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A 50-year Vision for Greater Sydney's  
Open Space and Parklands

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## Acknowledgement of Country

The Department of Planning, Industry and Environment acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land and pays respect to Elders past, present and future.

We recognise Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' unique cultural and spiritual relationships to place and their rich contribution to society.

Aboriginal people take a holistic view of land, water and culture and see them as one, not in isolation to each other. The 50-year Vision for Greater Sydney's Open Space and Parklands is based on the premise upheld by Aboriginal people that if we care for Country, it will care for us.

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**Contributors:** This document has been prepared by the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment with special thanks to the following contributors:

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- Infrastructure NSW
- Greater Sydney Commission
- Western Sydney Parklands, Parramatta Park and Centennial Park and Moore Park trusts

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Blaxland Riverside Park, Sydney Olympic Park





Centennial Park

## SHARING A VISION FOR GREATER SYDNEY'S OPEN SPACE AND PARKLANDS

In the middle of 2020, the NSW Government released a discussion paper as the first step in creating a vision for our open space and parklands. During the coronavirus pandemic, in a time when we experienced restriction on movement and everyday activities, collectively we all understood the importance of our favourite open space or park and the importance of these places to connect communities and provide places for people to rest, relax, exercise, gather or be on their own.

The discussion paper was the first time that we, with the community, had ever put forward a metropolitan wide vision for our great open spaces and parklands, to complement our metropolitan plans, A Metropolis of Three Cities and Sydney Green Grid.

We are now ready to present that vision. The 50-year Vision for Greater Sydney's Open Space and Parklands builds on the NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment's research on community values and attitudes to open space and parklands, as well as the feedback we heard and the conversations we had during a two-month consultation period.



Rob Stokes  
Minister for Planning and Public Spaces

Our vision is to create a city within a park that will help us to create a sustainable network of green space throughout the city. It recognises the importance of parks from an ecological, social, cultural and economic context and of diverse types of open spaces for people and city life.

The vision seeks to act now to create a legacy for future generations. It also recognises the significant value that Aboriginal knowledge and wisdom contributes to our places, and acknowledges the importance of promoting the health and wellbeing of Country for the benefit of all our communities.

We have established a city-wide parks agency, Greater Sydney Parklands, to champion the vision, advocate for open space and parklands across Greater Sydney, and look to expand open spaces and parklands in partnership with local communities and local councils.

The vision responds to the NSW Premier's Priorities for a better environment through 'Greener public spaces' - increasing the proportion of homes in urban areas within 10 minutes' walk of quality green, open and public space by 10 per cent by 2023; and 'Greening our city' - increasing the tree canopy and green cover across Greater Sydney by planting one million trees by 2022.

The vision also supports implementation of Sydney's Green Grid by taking a whole of city approach to linking the mosaic of waterways, open space and parklands across Greater Sydney.

The vision is a shared call to action to create a green and vibrant Sydney that is one with its landscape for the 21st century.

**Rob Stokes**  
Minister for Planning and Public Spaces

# CREATING



Historic Moore Park, once part of the Sydney Common, was formally dedicated for public recreation in 1866 and named in 1867.

## A 50-YEAR HORIZON

Greater Sydney's landscape is made up of natural waterways and ridgelines, bushland and protected areas, open spaces and parklands, rural landscapes, the coast and harbours, and urban landscapes. The Nepean River to the west, Hawkesbury River to the north and the Georges and Hacking Rivers to the south encircle the city.

This landscape has been managed by Aboriginal people as a cultural landscape for time immemorial. Aboriginal people understand that if we care for Country, it will care for us. Greater Sydney's open space and parklands need appropriate cultural care to ensure healthy and vibrant landscapes for future generations.

Greater Sydney is known globally for its incredible open space, its harbours, its beaches, its beauty and its unique outdoor lifestyle. Our green spaces and waterways provide important lifestyle and recreational opportunities and support biodiversity and cultural values. Sydney residents and visitors love these places; they provide a natural canvas for memories and daily life. People go to these places to connect with family and friends, to

breathe and be healthy, or when they want to be alone with their thoughts. They are fundamental to the city's DNA.

The 50-year Vision for Greater Sydney's Open Space and Parklands recognises that public spaces must remain an integral part of the landscape and the city and that we can do this through better planning and management. This vision relies on whole of government delivery over time, working with the community, to ensure Sydney remains a great place to live, work and play.

We owe much to the foresight of those who came before us. Today's abundance of open space and parklands is a legacy of good decision making for many years. These decisions have helped build the foundations for a resilient city, vital in the context of Greater Sydney's growth, the changing climate and the impacts of global trends and challenges.

Now is the right time to think about and act on our aspirations for open spaces and parklands for the next 50 years. Our 50-year Vision is the inspiration to make it happen.

# THE VISION

“**GREATER SYDNEY PARKLANDS IS THE CUSTODIAN OF THE ICONIC AND REGIONALLY SIGNIFICANT STATE-OWNED PARKLANDS AND OPEN SPACE OF GREATER SYDNEY. THE AGENCY WILL PROMOTE AND CHAMPION THE 50-YEAR VISION FOR A SUSTAINABLE, LIVEABLE, GREEN AND COOL SYDNEY. GREATER SYDNEY PARKLANDS WILL COLLABORATE AND PARTNER WITH THE PEOPLE OF GREATER SYDNEY AND ALL LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT.**”

## GREATER SYDNEY PARKLANDS: AN AGENCY DEDICATED TO OPEN SPACE

Led by a team of open space professionals, Greater Sydney Parklands cares for more than 6,000 hectares of open space and parklands in Sydney with around 40 million visits to the parks every year. These parklands include Centennial Parklands – comprising Centennial, Moore and Queens Parks – Callan Park, Parramatta Park, Western Sydney Parklands and Fernhill Estate. The agency will also care for a future parklands estate of new iconic parks to meet the open space needs of a growing city.

### Greater Sydney Parklands will:

- protect, respect and care for the natural environment
- ensure best practice community involvement in parkland planning, activation and management
- keep a local focus on important and unique parklands and open spaces, while having a metropolitan perspective
- nurture important and unique heritage and special landscapes
- integrate contemporary and holistic strategic planning for Sydney's network of parklands
- be a recognised leader in design excellence for the community
- create and manage a sustainable network of Sydney's iconic State-owned open space and parklands
- be empowered by the NSW Government to realise city-wide objectives for a green, cool city

Parramatta Park and Parramatta CBD



## GREATER SYDNEY PARKLANDS: AN AGENCY DEDICATED TO OPEN SPACE



The parks of Greater Sydney Parklands

### A CITY WITHIN A PARK

Since European colonisation, those who have planned for Sydney have thought of open space as being as important to the city as all other elements.

