

**Submission  
No 27**

## **REVIEW OF THE GREATER SYDNEY PARKLANDS TRUST ACT 2022**

**Organisation:** North Parramatta Resident Action Group (NPRAG)

**Date Received:** 31 January 2025



North Parramatta Residents Action Group

DATE: 31 Jan 2025

Submission to; The NSW Parliamentary inquiry into the Greater Sydney Parklands trust Jan 2025.

We will be responding regarding our understanding of the operation of the Parramatta Park within the Greater Sydney Parklands Trust structure.

The **North Parramatta Resident Action Group (NPRAG)** have considerable concerns regarding the operation of the GSPT and **particularly the Parramatta Park** over the period of operation of this legalisation.

We have been active in this precinct for many years as a Community Group active in representing the Local community and area, particularly to preserve this significant portion of the Parramatta CBD and the North Parramatta area. Our members have fought for the preservation off, improvement and expansion of the Parramatta Park since 1980.

In our response we have reviewed several sections of the Act which we have concerns about, and we will reply to those key section. However, this is NOT inclusive of the total items of concern regarding this legislation structure, suitability for the tasks required and its implementation.

The items following are those parts of the document Act that we suggest to the Parliamentary Committee that are significant, relevant and in our opinion deserve immediate action however there are several other sections which are of concern.

**The sections in RED below needs to be regarded as what NPRAG opinion is and what we have observed that Parramatta Park has NOT been managing and operated to meet the expected objectives of this section of the Act,**

The BLACK text is extract of sections of the Act that we are commenting upon.

The objects of this Act are as follows—

- (a) to maintain and improve the parklands estate across Greater Sydney and ensure the parklands estate is effectively managed and operated to deliver world-class and ecologically sustainable parklands for the public,

The Park has not progressed towards achieving a world-class and ecologically sustainable parkland. There are several examples where the Park has lost key elements regarding Flora and Fauna (Bat colony diminished and vegetation issues)

- (b) to enable the Greater Sydney Parklands Trust to facilitate a connection to Country for First Nations peoples that—
- (i) recognises and conserves First Nations peoples' cultural heritage and values through the use of the parklands estate, and
- (ii) establishes long-term and mutually beneficial partnerships that give effect to the ongoing relationships of First Nations peoples with Country,
- (b) **to ensure the conservation of the natural and cultural heritage values of the parklands estate and the protection of the environment within the parklands estate,**

Again, the Park has several issues regarding the above issue. There has been token activity in the management of natural and cultural heritage values of this very significant Cultural asset. There has been a wide variety of concerns from not properly maintaining Colonial heritage structures and edifices to such items as apparent not conserving the Park itself by granting leases and other arrangements that potentially significantly impacting its long-term viability, such as granting Leases of 45 years with a 50 year option to registered organisations, all without advising the locals what they have entered into or sought informed Community responses.

- (c) **to advocate for a long-term vision to achieve the outcome of quality parklands across Greater Sydney, particularly connectivity of green corridors and public access to open space,**

As a member of the local community of Parramatta it is doubtful if there is a viable long-term VISION for our great Park, let alone has there been any effective advocacy on the matter within the local Community or elsewhere.

- (d) **to encourage the use and enjoyment of the parklands estate by the community by promoting and increasing the recreational, historical, scientific, educational, cultural and environmental values of lands within the parklands estate,**

This requirement has been made very difficult on a number of grounds such as ,  
The Closure of the Westmead Entrance for a considerable time.  
The limitation of public parking within the park  
The very high COST of using picnic sheds and facilities etc.

- (e) **to ensure the parklands estate may be used by the community in a way that is adaptive and recognises and responds to the diverse needs of the community,**

Given the space limitations of Parramatta Park and a burgeoning local diverse population there is a greater need for more open space and community facilities however, relatively large sections of the limited PARK space has been hived off so that Large businesses and public organisations can get free land for their objectives.

- (f) **to provide increased opportunity for community engagement to shape regionally significant parklands in response to diverse community needs.**

The structure of the Act and inactivity the Board have completely ignored Community's request for an examination of the Parramatta Park and future demands, given the growing local and regional population as well as changes in the demographic makeup of the area around Parramatta. They have been advised by NPRAG sources to

the GSP Trust about getting the Board to indicate that Parramatta Park needs to be ENLARGED to the north. This would require a transfer of land from the Health Dept's North Parramatta site on both side of the Parramatta River up to the Toongabbie Creek. Over recent times land has been removed from the open public section to allow the enlargement of the Stadium site (CommBank) and also to compensate Parramatta Council for the loss of their Swimming Pool site which is now a much larger space requirement relocated to the southern portion of the Parramatta Park. In the future, it is foreseeable that the land occupied by the Parramatta High School (increase in Local Population) will need to be enlarged however as there is no cheaper alternative sites.

The logical solution would be a LAND SWAP of the southern part of the Park (for Education use and other uses) to be replaced by transferring the Health Dept land to the north of the Wisteria Garden, ALL the way to the Toongabbie Creek.

