

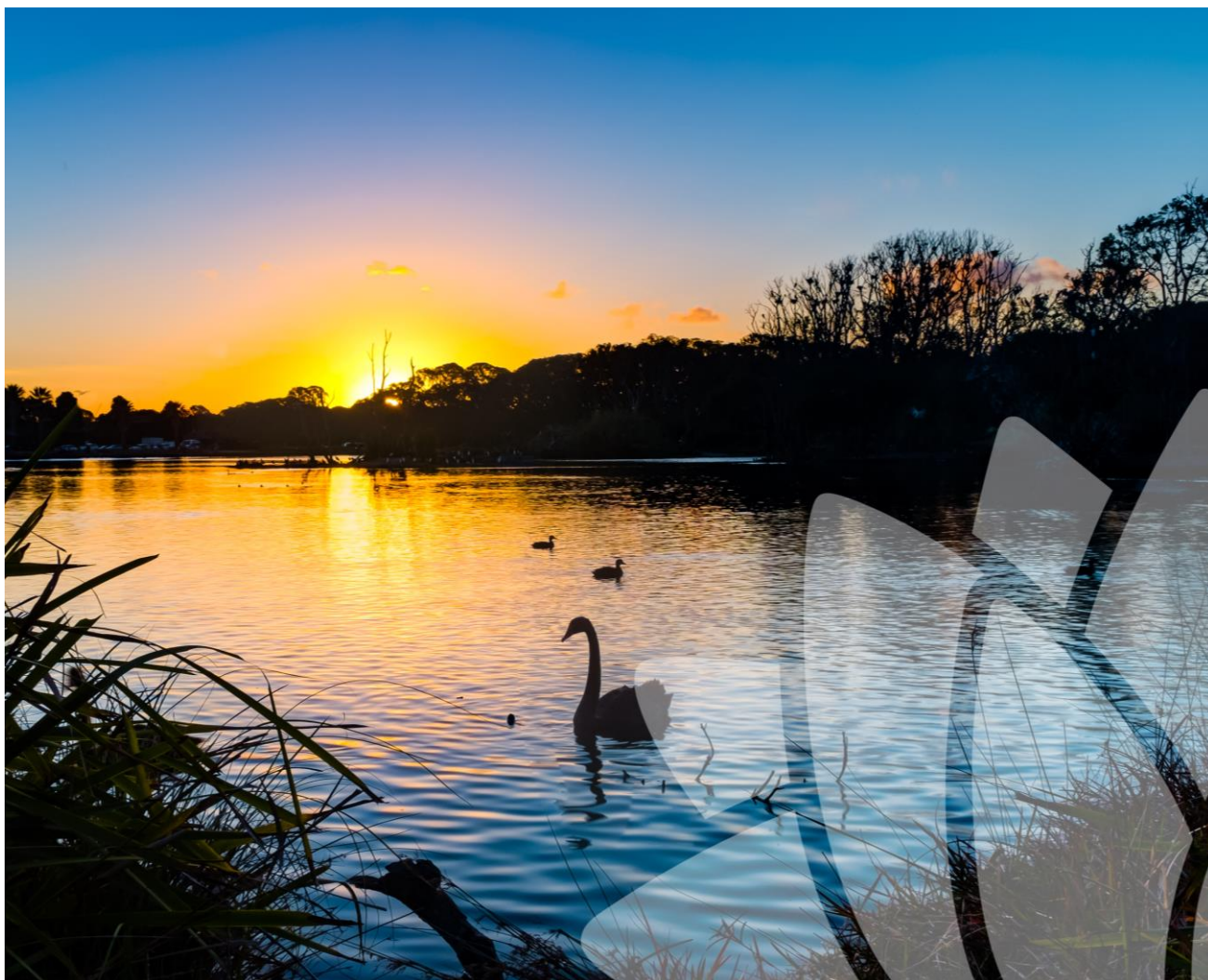


GREATER SYDNEY PARKLANDS

White Paper – Parklands for People

What we heard report

September 2021



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Acknowledgement of Country

The Department of Planning, Industry and Environment acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands, waters and sky of Dharug, Gundungurra, Dharawal and Eora Country and pays respect to the Elders of these lands past, present and emerging. We recognise First Nations peoples' unique cultural and spiritual relationships to place and their rich contribution to society.