Just as in the overseas cities that Sydney's first planners wished to emulate - places like London or New York - early Sydney was framed by the Domain and Hyde Park; as the city matured, other major open spaces such as Centennial and Parramatta Parks were put aside for the people. More recently Western Sydney Parklands was established.

These places are today what we refer to as the city's iconic parks - places that are so critical for the city and everyday life. These iconic open spaces are noted on this map.

### WESTERN SYDNEY PARKLANDS - 50 YEARS IN THE MAKING AND STILL GOING

From a twinkle in the eyes of city shapers in 1968, Western Sydney Parklands was conceived by the NSW Department of Planning to create a greenbelt and infrastructure corridor for Greater Sydney, a liveable, culturally and economically rich environment for current and future residents of Western Sydney. Acquisition of the corridor land commenced in the 1970s. The motorsports park and Olympic sites were developed, and an extensive greening program was initiated to transform vacant farming land to bushland.

In 2008, with approximately 90% of the corridor in public ownership, the Western Sydney Parklands Trust was established to own, protect and activate the lands to create a living, breathing, self-sustaining parklands that stands unique in Australia. At 5,280 hectares, it's Australia's largest urban park and one of the largest in the world. As a result of this long-term and visionary strategy, the Parklands is now perfectly positioned to provide for the current and future communities of Western Sydney.

### THE NSW GOVERNMENT HAS GIVEN GREATER SYDNEY PARKLANDS THE CRITICAL RESPONSIBILITY TO CHAMPION THE 50-YEAR OPEN SPACE AND PARKLANDS VISION. THE AGENCY WILL:

- advocate city-wide for a green, cool city, while recognising the local character and community needs and aspirations of each place
- ensure best practice outcomes to plan, activate and caretake the city's precious parkland estate
- work in partnership with communities and councils across Greater Sydney to champion the vision and ensure we're working holistically to expand and improve open spaces and parklands
- create sustainable financial models to support long-term management of the parklands estate that contributes to the environmental values of Greater Sydney

One organisation cannot do this alone. Greater Sydney Parklands will proactively collaborate with Sydney's communities, councils, State agencies, industry and others to realise world-class open space opportunities for Sydney.

Greater Sydney Parklands will work with local communities and councils, given their pivotal role in the activation of open spaces and parklands. This local perspective will be translated into the decisions made at a metropolitan level.

The 50-year Vision recognises the rich stories and significance of Australia's First Nations people. As open space leaders, Greater Sydney Parklands will involve First Nations people and communities in shared decision making and co-design practices to realise caring for Country principles.

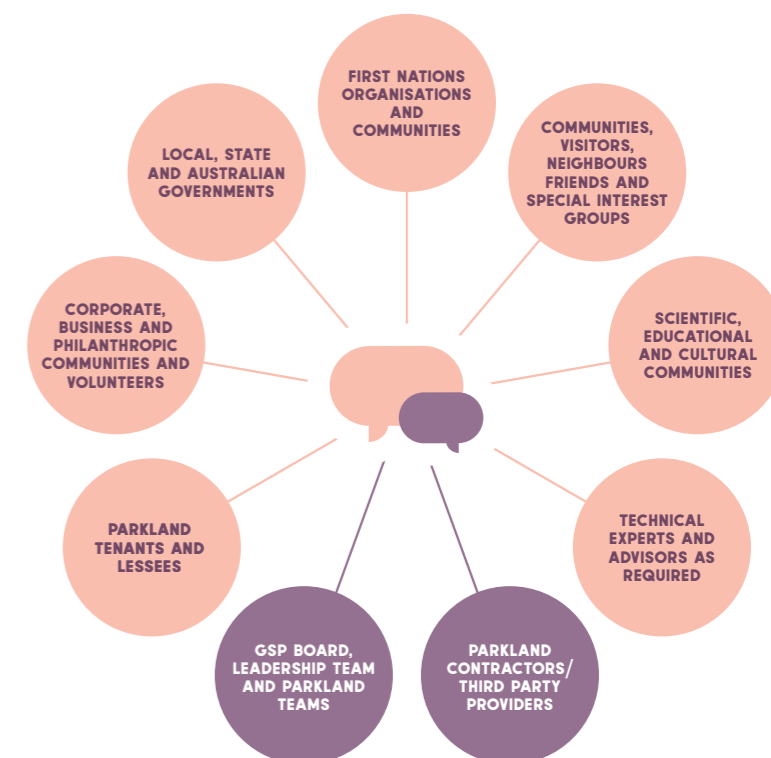
Sydney's parklands and open spaces hold great heritage, educational and environmental values, as well as being home to countless memories for individuals, families and community groups of diverse cultural and socio-economic backgrounds. In managing these green spaces the organisation will aim to reflect, honour and celebrate these values and stories for future generations.

### WHO DO WE ENGAGE WITH?

Our communications and engagement activities seek to reach both new and existing audiences - to understand the breadth of needs, aspirations and priorities.

The communities, stakeholders and partners we engage with are the knowledge holders in an ongoing dialogue about Sydney's open space and parklands. These individuals and organisations come from a broad and diverse background. Some have local interests, others work with us on a metropolitan, or broader lens.

We receive input that covers many aspects of enjoying and caring for Sydney's open space and parklands - across nature and the environment, sport, health and recreation, culture and creativity, learning and education, commerce and philanthropy and heritage. We engage with First Nations organisations and communities as a central point to care for Country.



Western Sydney Parklands



**“ IT’S GOOD TO HAVE A CLEAR VISION OF THE FUTURE. BECAUSE OF THIS WE CAN PLAN TO HAVE A BETTER FUTURE FOR OUR CHILDREN AND OURSELVES. ”**

Public submission to the 50-year Vision Discussion Paper

**YOUR VISION: WHAT WE’VE HEARD**

We shared our draft vision and four strategic directions from mid-July to the end of September 2020. We tested these initial thoughts with the community and stakeholders who value, use and care about Greater Sydney’s open space and parklands.

What we heard from around 2,000 people has directly informed the final vision.

We’ve heard from councils, State agencies, stakeholders such as local community groups or heritage experts, and individuals and groups who care about the future of Sydney’s open space and parklands. Key themes emerging from the consultation include opportunities for collaboration between levels of government, the importance of the environmental values of open space and of retaining the special heritage values of parks.

We believe we have collectively created a vision that speaks to both local needs while considering a metropolitan blue and green grid that extends across council boundaries.

