

# Parklands Bill to face inquiry

BY DANIEL LO SURDO

The controversial Greater Sydney Parklands Bill introduced by former Minister for Planning and Public Spaces Rob Stokes was sent to a Parliamentary inquiry in November following talks that the proposed legislation would harm the community through privatisation and excessive commercialisation.

Impassioned speeches in the NSW Legislative Assembly were mirrored by the concerns of the Alliance for Public Parklands (APP), which represents the five foundation parklands fearing the contents of the Bill, including Centennial Parklands, Western Sydney Parklands and Callan Park.

“Post-COVID, people have built a deep bond with their public places. They want control over them and want them secured and shielded from exploitation,” Member for Balmain Jamie Parker told the Legislative Assembly last month.

“We are concerned that there is no adequate mechanism to fulfil the principal objective, which comes to the issue of conserving, restoring and enhancing the natural environment of the parklands estate.”

In October, *City Hub* reported that the Bill will allow commercial development leases for up to 50 years in Sydney parklands. This would amend the provisions placed in the Callan Park Act, which ensures that leases longer than 10 years must be shown to parliament and can be rejected if they are seen to be against the public interest.

**“This is far more complex ... than coffee carts at Callan Park”**

The Draft Exposure Bill was open for feedback until the end of October, whereby the APP lobbied residents and communities to flag their concerns to the State. The Parliamentary inquiry will take place in January and will be chaired by Legislative Council Member Robert Borsak.

“This is far more complex an issue than coffee carts at Callan Park, which the government seems to narrow their narrative around,” APP spokesperson Suzette Meade said.

“We hope the upper house inquiry into the Greater Sydney Parklands Trust Bill will shine a light on so many



The Greater Sydney Parklands Bill will go to an NSW Parliamentary inquiry this month.  
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unanswered questions about the governance of public parks.”

## LOOKING FORWARD

The APP has called for the draft legislation to be abandoned entirely and has asked the community to discuss green space, biodiversity and habitat issues in their letters to the inquiry. Individuals are invited to submit their comments through an online questionnaire, which will

remain open until 19 December. Submissions will close on the 16th of January and the inquiry will begin on the 27th.

A federated, community model for Sydney Parklands has been suggested by the APP as an alternative model to the Greater Sydney Parklands Bill. Under this approach, each designated park would have its own Trust Act, which would manage and advocate for their individual priorities.