We acknowledge the rights and interests of First Nations peoples to be involved in the ongoing management of these traditional lands. We will work in a respectful manner with Traditional Custodians, Local Aboriginal Land Councils and our First Nations communities of Greater Sydney to facilitate and support their custodianship of the parklands' natural and cultural heritage and to ensure our parklands are places in which First Nations peoples are included socially, culturally and economically.

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About this report

This submissions report summarises feedback from members of the community and other stakeholders in response to the White Paper – Parklands for People: A proposed legislative framework for Greater Sydney Parklands (2021).

This report provides:

- an overview of the engagement process to support the release of the white paper – including a series of roundtable discussions and a call for submissions
- a summary of the key themes arising from submissions received during the public exhibition period
- a summary of key considerations for the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment in response to feedback raised in submissions
- an overview of the next steps for the legislative reform process.

Consultation to date

The conversation about open space and parklands across Greater Sydney and beyond has involved the following important steps:



release of the draft *50-year Vision for Greater Sydney's Open Space and Parklands* and related consultation in July 2020



finalisation of the 50-year Vision in May 2021



release of the *White Paper – Parklands for People: A proposed legislative framework for Greater Sydney Parklands* and related consultation in May 2021



issue of this submissions report and Greater Sydney Parklands draft Exposure Bill in August 2021.

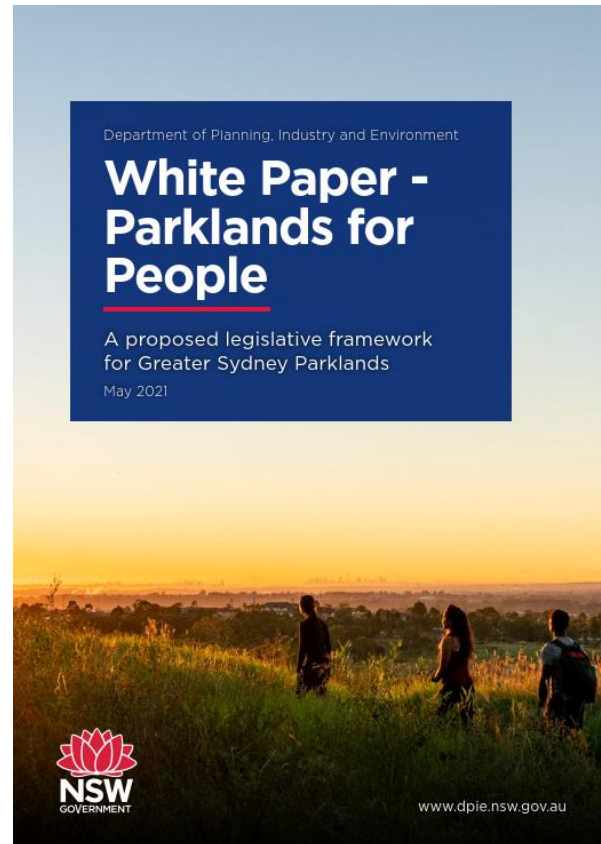


Figure 1. A preview of the White Paper – Parklands for People

About the White Paper – Parklands for People

The Department of Planning, Industry and Environment released a white paper to support a new *50-year Vision for Greater Sydney's Open Space and Parklands* in July 2021.

The White Paper – Parklands for People sits alongside the 50-year Vision, providing greater depth and breadth to the 2020 proposal for the creation of a Greater Sydney Parklands (GSP) agency. It gives all members of the community another opportunity to share their feedback on the future of Sydney's open space and parklands.

This report is intended to accompany the Greater Sydney Parklands draft Exposure Bill, which will be exhibited before it is finalised and introduced to Parliament.

Engagement approach

What we did

Public exhibition of the white paper involved a series of roundtable discussions and a call for submissions between 24 May and 12 July 2021.

Roundtable discussions

The department held the following roundtable discussions:

- Minister's roundtable
- councils roundtable
- community groups roundtable
- peak organisations roundtable
- community roundtable.

How we will use feedback

Members of the community and stakeholders provided feedback on both the white paper and broader parkland operations and opportunities during the public exhibition period.