We look forward to continuing to build these relationships with local communities through new and innovative ways to ensure the community has a pivotal role in the activation of open space and parklands.

**DEFINING OPEN SPACE AND PARKLANDS**

When we talk about open space and parklands, we mean everything from national, regional and local parks; to the harbour, beaches, wetlands, creeks and rivers; to playgrounds, playing fields, golf courses and even cemeteries. We also mean the links between these open spaces – including biodiversity corridors and green parkways, transport routes, streets, and walking and cycle paths.

Government Architect NSW. 2018. *Sydney Green Grid*.

# A CITY AND ITS PEOPLE IN THE

**Greater Sydney is cradled by green – encircled by national parks and intersected by diverse open spaces, parklands and waterways.**

The city's open spaces stretch to the Blue Mountains, Wollondilly and Hawkesbury in the west, Wyong and Gosford to the north, the Royal National Park to the south, and to the coastline in the east. Beyond Greater Sydney, green and blue corridors connect Sydney with the Central Coast, Newcastle and Wollongong.

People in Sydney love spending their leisure time outdoors; they agree that outdoor recreation is great for physical and mental wellbeing and that open space and parklands help to bring communities together.

We have an opportunity to embrace and enhance open space and parklands in all their diversity across Greater Sydney as a metropolis of three cities to meet the needs of future generations.

Moore Park



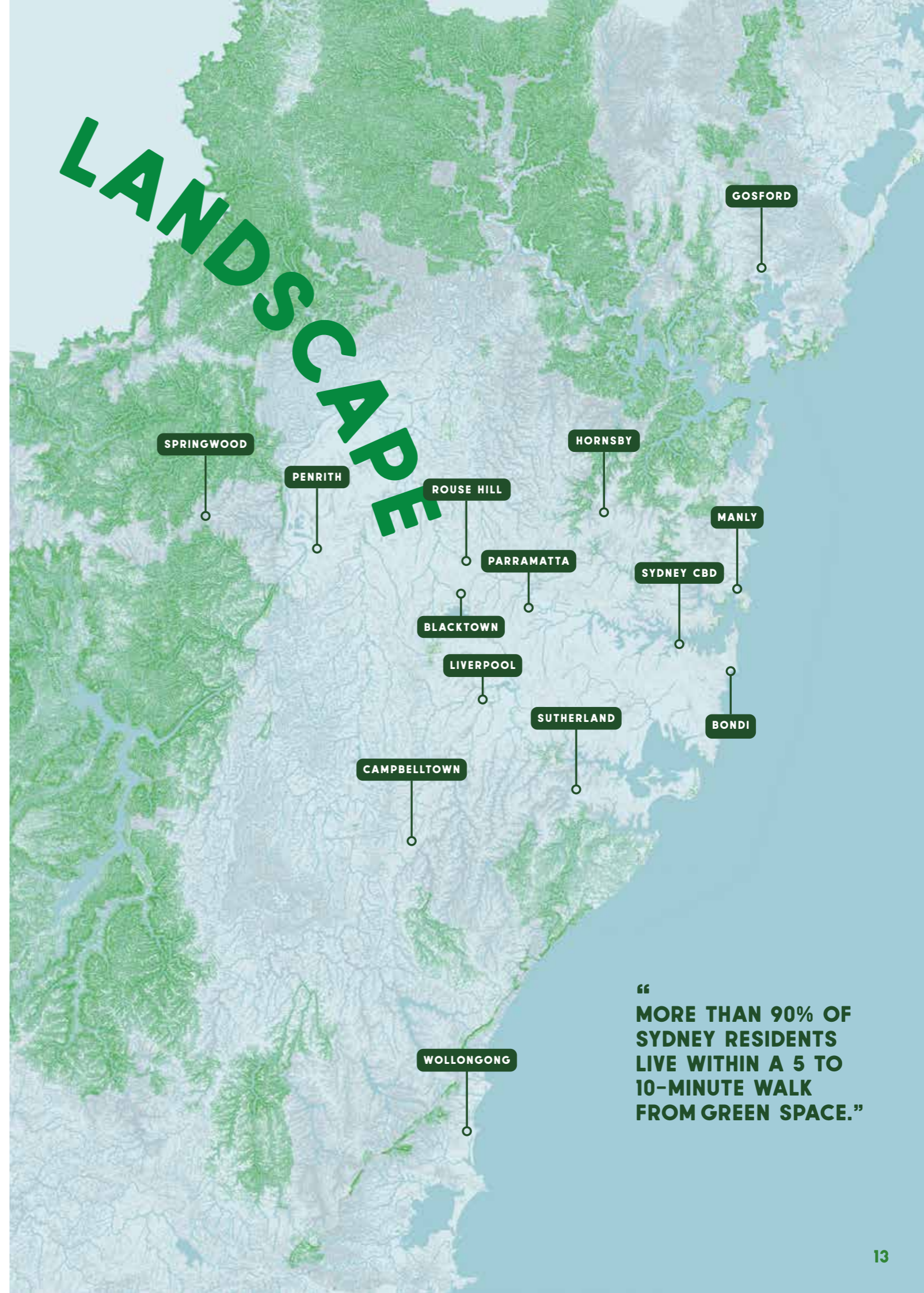
## SYDNEYSIDERS LOVE THEIR OPEN SPACES AND PARKLANDS



When choosing where to live, Australians rate access to parks and open space more highly than telecommunications and public transport.

Greener neighbourhoods have higher levels of neighbourhood satisfaction, contributing to overall personal health and wellbeing.

# LANDSCAPE



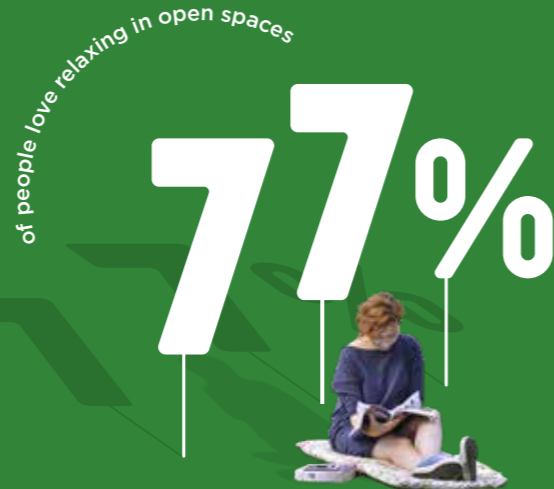
“**MORE THAN 90% OF SYDNEY RESIDENTS LIVE WITHIN A 5 TO 10-MINUTE WALK FROM GREEN SPACE.**”

# WHAT YOU'VE TOLD US ABOUT YOUR PARKS AND OPEN SPACES

In 2018, close to 7,000 people participated in the *Greater Sydney Outdoor Study* to share their feedback on the city's parks and open spaces.