## 2 Committees

- (1) The Trust may establish—
  - (a) a committee, known as the *Blue-Green grid committee*, to advocate for a long-term vision for and outcome of quality parklands across Greater Sydney, particularly connectivity of green corridors and public access to open space, and

### 18 Acquisition of land

- (1) **The Trust may, for the purposes of this Act, acquire and own—**
  - (a) **new parks, and**
  - (b) supplementary land.
- (2) Land acquired and owned under subsection (1) forms part of the GSPT estate.
- (3) The Trust may acquire land—
  - (a) by agreement, or
  - (b) by compulsory process in accordance with the *Land Acquisition (Just Terms Compensation) Act 1991*.

As NPRAG has previously outlined, the Act, the Board and the Local Committee has failed to consider this matter and or to take effective action, to not only preserve and maintain the Parramatta Park as a whole but have not considered the possible future Community Demands or the availability and timing of acquiring extra land in order to provide a GRAND Park for the second CBD area in NSW. There is a solution.

There is State owned land available NOW that can with minimal cost, to allow the Parramatta Park to be expanded. However, if this opportunity is missed NPRAG believes that this GRAND vision will be impossible due to Cost and ownership issues (if the sale of the Health Dept land (by the Planning Dept) proceeds the likely purchasers will lock it up for ever.)

It is NOT clear if the above Blue-Green grid Committee is established or operating however it would appear to be another failure of the ACT and the Board to comply with the requirements of the relevant ACT or in the BEST interest of the people of Parramatta and Parramatta Park.

### 23 Prohibition on disposal of GSPT estate

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

As NPRAG has stated previously there may be need for Parramatta Park, soon to be able to exchange or trade part of the current Parramatta Park in order to acquire additional land, therefore this section NEEDS to be modified to allow such a transaction. This would allow a continuous section of parkland north from the Western Rail line to and include the Toongabbie Creek and the whole of the Health Dept land including Fleet St and the Female factory. Note if this could be achieved and the likely listing on the World Heritage Register, Parramatta Park would include two (2) very significant heritage sites thus creating increased Tourism and employment. As well as increasing the revenue stream of the Park.

### 25 Government sector agencies to consult with Trust about planning and development that will impact on parklands estate

- (1) The Greater Sydney Commission must, in exercising its function to lead metropolitan planning for Greater Sydney—
  - (a) consult with the Trust about a plan that relates to, or will impact on, open space and parklands policy within Greater Sydney, and
  - (b) have regard to submissions made by the Trust about the proposed plan.
- (2) If a government sector agency or a local council is proposing to carry out development within, or that will substantially impact on, the parklands estate, the agency or council must —
  - (a) consult with the Trust about the proposed development, and
  - (b) have regard to submissions made by the Trust about the proposed development.

NPRAG believes that the GSP Trust has NOT been either consulted with, or is very inactive, uninterested or persuasive.

As of the beginning of January 2025, The NSW Planning Dept, Property and Development section has publicly released **NOTIFICATION to sell the Health Dept land immediately north of Parramatta Park and this is the only viable affordable land for FUTURE expansion of the Park. Given the powers outlined within this ACT we believe that the Authority can secure this critical land necessary for the expansion of the Parramatta Park.**

### 26 Overshadowing

- (1) This section applies if a consent authority is considering the making of a determination to grant development consent for development that will or may overshadow the parklands estate.
- (2) In making its determination, the consent authority must have regard to the impact of overshadowing on public open space, including the impacts set out in a Greater Sydney Parklands shadow modelling study.

As the ever-increasing development surrounds the Parramatta Park and adjoining lands. NPRAG suggest that the GSP Trust need to be more active in this area. Parramatta Park has recently had several large developments on its borders and the status of the Parramatta Park needs to be maintained and enhanced.

### **Finance and Structure:**

A final observation is that the demanding Guidelines and requirements to be primarily self-funding has led to significant number of the failures of the management team of GSP trust and particularly within Parramatta Park.

An examination of the Parramatta Parks latest available **Annual Report** shows the abysmal finances to meet ALL the needs and requirements to manage such a significant Cultural and Heritage Site as Parramatta Park, let alone to achieve the tasks outlined within the ACT to achieve a World Standard Parkland with such complex demands.

Our suggestion is to increase funding immediately by putting a surcharge on ALL patrons at Commercial Activities within the Park, such as at the CommBank Stadium etc. A per head fee per attendee could supplement the extremely inadequate funding provided so far.

Another concern is the appearance **that parking Fees and Charges** are a main source of funding and a review of this need to be considered, to rebalance the funding structure.

Also, NPRAG believes a more commercial approach to the terms and conditions on ALL Leases and agreements should be implemented.

I look forward to your prompt response.

[REDACTED]

Yours sincerely,

Mr P Russo, OAM

President of the North Parramatta Residents Action Group

[REDACTED]

Mob: [REDACTED]