Feedback relating directly to the legislative reform proposals outlined in the white paper is summarised in this report and has been considered by the legislation drafting team.

We have also summarised further feedback about parkland operations and other opportunities (beyond the legislative reform process) for consideration by the Greater Sydney Parklands agency as part of the ongoing management of parklands and open space.

Submissions analysis

We received a total of 150 submissions during the public exhibition period and immediately afterwards.

The department received submissions from a range of individuals, groups and organisations. Submissions we have classified as 'Other' included ones from academics, and non-government organisations.

The majority of submissions were made by individuals, including members of parliament and organisations located in Greater Sydney – particularly those in the Eastern City (80) and Central City (41).

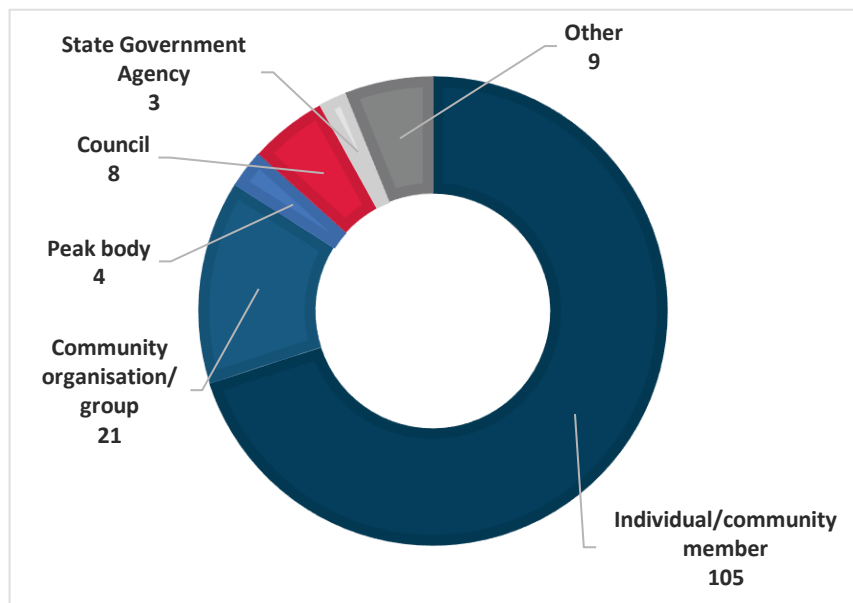


Figure 2. Submissions by type

The map (Figure 3) shows submissions by location.



Figure 3. Submissions by location

A full list of submitters is provided in **Appendix A**.

Overview of feedback

Strong support for the 50-year Vision

Submissions showed how important the Greater Sydney Parklands – Centennial Parklands (including Centennial, Moore and Queens Parks), Callan Park, Parramatta Park, Western Sydney Parklands and Fernhill Estate – are to the community. Submissions supported the vision of a ‘city within a park’ and ways to bring this to life. Feedback also stressed the importance of open space and parklands, as well as blue and green spaces, for environmental protection and climate change mitigation.

Mixed support for the white paper proposals

Feedback on the proposed options for a new legislative framework focused primarily on the **Preferred option** for one umbrella trust with new legislation, while also retaining the existing trusts and Acts. There was some support for the **Preferred option**, particularly from peak organisations, councils and government agencies.

By contrast, there was also some support for the **Keep as is option**, as well as for new individual trusts for Callan Park and Fernhill Estate.

Key concerns and suggestions

Key concerns included the potential over-commercialisation or sale of parks, lack of public funding for parks, loss of local community input and involvement, and impacts on ecology and the environment. The important role of local communities, First Nations peoples, local government and other agencies and organisations in the future of Sydney’s parks were also raised.

Indicative comments

‘Providing a legislative framework for the GSP is supported to provide clarity on governance, our communities’ participation and strategic planning requirements for existing parklands managed by the GSP. It also progresses opportunities for the future expansion of parklands.’

City of Sydney Council submission

‘We support the concept of an umbrella organisation for both the existing parklands and the wider responsibility of the Green Grid provided the safeguards are in place to address the unique needs of each park.’