## WHAT'S IMPORTANT?

- 1. Personal journey:** people enjoy experiences that involve walking, visiting destinations, exercising and exploring
- 2. Personal choice:** people like spaces that provide flexibility and don't require a membership or schedule
- 3. Diverse expression:** people like spaces that provide opportunities for a variety of recreation activities
- 4. Inclusive recreation:** access for everyone – regardless of their age, culture or ability – is fundamental
- 5. Competing priorities:** people want to know more about when outdoor spaces are available



## WHAT DID PEOPLE TELL US?

- **Sydney's parklands are popular:** Many people visit local parklands more than once a week for a range of activities – from jogging, walking and relaxing, to barbeques, picnics and ball games.
- **People love the water:** About 50 per cent of those surveyed enjoy outdoor recreation involving water at least once a week. Feasibility and travel are the biggest barriers.
- **Outdoor recreation areas are essential:** 70 per cent of respondents consider open space an important factor in their lives.
- **More opportunities:** 60 per cent of people would like to see more outdoor recreation areas near their home or their work.
- **Location of recreation activities:** People can't always easily get to their preferred recreation activities.
- **Community satisfaction:** People are more likely to express satisfaction with larger parks that typically provide a greater range of activities.

Data from: *Tell us about your neighbourhood*, Department of Planning, Industry and Environment, 2019; *Healthy Built Environment Checklist*, NSW Ministry Health 2020; *Infrastructure Australia Audit* 2019

“**WE NEED TO BE COGNISANT OF LOCAL NEEDS, BUT ALSO LOOK AT OPEN SPACE AS A SYSTEM ACROSS GREATER SYDNEY.**”

Public submission to the 50-year Vision Discussion Paper

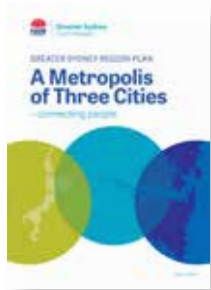


# GREEN PLANNING FOR A GROWING CITY

Greater Sydney is expected to be home to around 10 million people by 2070. Close to half these residents will live west of Parramatta.

Planning for sustainable communities requires us to think about a city where economic and social opportunities are available right across Greater Sydney, including open space and parklands. This is a key focus for the NSW Government.

Two visionary strategies guide our work to address this rebalancing:



The *Greater Sydney Region Plan* seeks to ensure planning and land use is respectful, equitable and sustainable across Greater Sydney. It aims to optimise the opportunities of urban development to protect, restore and enhance Sydney's landscapes, waterways, coastlines, natural areas, tree canopy and open spaces and deliver its benefits more equally to residents across Greater Sydney and its three unique but connected cities.



The *Sydney Green Grid* promotes sustainable development that can maximise people's quality of life and wellbeing. It recognises the vital contribution of green space to people's lives and proposes the creation and consolidation of a network of high quality green areas and waterways that connect centres, public transport networks and major residential areas. This interconnected network will keep the city cool, encourage people to be healthy, protect waterways, enhance biodiversity and ensure ecological resilience.

These visionary strategies are supported by other government strategies, policies and programs listed in the resource section of this document.

“**VIEWING GREATER SYDNEY AS A CITY IN ITS LANDSCAPE ALLOWS US TO THINK ABOUT HOW THE DIVERSITY OF SOCIAL, CULTURAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS OPERATE WITHIN THIS NATURAL LANDSCAPE.**”

*Towards our Greater Sydney, 2016*

Western Sydney Parklands and Western Parkland City



## Coordinating with other planning initiatives

This vision is the City's overarching aspiration for Sydney's open spaces and parks. To enable and implement this vision, many strategic plans are either complete or underway within the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment including *Greener Places*, a Design and Place State Environmental Planning Policy, the *Place Charter* and the *NSW Open Space Strategy*.

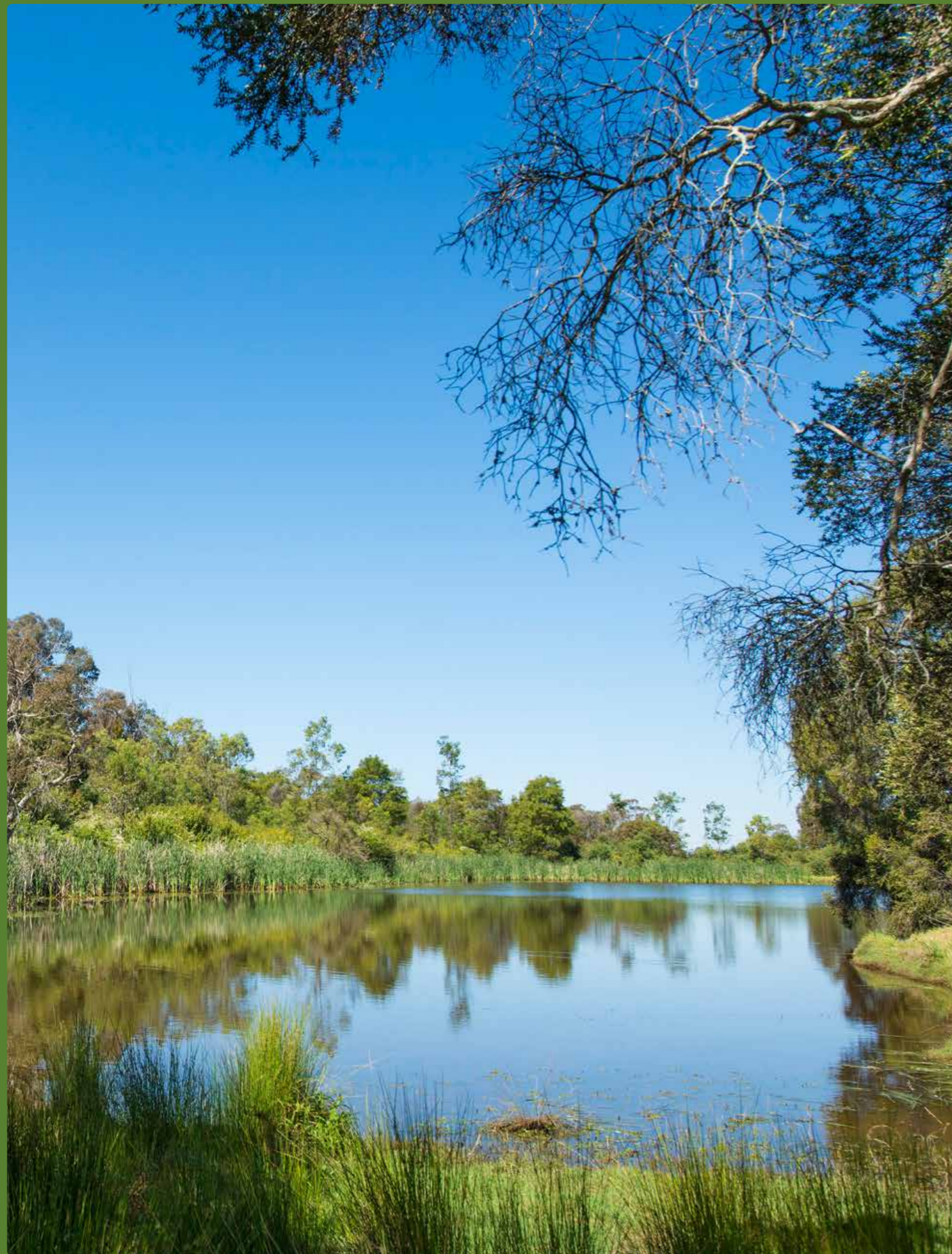
## GREATER SYDNEY AS A METROPOLIS OF THREE CITIES

