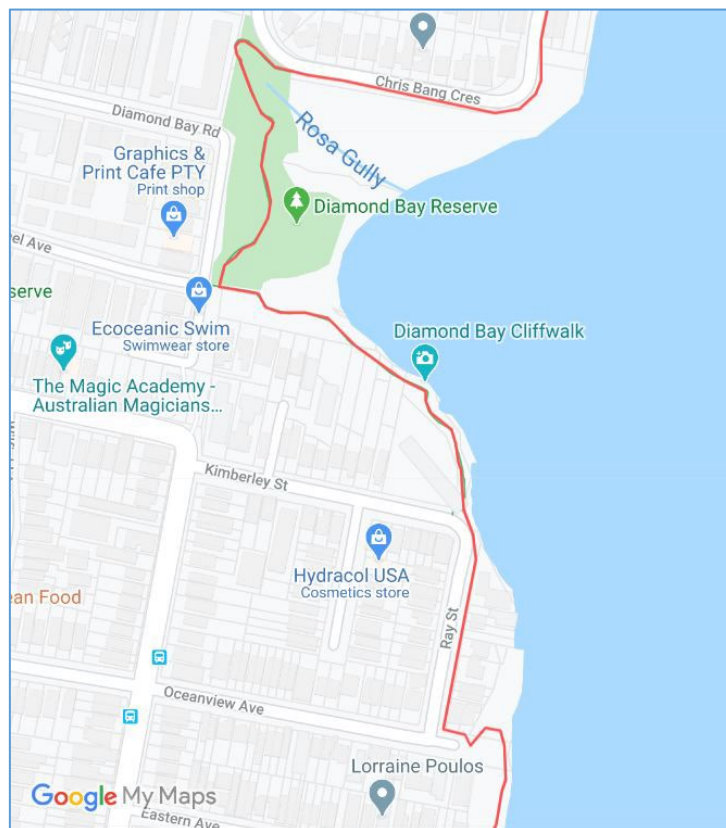
Submission to the Joint Select Committee reviewing the Greater Sydney Parklands Trust Act 2022 No. 9

Who we are

As our name implies, we rely entirely on volunteers to carry out the time consuming task of identifying, proof-walking, mapping and preparing online maps for use by walkers throughout Sydney as well as overseas and interstate visitors. To date, over 2,100 kilometres of walking routes have been proof-walked and mapped. Over 1,900 kilometres of these routes have been approved by land managers for publishing on our publicly available, downloadable online maps that have been viewed 1.7 million times:-

These maps are scalable to street level and show:-

- Multi-day walking routes (red line)
- Links to transport and loops for local walkers (green line)
- Street and location names
- Train stations, bus stops, ferry wharves
- Toilets, water fountains (when needed)



These online maps are constantly updated as councils and other land managers change tracks or paths or close them for repairs and detour routes are shown, wherever possible.

Our interest in the Trust

We incorporate the walking routes within the Trust's estate into our network of walking routes and have had a good working relationship with staff at the various parklands. Of particular interest to us has been the use of slashed paths for walkers with the Gabragal Yana Track in Western Sydney Parklands as an excellent example.

We are however particularly interested in the wider objectives of the Act which envisaged a city-wide agency capable of advocating for and facilitating the NSW Government 50-year Vision for Greater Sydney's Open Space and Parklands, particularly realising the concept of a Sydney Blue/Green Grid connecting these open spaces.

We therefore address our comments on the Act under three headings, its continuing relevance in general, the existing parkland estate and the wider long-term vision.

General

We believe the Act, the objectives it embodies and the Trust it established, are as relevant and important as when it was drafted.... if not more so. The pressure to address the housing crisis through denser developments inevitably reduces access to private open space and hence increasing reliance on public open space. In turn the resulting pressure on public open space requires that it is well managed to cater for the many demands on that resource without compromising environmental, heritage and conservation values. The reality of a changing climate more than ever highlights the importance of green space and particularly the need to increase the tree canopy to moderate the 'heat island' affect.

We believe there is a role for the Trust in promoting Sydney as a highly liveable 'World' city where ready public access to green open space can be celebrated thus attracting skilled workers, investment and tourism.

The Existing Estate

We are not aware of any issues in our dealings with Trust staff about particular park facilities that derive from any shortcomings of the Trust framework or Act objectives.

Typically, our concerns revolve around the shading of walking tracks, their design, materials and avoiding potential conflict with other park users particularly cyclists.

Wider Vision

While the majority of the Act focusses on the established parks including separate (associated) Trusts, Management Plans and Community Trustee Boards, one of the benefits and stated objectives of amalgamating the parkland estates into one city-wide agency was that it could '*advocate to Government to influence the long-term vision for open space and parklands in Greater Sydney.*'

There is admirable effort directed to the custodial role managing the current estate yet we see little directed towards this 'connected' long term vision. In particular, the Act makes provision for the establishment of a '*Blue-Green Grid Committee to advocate for a long-term vision for the outcome of quality parklands across Greater Sydney, particularly connectivity of green corridors and public access to open space.*' Despite a number of enquiries, we are not aware of such a committee being established nor of a core group within the Trust staff tasked with advocating for the connections between parks and scoping opportunities for new parks and accessible public space.

Provision is specifically mentioned for government utilities infrastructure within the parklands estate but the Act also makes provision for entering into partnerships and contracts '*for the purposes of this Act.*' We suggest that this provision might be used to create identified green links connecting parks as part of the Green Grid. Such partnership arrangements could be with Councils so that local streets could be specially designated as green links attracting grants for additional landscaping. Similarly, concrete channel drainage easements could be 're-wilded'

as green corridors or alternatively in some instances decked over to facilitate a missing link in a walking or cycle network.

Our concern with the current framework for the Trust is that it appears not to be in a position to drive the agenda of such connections outside its estate boundaries. The concept of the Green Grid, borrowed from or inspired by London, was initially championed by the office of the NSW Government Architect and the Department of Planning and Environment, and ultimately was incorporated into the Greater Sydney Commission District Plans. With the demise of the Commission, we assume that role is now reabsorbed into the Department of Planning. We suggest that this is all the more reason for the Trust to advocate for the Green Grid and drive its implementation. We therefore suggest that the framework of the Trust and its Act should reflect this emphasis.

W. Avery

Secretary

[The Walking Volunteers Inc.](#)