The Walking Volunteers submission

‘I support Minister Stokes’ proposal to increase the quantity of parkland and his advocacy of a vision for Greater Sydney to “evolve as a city within a park” and his acknowledgement of the importance of parklands and open space to the health and wellbeing of the people of Greater Sydney.’

Individual/community member submission

Key feedback themes

Governance

What you told us

- While an umbrella trust can create a stronger voice for parks and greater coordination and efficiencies, there is concern that local voices will not be heard, and that more complex structures may have cost implications.
- The selection of the Greater Sydney Parklands Trust (GSPT) Board should reflect the wider Sydney community and the skills of the board should be relevant to the key values of parks. Diversity in board appointments is important.
- The decision-making framework for the board should be transparent and mechanisms put in place to respond to individual park values rather than a one-size-fits-all approach. Local voices should be heard.
- Parks such as Callan Park and Fernhill Estate may not be well represented by the GSPT Board and may require their own individual trusts and local boards.
- Callan Park and Parramatta Park should be expanded to include the remaining NSW Health lands and the North Parramatta Heritage Precinct.
- It is vital that the existing trusts can continue to operate under their existing legislation and protections.



How we've responded in the draft bill

The legislation will:

- include robust mechanisms for local voices and recognising the needs of local communities through community trustee boards and a community and engagement framework
- ensure that the combined board has skills in key park values such as environment, heritage, landscape planning, and community consultation, as well as key governance, finance and property management experience. The legislation will also require diversity in board appointments, including familiarity with the wider metropolitan area
- require transparency in board operations and require the GSPT Board to listen to advice provided by community trustee boards to ensure local and park user voices are heard, including the voices of users of Callan Park and Fernhill Estate and any future regional parklands, while maintaining all the benefits of an umbrella trust model
- ensure that the GSPT is scalable and can take on future parks to protect them in perpetuity
- ensure the existing trusts and all their protections remain in place and that GSPT is required to operate the parks under the terms of the existing trust legislation.

Indicative comments

‘The Australian Institute of Landscape Architects supports the legislative change required to support GSP with its vision, to elevate the importance of open space to protect heritage and provide recreation opportunities for Sydney’s growing diverse demographics while providing for adaptable open space that caters for current and future recreational demands ...’

Australian Institute of Landscape Architects submission

‘The Legislation must be robust enough to protect each individual iconic foundation parkland from any future potential for sale either in part or whole. This protection is one of the foundations of the Callan Park (Special Provisions) Act 2002 (Item 5 - Callan Park not to be sold or otherwise disposed of). We appreciate that the Minister has identified that “There is no standard prohibition on the sale of parkland” that applies across the five foundation parkland properties.’

Friends of Callan Park submission

‘... Legislation must embed provisions for an independent governance entity for each of the parklands and a requirement for the GSP to consult each of those governance entities regarding strategies, plans and actions affecting each specific parkland.’

Alliance for Public Parklands submission

‘It is essential that any overall authority builds community and local input, direction and control into its framework, and continues to make decisions that use the natural and cultural heritage values of the parks as their basis.’

National Trust submission

Community consultation

What you told us

- Parks are for people. Ongoing and genuine community engagement is vital to establish confidence in the GSPT, including the meaningful participation of First Nations peoples.
- Consultation should provide opportunities for GSP and communities to work together to improve the access, amenity and ecological functions of existing parks through integration into the blue-green grid and should secure more parks for the city.
- It is important that the proposed community trustee boards have a real and meaningful role to advise on important local issues and represent diverse local views. These views must be considered in key decisions including on plans of management, commercialisation controls and new activities in the parks.
- A tiered structure of GSPT boards and regional boards may allow for more local operational control of parks.
- Engagement between local councils and GSPT will be critical in providing new GSP parks and in particular in achieving the *50-year Vision for Greater Sydney's Open Space and Parklands*, given their key role in delivering parklands across Sydney.
- The community and stakeholders need to know what matters GSPT will consult on, who will be consulted and how that will be undertaken – including through the consultation and engagement framework.
- Any consultation and engagement framework should be prepared in close consultation with the community. Consultation should be informed by good-quality background documents and studies so that participants understand the related constraints and complexities of the issues being considered.
- If GSP gets consultation right, they will have the power of the community behind them and be much more effective in achieving the 50-year Vision.