The emerging **Western Parkland City**, anchored by the Western Sydney International Airport and Aerotropolis, will be the most connected place in Australia, underpinned by unique and rich urban, rural and natural environments. It will be home to more than one million people by 2036.

The **Central River City** is centred on Greater Parramatta. Capitalising on its location close to the geographic centre of Greater Sydney, the Central River City is also predicted to grow substantially from 1.3 million people in 2016 to 1.7 million people by 2036.

The **Eastern Harbour City** will remain Australia's global gateway and financial capital, with the Harbour CBD its metropolitan centre. The radial rail network makes it an easy place to access and a well established heart of the city. The Eastern Harbour City is projected to grow from 2.4 million people in 2016 to 3.3 million people by 2036.

Shale Hills, Western Sydney Parklands



# LOOKING BACK TO LOOK AHEAD

## REFLECTIONS ON VISIONARY THINKING

Greater Sydney's open space and parklands network is underpinned by visionary thinking.



**The County of Cumberland Plan** (1948) pioneered the development of Sydney's green belt and the provision of open space for recreation and as a buffer between land uses.



**Sydney Region Outline Plan** (1968) identified the importance of large-scale recreation areas like the Western Sydney Parklands, multi-use corridors, access to water and the visual contribution of open space to a growing city.



**Sydney Metropolitan Strategy: City of Cities** (2005) highlighted the need for access to quality open space across Greater Sydney.



**Greater Sydney Region Plan: A Metropolis of Three Cities** (2018) is the current strategic vision, which identifies the importance of the Greater Sydney Green Grid to promote sustainable development and maximise quality of life and community wellbeing.

## GREATER SYDNEY AS A CULTURAL LANDSCAPE

Greater Sydney's landscape has been managed by Aboriginal people as a cultural landscape for time immemorial. Learning from Aboriginal ancestors will draw on both spirit and nature to bring the depth of Aboriginal culture and custodianship to the fore.

Some of the traditional Aboriginal names for the three cities of Greater Sydney are:

- 'Sweetwater Country - Wianamatta' for the Western Parkland City
- 'Freshwater Country - Burramatta' for the Central River City
- 'Saltwater Country - Warrane' for the Eastern Harbour City

## A CITY IN A PARK

### THE 50-YEAR VISION FOR GREATER SYDNEY'S OPEN SPACE AND PARKLANDS

This document outlines an aspirational vision and strategic directions for Greater Sydney's open space and parklands for the next 50 years.

How we will incorporate these elements into planning policy, programs, funding streams and implementation processes will be decided in consultation with communities, councils, State agencies and others.

In the next 50 years, Greater Sydney will be A City in a Park. It will be:

- a living and breathing city with a **protected, celebrated and embraced** natural environment
- a city of community-focused parks and **open spaces** that are connected through the Greater Sydney Green and Blue Grid
- a place that reflects the value and stories of the **past, nurtures the present** and sets the stage for stories yet to be told, including its rich First Nations culture
- a city within its landscape, where open spaces and parklands are **accessible, meaningful, sustainable** and part of everyday life
- as much a parkland city as it is a harbour city and river city, where people can **easily access** diverse types of high quality open space and parklands
- a place where people are custodians and wholeheartedly **embrace and care for open space** and parklands

# 50-YEAR VISION



Blaxland Riverside Park, Sydney Olympic Park and Parramatta River

### CARING FOR COUNTRY

Country relates to the nation or cultural group and land that Aboriginal people belong to, yearn for, find healing from and will return to. Country means much more than land, it is a place of origin in cultural, spiritual and literal terms.

Country includes not only land, but also skies and waters. It incorporates both the tangible and the intangible, for instance, all the knowledge and cultural practices associated with land.

People are part of Country, and their identity is derived in a large way in relation to Country.

(Daniele Hromek (2019) - Budawang/Yuin, Researcher and spatial designer)

### STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS AND CASE STUDIES

Four strategic directions underpin the 50-year Vision for Greater Sydney's Open Space and Parklands:

- Strategic direction 1: Growing parks **for people**
- Strategic direction 2: **Connecting** people to parks
- Strategic direction 3: Keeping Sydney **green and vibrant**
- Strategic direction 4: Caring for the **environment**

In describing what we mean by each of these strategic directions, we've also provided case studies - some of which are underway, some of which are aspirational - to show how State agencies, councils and communities can work together to embody the 50-year vision.

Together with councils, Greater Sydney Parklands will build on these outstanding examples and continue to respond creatively to the challenges and opportunities for Greater Sydney's open space and parklands.

Strategic direction



# GROWING PARKS FOR PEOPLE

Greater Sydney's diverse open spaces and parklands must meet the needs and aspirations of residents and visitors. They must be places that can encourage people to be active, get healthy and feel good. This means we need to plan for them to be accessible to everyone, with flexible and multipurpose spaces for a range of experiences.

