

The Darling Point Society Incorporated

ABN 88 141 102 701

P.O. Box 1131
EDGECLIFF NSW 2027

3rd April 2023

Craig Swift-McNair
General Manager
Woollahra Municipal Council
Records @woollahra.nsw.gov.au

Re: draft Plans of Management, Recreation Strategy & Play Space Strategy
Rushcutter's Bay and Yarranabee Parks

Attn: Roger Faulkner & Joanna Tanus

Dear Sir,

Rushcutter's Bay Park and Yarranabee Park are parks - not sports' complexes.

As evidenced by the responses to WMCouncils' surveys, to *the vast majority of users*, they are open green spaces for passive recreation, where hushed silence, birdsong and gentle play of children and dogs barking are expected. A place for deeply breathing and exercising and garnering feelings of peacefulness is what a local park offers to the community. And is a crucial ingredient to positive mental health.

Parks are a priceless portable freedom - that one brings back home.

These precious elements were all so widely appreciated during our recent Covid Pandemic as they provided the only recourse the community had to outdoor exercise and be free from the confinement of their homes. The importance of having open green space was newly acknowledged.

WMCouncil's POM, Recreation Strategy and Play Space Strategy cut into and across so much of this passive open green space as to render it no more than peripheral to the concrete infrastructure that is proposed with a noisy and illuminated skatepark and significant additional infrastructure and lighting to existing playing fields. Reference Table 59 P.251 the impracticability, not to say dangerous, proposal of "when organised sport is not played passive recreation can take place." It would be virtually impossible with cement or hard surfaces such as the proposed Youth Recreational Facility to do anything of this kind.

Has WMC "investigated increased access to public and private school facilities in line with the State Government objectives and principles" as earlier proposed?

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We understand that WMC has forwarded all resident responses to the proposal of a skatepark to NSW Heritage in its pre-lodgement application for a Section 60 in respect of State Heritage listing of the parks; but would like to remind you here of our earlier presented reasons in our brief encapsulation for not installing a skatepark in Rushcutter's Bay park – and to list what other sporting facilities are already available to youth here.

YOUTH FACILITIES IN/NEAR RUSHCUTTERS BAY

Trying to be fair, the Darling Point Society has re-examined the pros and cons of the re-proposed Rushcutter's Bay Park skatepark, earlier refused at a full Woollahra Council meeting, due to huge community opposition.

We've looked at what young people already have available to them locally, including: tennis/swimming/cricket/sailing/football/soccer/cycling and skateboarding, the latter two in Centennial Park.

Additionally, we've spoken with the Executive Assistant to the Board of the Hakoah Club, who has informed us of the huge range of facilities, including educative programmes, that they have planned for the White City site. It will offer 18 different sports, including football, soccer, swimming etc over an area of 30,000 square metres being built at a cost of \$80M and due to be opening at the end of 2023. ***We were also told that they are actively wanting to encourage youth membership (under 18), and that the cost of that at their previous club was \$22 annual subscription and that they had a very large gentile membership, upwards of 25%. There will be parking space for 100 bicycles in addition to cars and motorcycles.***

They have considered a skateboard park as one of their facilities, but decided against it, due to reasons of noise to surrounding residents.

And also, the CYCA runs an affordable youth sailing programme.

SKATEPARK ISSUES

Skateboarding is noisy (66dB) with the clackety clack on their repeated landings. There are now electric skateboards that can travel at 23Km/h with 250 watts of power. **There are too electric scooter skateboards also highly powered which, on the Convic [Council's consultants] Dubai site, appear to show them being used in the skateboard park.**

How will pedestrians fare with this type of overspill from the skate park?

How will this sit with all ages practising yoga, meditation, socializing, picnicking, walking babies, walking dogs, just exercising on foot, reading, painting?

A quick look at the Convic website will demonstrate how most of the parks they've built are right next to busy roads. Many are floodlit, which the Police encourage to discourage nefarious activity.

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WMC is now in Recreation Strategy P.50–54 3.1: “undertaking a feasibility study of field lighting across the LGA”. 3.2: “wanting to increase sport’s field lighting.” But at the same time P.54 stating “**Designs MUST consider the possible impact of such lighting on residents and the potential for objections.**”

Impacts will be huge and the birdlife and small animal will be seriously affected by lights and noise. They will disappear and deprive us of the pleasure of hearing and seeing them. Not to mention how it is evidenced that this seriously interrupts their reproductive cycle. (there is more detail on this elsewhere in this document).

HOW CAN THE FOLLOWING BE CONTROLLED OR EVEN MONITORED:

Hours of operation of a skatepark?