How we've responded in the draft bill

The legislation will:

- establish community trustee boards for parks to ensure the special qualities of individual parks are clearly understood by GSPT, local voices are heard, park users' needs are met and competing views on key park issues are canvassed
- ensure legislation provides more details of how appointments to community trustee boards can reflect local community diversity, First Nations peoples' representation and a role for local councils and relevant agencies, such as NSW Health at Callan Park
- require the GSPT to listen and respond to the views of community trustee boards and ensure there is a meaningful relationship between the 2 bodies
- require GSPT to prepare a consultation and engagement framework to set out how GSPT will consult with the community and on what matters, including further details of First Nations engagement. The framework should be prepared in close consultation with the community, be inclusive of diverse views, create positive conversations with the community and be clear with the community about the consultation process.

Indicative comments

‘A key challenge of the city-wide approach to parklands management is the recognition and response to local issues. The proposed legislated community consultation framework appears to be seeking to address this challenge through the formation of the local community trustee boards and a commitment to community consultation.’

Parramatta Council submission

‘We recommend that any consultation framework must include criteria on how the advice from a Community Trustee Board, including how changes or other proposed ideas are considered and addressed by the GSP Trust.’

Blacktown City Council submission

‘[It is recommended] That the Consultation and Engagement Framework prioritises meaningful engagement with First Nations people through: emphasising community education on First Nations traditional knowledge, providing for representation on community trustee boards, and implementing a Reconciliation Action Plan;’

The Law Society of NSW Young Lawyers submission

‘Two streams of discussion need to occur in parallel - a city-wide conversation about 'what a city within park might be' and 'what green spaces Sydney needs into the future', plus a conversation that recognises people's attachment to and desire to protect local parks and the importance of local experiences of place’

Roundtable participant

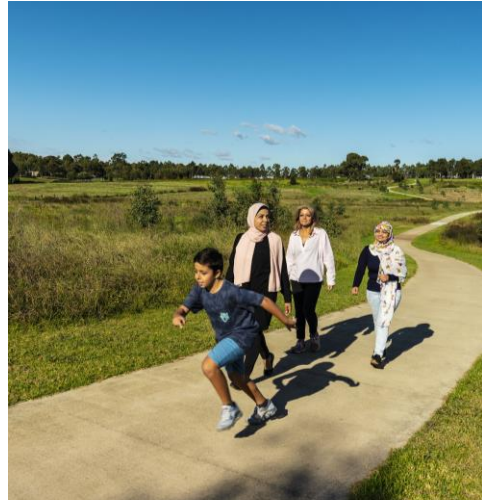
‘We support the concept of local community trustee boards for each parkland, with community groups like BDFC being represented on them. We consider this is critically important if the new trust is to have the confidence of the local community and to demonstrate that the parklands are being planned and operated for the local community's benefit.’

Balmain District Football Club submission

Funding and finance

What you told us

- Parks should be adequately funded by government and not solely reliant on creating their own revenues.
- Over-reliance on self-funding models may result in over-commercialisation of parks and the trust's resources being directed towards commercial outcomes rather than the custodianship of the parks themselves.
- Limiting new commercial uses to those areas currently identified in plans of management for this purpose could assist in curtailing over-commercialisation but could also work to limit the growth of new trust revenues over the long term.
- Commercial activities, temporary activities and festivals should add to the amenity and attraction of the parklands and not impact on overall recreational, heritage or environmental values.
- Parks should be protected from encroachment by infrastructure or built facilities that reduce green space, and prohibitions on land sales should be strengthened, including on long-term leases such as at the Entertainment Quarter.
- New and innovative mechanisms need to be outlined and investigated to fund parks that add to rather than detract from park values and amenity, while off-park business hubs may provide benefits for some parks.
- Savings from cost efficiencies should be reserved for park purposes. Financial reporting for GSPT should be transparent, including where savings are being made and where across the portfolio revenues and expenditure are being prioritised.