The following opportunities can help us meet this direction:

- increase open space and parklands in areas near where people live and work
- engage with and involve the community and all levels of government
- adopt design excellence principles
- create quality spaces for walking and cycling including bike paths, local streets and laneways
- provide inclusive and equitable access to open space for everyone in the community by balancing the provision of space for passive activities (unstructured or relaxed activities) and community sports activities (organised or scheduled sport)
- make sure there is a balance of open space for quiet reflection, and for more intensive uses such as sport or dog walking, while leaving areas aside for wildlife
- plan facilities that meet cultural needs and suit people of all ages, including safe places for seniors and young people
- let the community know how they can engage with the city's many open spaces and recreational opportunities

“**OUR CITY'S PARKS AND GARDENS ARE AMONG SYDNEY'S GREATEST ASSETS AND A RESOURCE THAT BELONGS TO, AND BENEFITS THE ENTIRE COMMUNITY.**”

Public submission to the 50-year Vision Discussion Paper



## THE COAL LOADER, WAVERTON

- Creating a community meeting point as one of several environmental and sustainability programs established by North Sydney Council for business and the community
- Recycling an historic industrial site on Sydney Harbour into a spectacular place that displays best-practice sustainable technology, community gardens, urban farming, native bush nursery, food gardens, regenerated bushland and parklands and education
- Utilising the Waverton waterfront to feature lookouts, walking and cycling trails, bushland and places for quiet contemplation where people can get close to water
- Building on a 20-year partnership with the community, council and the NSW Government

## THE PEOPLE'S LOOP, PARRAMATTA PARK

- Transforming walking and cycling in Parramatta Park by removing cars from most of the Park's internal loop road and creating parking in nodes at the edge of the Park
- Building on temporary measures that were trialed as part of the People's Loop in mid-2020
- Using innovative engagement techniques to obtain real-time public feedback to understand how people expect to use open space and to build on the community's sense of ownership of the Park as demonstrated by community-led clean up days and other volunteer programs
- Being agile in adapting plans in response to community feedback
- Establishing a collaboration between Greater Sydney Parklands, Heritage NSW, National Trust, Transport for NSW and City of Parramatta along with stakeholders and the community to retain Parramatta Park as a park for people



## COOKS RIVER

- Repurposing hard infrastructure and former industrial land to create a linear park and opportunities for environmental enhancement and recreation
- Addressing multi-use recreational values and demand for walking, cycling, kayaking and connections, and linking a corridor of open space and waterways - including wetlands, golf course, sporting fields, walking paths, boat launches and dog areas - from Rookwood to Kogarah
- Using collaboration and community and stakeholder engagement initiatives to reinvigorate the open spaces along the river including clean up days, school programs and stormwater initiatives
- Creating a partnership of multiple councils and the NSW Government to achieve a single management vision along the river and pursue initiatives such as an Aboriginal riverkeeper program

Strategic direction

2

# CONNECTING PEOPLE TO PARKS

The journey to open space and parklands is as important as the places themselves. For new and expanded public open space areas to support people's quality of life, people need to be able to access high quality open space near where they live and work and should be able to enjoy better connections to iconic parklands. These connections will act as green hubs accessed via safe and appealing greenways.

The implementation of the Greater Sydney Green and Blue Grid by councils, the NSW Government and the Australian Government will create a better network of safe connections between open spaces.

“**PROXIMITY TO OPEN SPACE AND PARKLANDS IS IMPORTANT, BUT EQUALLY OR MORE IMPORTANT IS THE CONNECTIVITY OF PARKLANDS.**”

Public submission to the 50-year Vision Discussion Paper

The following opportunities could help us meet this direction:

- use surplus public lands for open space and parklands and activate underutilised spaces
- plan early for open space at a local level
- implement Greater Sydney Green and Blue Grid links, including through public acquisitions
- identify new ways to provide public open space in high density environments
- upgrade and improve open space and parklands in ways that increase capacity by installing lighting and irrigation and opening up access
- identify opportunities and connections for pedestrians, cyclists and people using public transport to enjoy open spaces, including using local streets as activation places for people
- improve connections to open spaces and parklands through greening of paths and streets
- connect new and existing neighbourhoods to open space areas and create opportunities for free movement through the landscape to overcome barriers such as major roads and railways
- complete local connections such as Queens Park to Bronte, Moore Park to Green Square and extend major regional connections such as The Great River Walk at Penrith and Manly to Palm Beach walking trail

## DUCK RIVER

- Unlocking the full potential of the Duck River corridor as a valued parkland for local residents and regional visitors through enhanced connections, community and cultural attractions, and environmental initiatives
- Providing bushland corridors and wildlife habitat, interspersed among sports fields and other open space to support the Greater Sydney Green Grid, ensuring recreation facilities are balanced with undisturbed space for wildlife
- Creating opportunities for passive recreation by linking Auburn Botanic Gardens with other cultural attractions via the surrounding greenway pathways and along the Duck River Parklands, with improved links to Parramatta and Georges Rivers
- Protecting wetlands of regional conservation significance that are home to three Endangered Ecological Communities and several threatened species; improving waterway ecology and water quality; and contributing to broader catchment management as a major tributary of Parramatta River
- Creating activities that reflect multicultural communities and provide the opportunity for different segments of the community to meet and engage
- Utilising former industrial areas and showcasing collaborative planning and management of open space between Cumberland City and Parramatta City Councils

Image: McGregor Coxall and Cumberland City Council



## TRANSFORMING SYDNEY'S SHOWGROUNDS

- Transforming underutilised showgrounds across Greater Sydney, such as those in Blacktown and Fairfield, to provide multipurpose recreation facilities
- Repurposing underutilised open space to adapt to new community demands, including links to surrounding green corridors
- Optimising existing public land located adjacent to population growth areas, such as Fairwater in Blacktown
- Looking at the potential for additional showgrounds as many undergo planning and transformation, such as the work on the 30-year vision for Castle Hill Showground

## PADDINGTON GREENWAY

- Transforming a forgotten stormwater drain into a leafy pathway to link Rushcutters Park to Trumper Park in Paddington and naturalising Rushcutters Creek to improve environmental and biodiversity values
- Providing safe and shaded walking and cycle connections to help reduce car use for the daily commute
- Making better use of public land, including land owned by Sydney Water and Transport for NSW, to provide much needed inner-city green space and connections in highly populated urban areas



# 3

Strategic direction

## KEEPING SYDNEY GREEN AND VIBRANT

Greater Sydney exists in a landscape of great beauty, complex natural processes and unique heritage stories.

These scenic natural and cultural landscapes are places of profound significance in people's hearts and minds. Open space and parklands must be remarkable, memorable, captivating and distinctive, not only to provide a wonderful and varied outdoor lifestyle for the people who live here, but to help attract local, regional and international visitors to Sydney.

