

**INQUIRY INTO GREATER SYDNEY PARKLANDS TRUST
BILL 2021**

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Upper House Inquiry into Greater Sydney Parklands Trust Bill

To whom it may concern.

I am concerned that this Bill will permit unnecessary commercialisation of Sydney's parklands and effectively privatise many parts of them.

Too much power in the hands of a single politician

Ministers are vulnerable to election pressures. They can get to thinking that what is in their portfolio is theirs to dispose of. It is very unwise to allow them too much power in deciding the fate of our parks. We need legislation that protects and safeguards these parklands from all sides of politics for future generations.

Lack of funding

Parks are a public good and provide a vital service to the health of the community. Access to green open space is a key indicator of mental health and sense of wellbeing. Western Sydney is under enormous pressure to increase its population, with no commitment or plans to provide more green open space to meet the associated needs. The existing parklands will be expected to absorb the added usage.

Parklands, like hospitals, schools and roads, should be funded and serviced by general taxation revenue. This would do away with the need to sell and privatise the commons. There should be no need to 'facilitate business activities and facilities within the GSPT estate to maintain and improve the parklands'.

It is also totally inappropriate to offer long term leases for private operations. Ten years is more than enough.

The wrong model for managing the parklands

Local involvement and local management are historically what have kept public open space safe from being sold off or developed, bequeathing us with the parklands under discussion today. Acknowledgement of this should be reflected in the makeup and responsibilities of the agencies overseeing the parklands.

Each parkland should have its own Trust with a board comprising community members with local knowledge of each park, First Nations representation, experts in heritage, biodiversity and park management, and a representative from the local Council. The role of the Greater Sydney Parklands agency would be to liaise with the Trustees to ensure these parks obtain the funding they require from the relevant ministers.

Allow the people who use and give their time to look after the parks, decide how to care for them, not politicians and commercial interests. Keep them local, keep them public and keep them safe.

Yours sincerely

Meron Wilson