How we've responded in the draft bill

The legislation will:

- limit commercialisation to those areas already identified in plans of management for this purpose and ensure that any commercial activities, temporary and ongoing, contribute to park amenity and have positive impacts on the parks
- provide community trustee boards with a role in advising on appropriate commercial activities and potential leases
- ensure lease lengths under the GSPT and existing Acts protect community ownership over the long term, while still allowing for private investment in our park facilities that provide a wide range of community benefits
- ensure all parks funds, including savings, are reserved for park purposes and not used for other government purposes
- ensure a nexus between the park where funds are raised and where those funds are spent, and that the GSPT prioritises funds to ensure plans of management are implemented in a timely manner
- enable new and innovative ways to fund parks, including investigation of off-park business hubs, but not to replace government funding for parklands.

Indicative comments

‘A self-funding model is not in the best long-term interest of each parkland. The requirement to self-fund has forced parkland organisations to increasingly commercialise operations including allowing long term leases and inappropriate events on parklands to maintain income and making them vulnerable to inappropriate unsolicited proposals. Self-funding will open these parklands up to further commercialisation.’

North Parramatta Residents Action Group Inc. submission

‘The wide-reaching social, economic and environmental benefits that Sydney’s parks provide should be recognised and reflected in guaranteed, ongoing funding to enable the parks to operate on a non-commercial basis.’

UNSW submission

‘The Discussion Paper opens up the opportunities for “new and innovative ways” to fund the parks from on-park activity/development. While this may be possible in a very limited way, there should be recognition that some of the parks already have significant development (or too much) and have reached a management and publicly acceptable cap.’

Total Environment Centre submission

‘Assuming the WSP off-park business hub financial model is adopted (page 26), which we accept in principle, we do not believe that revenue generated should be allocated exclusively towards meeting the operating expenses of adjoining parklands. This would inevitably lead to the standard of some parks being higher than others, something we regard as unacceptable. Rather, the revenue generated should be aggregated to meet the cost of maintaining the GSP parklands as a whole.’

Saving Moore Park Inc submission

City-wide planning

What you told us

- A city-wide view of parks and the 50-year Vision should be complemented by recognition of First Nations peoples' understandings of Country and local community and environmental values and needs. Ecology, climate and water should be elevated in the GSP's city-wide planning approach.
- The role of GSPT in advocating and influencing city-wide outcomes should be clearly articulated, including its relationship with other agencies and local councils.
- The advocacy role of GSPT should also include thought leadership and educational resources to support councils and other parkland managers to achieve best practice and innovation.
- The importance of waterways, protection and enhancement of the environment, and recreational and ecological links should be recognised in these city-wide outcomes.
- It is important to ensure that GSPT has the capacity to take on new parks and at the same time to advocate for the expansion of the blue-green grid across the city to meet ongoing and growing community needs.
- To be successful, the GSPT would need adequate resourcing to carry out a city-wide strategic advocacy role, as well as the management of its own parkland estate.
- Consideration should be given to planning controls that protect parklands from negative impacts of adjacent development.
- Any access by NSW Government agencies to underground land for critical infrastructure should ensure there are no above-ground impacts on the parks. GSPT should provide strong support for park values when above-ground critical infrastructure is considered.

How we've responded in the draft bill

The legislation will:

- establish the GSP's role in city-wide strategic planning and advocacy, parkland planning and management and relationships to other agencies and councils by creating a GSP blue-green grid coordinating committee
- ensure the protection of the environment and heritage are embedded in the GSPT's advocacy for the blue-green grid, 50-year Vision and in its own plans of management
- ensure consistent requirements for plans of management across GSPT and existing trust parks, including the content of the plans
- ensure there will be no negative impacts on the park before underground access for critical infrastructure is permitted.

Indicative comments

‘Maintaining and enhancing the environmental and biodiversity values of urban parkland should be at the heart of the proposed legislative framework. Native vegetation in urban parks supports biodiversity and connects people to our unique Australian natural heritage. We should prioritise protection of remnant or replanted native vegetation and look to further regenerate urban ecology by increasing the extent, quality, and connectivity of urban bushland...’

Nature Conservation Council submission

‘The GSP Trust offers the opportunity to create a public sector agency which has a range of unique skills and expertise in managing complex precincts. The collocation in a single agency of expertise in environmental and landscape conservation, heritage protection, place activation, and precinct management will provide a much-needed resource for other public lands beyond the existing Parklands. Several Government agencies and Departments own and operate special precincts which would benefit from the skills and resources of the GSP Trust...’