The following opportunities can help us meet this direction:

- open up public land holdings with rich natural and cultural heritage and landscapes, as is occurring at Fernhill Estate in Mulgoa
- create or improve linear open space connections and facilities along waterways, including Sydney Harbour, the Parramatta, Georges, Cooks and Nepean Rivers and Wiannamatta South Creek and Ropes Creek
- embellish local open space links with heritage values and place making features such as the Boothtown Aqueduct at Greystanes
- preserve and conserve the many natural, cultural, scenic and rural values of special landscapes across Greater Sydney
- value rural heritage landscapes across Greater Sydney
- use place-based planning to enhance diverse landscapes across Greater Sydney as connections for local communities
- investigate water-based recreation opportunities particularly in Western Sydney
- meet targets under the Premier's Priorities – Greening our City and Greener Public Places

“**KEEPING SYDNEY CAPTIVATING MEANS EMBRACING THE UNIQUE ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE OF OPEN SPACE AND PARKLANDS IN THE REGION.**”

Public submission to the 50-year Vision Discussion Paper



### LAKE PARRAMATTA AND DARLING MILLS CREEK

- Providing a green and lush corridor in an extraordinary natural setting, accessible within a suburban area, under a City of Parramatta Council program
- Linking a network of tracks through remnant bushland for people in Parramatta North (Cumberland Hospital), Castle Hill and Cherrybrook
- Opening Lake Parramatta as a designated swimming spot in 2015 – a unique experience of natural swimming in Western Sydney
- Retaining the site's scenic and recreation qualities within suburban Western Sydney and optimising new public transport connections including the Sydney Metro Northwest

### CALLAN PARK, LILYFIELD

- Transforming a significant parkland, featuring an active, busy foreshore and rich heritage and activated landscape
- Enhancing the heritage significance of buildings and landscapes and presenting the site's rich Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal values and stories, including its past as a health facility, to visitors
- Under the guidance of the Callan Park Landscape Structure Plan 2020, restoring Callan Park as a place for wellbeing that prioritises walking and cycling and enriches people's connections with nature
- Providing opportunities to interact with nature and strengthen the connections with the Green and Blue Grid with possible connections to Glebe Foreshore and Blackwattle Bay
- Supporting a multi-use parkland with opportunities for community sports grounds and a vital link along the iconic seven-kilometre Bay Run around Iron Cove



### GREAT RIVER WALK, PENRITH

- Linking Fernhill Estate and Penrith Lakes by the Great River Walk, a seven-kilometre riverside walking track along the Nepean River
- Connecting existing open spaces, including Tench Reserve, improving existing open space and expanding access to new parklands
- Improving and expanding access to quality open space that is safe and close to where people live via riverside greenways and walking tracks supporting clean waterways and biodiversity, and building on Penrith City Council's *Penrith Green Grid Strategy*
- Consider broader recreational links to places such as the Blue Mountains and beyond
- Partnering between all levels of government and private landowners to realise connections over time

Strategic direction

4

# CARING FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

Greater Sydney's open space and parklands help to support native vegetation in urban and suburban places as habitats for animals. They are the lungs of the city and can respond to changes in the climate as they support and sustain biodiversity. Healthy waterways encourage more people to enjoy the water and help to cool the city.

Healthy and cool open spaces and waterways can support community resilience as places that foster connections and social networks. We must care for these places with sensitivity and agility.

Smart and resilient solutions will help us to plan, manage and maintain adaptable open spaces and parklands that meet the needs of the community and the changing environment due to the impacts of climate change.

The following opportunities could help us meet this direction:

- adopt Caring for Country principles and practice in the design, delivery and management of open space and parklands and involve Aboriginal people and communities in shared decision making and co-design practices
- expand and link key natural areas and habitat corridors throughout Greater Sydney and protect refuge areas within the Sydney Green Grid such as Blue Gum forests and areas of Cumberland Plain Woodland
- protect biodiversity on public and private lands through land conservation agreements or other innovative arrangements and facilitate public access for recreation where appropriate
- increase tree canopy cover across Greater Sydney to at least 40 per cent
- understand and tell the diverse cultural and heritage stories of important places in open space and parkland design and management
- plan for and mitigate the effects of climate change, build resilience in the natural environment and plan for continued biodiversity conservation into the future
- use smart technologies to gather robust data about the natural and built environment to support environmental management, inform decisions about public spaces and provide information to local communities
- consider opportunities for multipurpose spaces such as green roofs, water sensitive urban design and water recycling

## GEORGES RIVER KOALA CORRIDOR

- Planning for the Georges River Koala Reserve under the *Cumberland Plain Conservation Plan* to protect up to 1,885 hectares of bushland including the most important north-south koala movement corridor along the Georges River between Appin and Kentlyn
- Including opportunities for the community to enjoy green space in Western Sydney including recreational tracks and trails
- Meeting a need that was recognised in the Chief Scientist's *Koala Report 2020* as essential for the southern Sydney koala population
- Planting 100,000 native trees by 2023 in the reserve to restore koala habitat including koala feed trees, enhance connections between patches of koala habitat and strengthen existing koala corridors beyond the reserve including to the Georges River Nature Reserve



## CARING FOR COUNTRY – WESTERN SYDNEY PARKLANDS

- Acknowledging the Southern Parklands in Western Sydney Parklands are on Gandangara and Darug Country and the cultural knowledge of these lands is held by its Aboriginal community
- Working with the traditional custodians, Aboriginal Land Council and other Aboriginal groups in this area since 2018, beginning with the Southern Parklands Framework that shapes the development of new recreation facilities
- Bringing the depth of Aboriginal culture and custodianship to the fore and elevating its Aboriginal community from stakeholder to co-leader in Trust projects
- Building on relationships and dialogues with the traditional custodians, Local Aboriginal Land Council and other Aboriginal groups to facilitate and realise their request for access and a presence for Aboriginal activities in the Parklands as well as Aboriginal developed and led programs and employment such as ranger programs, seed collection and storytelling

## GREENING OUR STREETS

- Combining scientific research and working with local communities to implement effective street tree plantings that provide shade in heat-affected urban areas, demonstrating how streets can be cool, green and interconnected
- Building on a successful pilot project - Cool Streets by Gallagher Studios and Blacktown City Council in 2016 - where residents developed shared visions for tree planting in their street
- Helping to deliver the Premier's Priority of planting one million trees by 2022
- Providing benefits such as more shade, lower temperatures and green streets as trees mature
- Adapting this pilot project to other street networks across Sydney



Image: Matthew Duchesne and Gallagher Studios

We will collaborate with and involve the people of Greater Sydney and all levels of government, including local, state and federal government agencies to realise the vision and strategic directions.

## ROBUST POLICY AND PLANNING

We will use consistent statutory controls and a strategic and integrated approach to policy and planning to drive better local, regional and city-wide open space and parklands.