Noise levels from extra activities that will inevitably evolve?

Anti-social behaviour?

Age of users?

Will a fence be installed around it and locked after hours?

Monitoring all of this sounds not only expensive, but OTT and unmanageable.

CURRENT DENSITY OF USES OF THE PARKS

Already there is so much happily going on in the park.

Organised sport absorbs a lot of the area at certain times.

Sailing events also and cricketing and personal exercisers conducting their businesses.

Recently too, personal exercisers operating in the park have added motorised Segways to their apparatus kit!

The Committee of Sydney has plans to increase the population of Sydney to 8 million plus. WMC is proposing a major development at the **Edgecliff Centre** which will seriously increase the current population.

This area is already part of the most densely populated region of Australia.

Rushcutter's Park is the grassy backyard for thousands of apartment dwellers.

Surely the balance should be in favour of the majority of users to this precious open green space.

RUSHCUTTER'S BAY CATCHMENT

Has WMC considered what **Sydney Water** is becoming increasingly concerned about in relationship to the Ruchcutter's Bay roadway flooding and poor drainage, particularly following heavy storms and the increasingly long rain episodes that climate change is bringing?

Water spills over from the roadway and pathway, down the slope to the Park area to the Fig trees. Water on the playing field area moves away very slowly and pools around the fig trees causing erosion to their roots.

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This “flat land” is where the proposed Skate park is proposed.

The skate park base material is red clay and concrete.

These are non porous and will cause water to further pool in this area.

There is a substantial gradient from the west and the northwest sides of the park which directs water to this area.

What consideration has WMC given to the increased run off resulting from new hard surface percentage area being created by the White City/Hakoah development?

Will all stormwater run off proceed to the one canal, and be subject to vagaries of tidal activity?

HISTORICAL LAND QUALITY

Does Council need reminding that all this land was previously swamp and that the water table is excessively high across this entire park area.

The costs of mitigating the resulting **disadvantageous** effects of so much hard non porous surface being imposed on this land, will be exorbitant – even perhaps leading to anything build on it being rendered dangerously unusable.

Perhaps it is opportune here to remind Council that **Centennial Parklands have had a skatepark in their POM** for many years and only budget restrictions have prevented them from building it, to date. And there has been a resolution passed by WMCouncil to liaise with CP to possibly combine funds for its implementation.

DETAILED RESPONSES TO PROPOSALS

We would like here to make the following detailed comments on the POM as they relate to Darling Point.

McKELL PARK

P.194: This park is a treasure of passive open green space for quiet recreation, and we do not see the need for any of the future plans proposed for McKell Park as per the following:

“Development related or ancillary to the recreational, physical, cultural, social or intellectual needs of the community is permissible, e.g. kiosks, mobile refreshment stands, temporary structures for recreational needs, community facilities, environmental facilities / management / protection works (subject to the relevant approval process). “ In particular **no need for a temporary playground during school holidays** (see further comment elsewhere re Play Space Strategy P.39)

P 197 2B: This park does **not** need a cycling path. Indeed, this lower area of the park is highly used by people for picnics or sun worshipping. Adding a cycling path would create huge conflict **between** park users given how narrow this strip of land is.

DARLING POINT RESERVE

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P.197 2C: This public open space (aka Darling Point Reserve?) Yes, it should be rezoned to RE1

AND We would very much like to see placed here a fixed park table with fixed seating (perhaps in a solid fabric such as concrete) with a permanent checkerboard inlay for recreational playing probably most attractive to the large older population of this area – in this beautiful place having a magnificent view to the harbour and city skyline, across the gardens of historic Craigend. It could also perhaps serve as a memorial seating with plaques relevant to living or former Darling Point residents who have been active in the community.

RUSHCUTTER'S BAY PARK

P252 Table 59 Future use: Existing 'kiosk' use as per agreement. There is **no kiosk** – it is the café.

P.257 Table 60 7B: **We strongly object to any increased lighting in the park.** Highly positioned White LED lighting, without baffles, is a serious intrusion to surrounding residents impacting their amenity, *increasing as it does additional traffic due to extended hours and intensity of use.* It is proven to adversely affect bird and animal and marine life as it interrupts their circadian rhythms and subsequent reproduction. It is highly advised against installation from environmental and medical researchers and there is much evidence to refrain from it being installed. **See also EPBC 1999 Birdlife.**

And ALAN – the Marine & Coastal Research Consortium, in partnership with 4 universities in Sydney, is a body of scientists that include Marine Biology academics from the Commonwealth Department of Agriculture, Water and Environs and **The Sydney Coastal Council's Group.** They **maintain** "that artificial light is having an extreme ecologically detrimental effect on MARINE life, along with ANIMAL & BIRD & INSECT life, as it upsets their seasonal breeding due to its interference with their circadian rhythms, causing them to cease reproduction".