Committee for Sydney submission

‘Facilitate the delivery of the Green Grid beyond the parkland boundaries to provide high quality shaded connections to support walking, cycling and biodiversity.’

Walk Sydney submission

‘Western Sydney is at a critical juncture in the establishment of this open space / “green grid” system. Ecological cohesion and physical connectivity need to be matched to the rural landscape and historic, cultural and natural sites of Fernhill and the Mulgoa Valley.’

Friends of Fernhill and Mulgoa Valley submission

‘We believe that our vision for the Greater Sydney Harbour CMP greatly aligns and supports the Greater Sydney Parklands 50-year vision...The SCCG strongly advocates for a future environmentally sensitive, greener urban form and water sensitive open space and parklands.’

SCCG submission

Other feedback

The department received feedback on a wide range of topics that extend beyond the legislative reform options discussed in the white paper. The community and stakeholders were keen to share specific feedback on issues relating to the GSP estate, as well as other open space and parkland areas within their local communities and across Sydney. Feedback on these matters is summarised below and will be used to inform future planning and operations of GSP.

Future opportunities for new parklands and connections

- Additional parks were identified that could be included in the GSP parklands estate or to create new linkages, such as Wentworth Park, Bicentennial Park, Rozelle railway yards and Penrith Lakes.
- There was support for best-practice approaches to be used to create new parks in Greater Sydney (for instance linking parks and linear upcycled rail line parks, similar to those in New York City and Singapore).

There was support for the GSP's role in advocacy and a focus on realising opportunities such as:

- a 'NSW Government-led focus on the whole-of-river opportunities' along Parramatta River, with recognition of Parramatta River as a shared, regional public resource
- recognition of Penrith Lakes as an important recreational space for the community of Penrith and the broader Western Parkland City within the vision and establishment of recreational links from Fernhill Estate to Penrith Lakes
- significant linear park between Guildford and Potts Hill, improved connections between open space and community hubs, greater recognition of the different needs of walkers and cyclists
- considering how spaces within cemeteries, schools, hospitals, golf courses, sports grounds and transport and drainage corridors can contribute to greening of Sydney
- creating linkages with national parks, Crown lands and Sydney Water assets
- city-wide approach to equestrian facilities such as the Centennial Park Equestrian Centre (CPEC) and Sydney International Equestrian Centre (SIEC)
- extension of the Glenmore Park Open Space to Mulgoa Creek walk to the Blue Mountains National Park and linking with the Fernhill to Nepean walk, inclusion of Littlefields Creek as a wildlife corridor, securing the Kings Hill Road corridor as a significant green connection (and further opportunities throughout the Mulgoa Valley and surrounds)
- potential minor reconfiguration of Moore Park golf course to open up significant green space for broader use (and further opportunities in and around Moore Park)
- coordinating, planning and delivering regional parks and green grid opportunities to meet new growth – including coordinated and early planning to meet the needs of communities in new growth areas and on major opportunities such as Wianamatta/South Creek.

Suggestions for the Parklands Estate

This list summarises suggestions we received.

- People made comments specifically about issues for Callan Park, Paramatta Park, Centennial Parklands/Moore Park, Western Sydney Parklands and Fernhill Estate. These included ideas for new activities, dog walking, improved facilities and events.
- There are opportunities to improve the parklands such as the expansion of Callan Park and adding the North Parramatta Heritage Precinct to the Parramatta Park Trust land.
- Callan Park could incorporate new design elements to make it a place for discovery where visitors can learn about the park's history and connect with nature.
- Each park should have a regional manager as a central point of contact for the community and regional boards, rather than park-specific trustee boards.
- Each of the parklands should have a café/restaurant, community information board, community events and an overarching education program.
- CCTV could be installed in the Parklands to support public safety and collect data to enhance user experience of the parklands.
- A desire was expressed for improved maintenance in Western Sydney Parklands to ensure it is usable and to protect biodiversity.

Some of the parklands suggested for inclusion in the Parklands Estate:

- Wentworth Park
- Bicentennial Park
- Sydney Foreshore Park
- former Rozelle Railyards
- Penrith Lakes
- Wianamatta South Creek

Feedback on the consultation and engagement framework

- Submissions raised more opportunities for comment on the proposals identified in the white paper such as the consultation and engagement framework. This was regarded as a central element of the GSP's approach to engaging with Sydney's communities, councils and other stakeholders with an interest in the future of the city's open space and parklands.