YARRANABEE PARK

P. 349: Please note that this is a significant omission here in that **the seawalls of both Rushcutter's Bay and Yarranabee Parks** are stated as "Yarranabee Park seawall and Rushcutters Bay Park seawall is listed on the WLEP 2014, Item 670" but in fact they **are State Heritage Listed.**

Presumably at the same time as: "Rushcutters Bay Park, Sir David Martin Reserve and Yarranabee Park were listed on the **State Heritage Register** 19/6/2020 [SHR 02041]."

And it is understood that WMCouncil has commissioned its own EIS on the seawalls and submitted it to NSW Heritage as part of their pre-lodgement seeking a Section 60, along with the EIS that The Darling Point Society commissioned and gave to Council, which prompted its local heritage listing, earlier.

P355 -2D We strongly object to any inclusions referencing the 2012 Master Plan "contained within previous plans [that] are not repealed" for recommended inclusion here that:

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- a. relate to removing any of the trees in this park, particularly the ones on the Significant Tree List having as they do, significant value for their beauty and ability to provide coolth and shade as climate change increases these needs.
- b. reduce the size of the park in order to create more parking, this an alarming proposal.
- c. that require the partial removal or changes to the State heritage listed sea wall. There is already existing a perfectly usable jetty for the purposes of launching any non-motorised craft for recreational water sport. And we have previously detailed our numerous reasons for the total unsuitability of swimming at this place, due to the presence of sharks and the ever-present boating traffic. The cost of installing a shark-proofed/netted swimming pool anywhere along this section of the seawall which would encompass dealing with tidal issues, aquatic traffic issues and concomitant facilities infrastructure is an extravagant notion for an authority with limited funds.

P.356 Table 95: There is **no mention of installing proper functioning irrigation in future improvements. This has been an outstanding need for some time.**

P.356 Table 96 2A: There is already ample public access to the foreshore from an existing jetty. **There is absolutely no need to make any more openings or new jetties to be built.**

P.356 Table 96 4B: A reliable system of watering should be given a high priority here. If there is in existence some type of irrigation – it has never worked as it should – and it needs attention.

P.356 Table 96 4D: **We are alarmed at the action plan here to remove Fig trees** along New Beach Road, pending a report – that has already been completed – but **not seen by residents!**

P358 6A & 7B: **We strongly object to the CMS and SoHi recommendations that include any break in the State Heritage Listed Seawall as part of the plan for the Northern Plaza. It is sincerely hoped that the EIS will not recommend any incursion into the seawall and that NSW Heritage neither will approve it. We have submitted to Council on numerous occasions the many pitfalls in such a plan.**

PLAY SPACE STRATEGY

P.23 Dates for improvements to Rushcutter's Bay Play park should be brought forward as **this playground is extremely poor and tired and the safety of its ground cover is dubious at the least.** *It is also very unimaginative in its content and needs a total over hall. It is by far one of the poorest in the municipality.*

P.38: We consider it very important that council **"Engages the community in the decision making process of play spaces."**

P.39 The Darling Point Action Plans for the Youth facility do not include facility for much younger children – it is sorely needed. **There is need for urgent improvement and innovation in the current Rushcutter's Bay playground and it's softball facility checked asap.**

There are many more urgent needs than looking to add a play station in McKell Park solely for school holidays. It is essentially a quiet peaceful green space where locals go to read and relax sunbake and picnic. It is not a suitable park for noisy activities nor (see elsewhere) cycling paths.

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RECREATION STRATEGY

P41 We object to any Field Lighting or to the use of synthetic playing fields to Rushcutters Bay Park. The majority of park users use the park for passive activities and the grassed sports fields also allow these areas of the park to be used for passive recreation when not used for sports. *Any hard surfaces would reduce the ability of the park to be used by the majority of park users.*

Futhermore, we are opposed to all of WMC's proposals we have outlined in our Marked Sections in the (attached) Marked Sections YPPoM 2012 & RECREATION STRATEGY document.

However, this is with the exception of the Marked Sections of 1.3, 1.10, and 1.11 on Page 53 - which we endorse. Note that we outstandingly oppose 1.2 Page 53.

We respectfully trust that Council will take our comments here on behalf of the Darling Point community into serious consideration – for the benefit of all who use our parks, many thousands of whom live outside our immediate district, across most suburbs in the Woollahra municipality as well as from more distant areas.

Yours sincerely,



Robert Pompei
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Secretary/public Officer
Darling Point Society
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