Further issues raised

- There was widespread acknowledgement of the value of open space and parklands to public health and wellbeing, particularly during the pandemic; comments focused on the increased importance of parks as our city grows and particularly for people living in densely populated areas.
- Submissions called for parks and open spaces to be more accessible and inclusive for people with disabilities.
- Opportunities for green spaces to be used as community meeting places were proposed.
- It was suggested that parks should be more welcoming and inclusive places for people with dogs.
- There was a desire for further opportunities to provide feedback on broader parkland matters beyond the legislative reform proposals discussed in the white paper.

Indicative comments

‘Our city is growing and the need for freely accessible open green space is of the utmost importance. Centennial Parklands has 31 million visitors per year ... That level of usage is staggering and expected to increase with an expanding adjacent population housed in higher density dwellings. This serves to exemplify the criticality of preserving our parklands...’

Centennial Park Residents Association submission

‘We are interested in the potential for Iron Cove Creek (also known as the Dobroyd Canal) to support a walk and cycleway...[that] will become the backbone of a larger network of safe cycle lanes, so that school students can travel to school and sports activities safely and independently, and parents have the option to walk or cycle, like they do in cities around the world.’

Friends of Iron Cove Creek submission

‘The 26ha North Parramatta Heritage Precinct (former Cumberland Hospital East grounds) should be added to the Parramatta Park Trust to bring the park closer to its original size when Governor Macquarie set it aside for the health and wellbeing of the people of Parramatta.’

Individual/community member submission

‘I would love to see green spaces activated as community meeting places, where we can share our knowledge and passions. A collection of places connecting nature, play, food and fire, the traditional meeting place... This is what creates community resilience.’

Individual/community member submission

Next steps



This report has summarised submissions and feedback received during the public exhibition period. We have used this feedback to inform the review of legislation and direct instructions for drafting of the Exposure Bill to be introduced to the Parliament of New South Wales.

Visit the department's website dpie.nsw.gov.au/draft-exposure-bill to read the draft Exposure Bill and explanatory notes and have your say.

The draft Exposure Bill will be finalised following the exhibition period, before it is introduced to Parliament.

Appendix A: List of submitters

Community organisations/groups – 21

- Alliance for Public Parklands
- Alliance of Moore Park Sports
- Australian Football League
- Balmain and District Football Club
- Blacktown and District Environment Group
- Centennial Parklands Community Consultative Committee
- Centennial Park Residents Association
- East Sydney Bulldogs
- Friends of Callan Park
- Friends of Cooper Park
- Friends of Fernhill and Mulgoa Valley Inc.
- Friends of Iron Cove Creek
- Hunters Hill Trust
- Mulgoa Valley Landcare Group
- North Parramatta Residents Action Group
- Ryde – Hunter’s Hill’s Flora and Fauna Preservation Society
- Saving Moore Park Inc.
- Saving Sydney’s Trees
- Sydney Swans
- The Walking Volunteers
- Walk Sydney

Councils – 8

- Blacktown City Council
- Canterbury Bankstown Council
- City of Parramatta Council
- City of Sydney
- Inner West Council
- Penrith City Council
- Waverley Council
- Woollahra Municipal Council

Peak bodies – 4

- Australian Institute of Landscape Architects (AILA)
- Parks and Leisure Australia NSW/ACT Regional Council
- Tourism and Transport Forum Australia (TTF)
- National Trust of Australia (NSW)

State government agencies – 3

- WaterNSW
- Heritage NSW (Department of Premier and Cabinet)
- Venues NSW

Individuals/community members – 105

- Dave Sharma MP
- Jamie Parker MP
- Stephen Bali MP
- Callan Park form letter submission – 10
- Parramatta Park form letter submission – 7

Confidential – 21

There were 21 confidential submissions.

Others – 9

- Nature Conservation Council
- National Parks Association of NSW
- Sydney Coastal Councils Group
- Committee for Sydney
- Total Environment Care
- University of NSW
- NSW Young Lawyers