This will require us to:

- continue to develop open space strategies and green plans that establish requirements for State significant precincts and other significant projects that cross council boundaries
- support high-level planning frameworks that prioritise requirements for open space and parklands such as Greener Places
- continue to align the *Greater Sydney Region Plan* and district plans with the 50-year vision as those plans are updated
- establish the Design and Place State Environmental Planning Policy (SEPP)
- implement new ways to promote best practice private investment in planning and provision of open space and parklands through the development process, including the potential for the long-term involvement of the private sector in provision and maintenance of some types of local open space
- develop guidance to help place owners and precinct planners design smart places to better capture data insights

Blue Mountains National Park



# A WAY FORWARD

Northern Park, Sub Base Platypus, North Sydney, Harbour Trust



As well as the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment and Greater Sydney Parklands, key agencies to be involved in collaboration to realise the vision include local councils, National Parks and Wildlife, Heritage NSW, Placemaking NSW Advisory Committee, Sydney Water, Water NSW, Property NSW and Crown Lands, Transport for NSW, Infrastructure NSW, Sydney Harbour Federation Trust, Office of Sport, Environmental Protection Authority, Western Parkland City Authority and the Greater Sydney Commission.



“  
**THE COMMUNITY HAS  
 A BIG ROLE TO PLAY IN  
 PROTECTING AND CARING  
 FOR SYDNEY'S OPEN SPACE  
 AND PARKLANDS AND IN  
 SHAPING THEIR FUTURE.”**

## OPEN SPACE MANAGEMENT

All levels of government and the private sector need to collaborate to support integrated planning and management of open space and parklands. This will promote city-wide connections, protect unique landscapes, and meet the needs of Sydney's current and future populations.

This will require us to:

- repurpose existing NSW Government-owned land for open space and parklands, either as part of major infrastructure projects and urban renewal projects or via infrastructure planning such as place-based infrastructure compacts
- consider multiple objectives for a range of purposes such as upstream water management, infrastructure provision as well as recreation and environmental protection
- identify privately owned land that could become publicly accessible open space and parklands in urban and suburban areas
- create a framework for centralised digital data management to inform planning, acquisition, implementation and management of open space and parklands as part of the Sydney Green Grid and e-planning portal
- use common data and digital tools to visualise the city, consider scenarios over time and coordinate data on land use, flooding, bushfire risk, infrastructure and the built environment, housing and climate change
- explore innovative ways to create sustainable funding streams for parks, both local and regional
- coordinate regional open space planning to create cross-LGA Green Grid corridors
- consider public and active transport options to expand access to public open space

## STRONG ADVOCACY AND SUPPORT

Bold leadership must be informed by evidence-based research and evaluation and be guided by best practice approaches. Embellishment, management and potential acquisition of open space and parklands will require sustainable and streamlined investment.

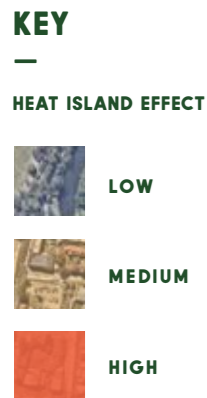
This will require us to:

- partner with State agencies such as Transport for NSW, Sydney Water and Water NSW to complete transformational regional walking routes
- amplify and market both the values of open space and the opportunities for the community to engage with parklands
- establish a Centre for Excellence for Parklands to build evidence, share knowledge and establish monitoring and analysis programs
- reprioritise and amplify existing grants programs and land acquisition plans across the NSW Government including the Metropolitan Greenspace Program, Streets as Shared Spaces grants program and Parks for People program
- review and coordinate financial contributions schemes such as the Sydney Regional Development Fund and investigate cross-city funding mechanisms used in other states, such as levies, green bonds and parkland-specific funds, in conjunction with State agencies and local councils
- establish new ways to listen to and engage Greater Sydney's communities
- establish mechanisms to monitor and measure outcomes against the vision and strategic directions

Sydney Olympic Park



Parramatta Park heat island map



### FACING THE CHALLENGES OF CLIMATE CHANGE

The consequences of climate change are not just predictions – we are seeing evidence of them now. We are experiencing higher temperatures, extensive periods of drought, and storms of increasing intensity. Couple this with urban heat island effects where constructed elements – roads, carparks, roofs, and materials – brick, concrete and bitumen trap heat and raise temperatures even further.

Sydney's open space and parklands can help to mitigate the impacts of climate change. As shown in the Parramatta Park heat island map above, on hot days Parramatta Park is lower in temperature than the adjacent Parramatta CBD and surrounding suburbs. This is because of the landscapes of the Park – the turf, shrubs, trees, creeks, and river.

The greening of streets with verge gardens, planting new trees to realise the vision of the Green Grid, and protecting and restoring precious urban trees, bushland and waterways all contribute to the greening, cooling, and liveability of the city.

Keeping Greater Sydney green and vibrant and caring for the environment will ensure Sydney remains a liveable city for future generations.

## RESOURCES

This vision forms the first step in bringing together the many elements of planning for open space and parklands for Greater Sydney. Supporting the vision are a number of key activities and strategies that are noted below. For the rest of NSW, the vision is a launching pad for the NSW Government to develop the NSW Open Space Strategy which will utilise the strategic directions from the vision for Greater Sydney and develop tailored strategic directions for regional areas. Guidelines will also be developed to support the planning and delivery of high quality open space across the state.

Government strategies, policies and programs

- **A Metropolis of Three Cities:** [greater.sydney/metropolis-of-three-cities](http://greater.sydney/metropolis-of-three-cities)
- **Caring for Country – Designing with Country:** [governmentarchitect.nsw.gov.au/projects/designing-with-country](http://governmentarchitect.nsw.gov.au/projects/designing-with-country)
- **Cumberland Plain Conservation Plan:** [planning.nsw.gov.au/Policy-and-Legislation/Biodiversity/Cumberland-Plain-Conservation-Plan](http://planning.nsw.gov.au/Policy-and-Legislation/Biodiversity/Cumberland-Plain-Conservation-Plan)
- **District plans:** [greater.sydney/district-plans](http://greater.sydney/district-plans)
- **Everyone Can Play:** [everyonecanplay.nsw.gov.au/](http://everyonecanplay.nsw.gov.au/)
- **Greener Places:** [governmentarchitect.nsw.gov.au/policies/greener-places](http://governmentarchitect.nsw.gov.au/policies/greener-places)
- **Metropolitan Greenspace Program:** [planning.nsw.gov.au/Plansforyourarea/Infrastructurefunding/Metropolitan-Greenspace-Program](http://planning.nsw.gov.au/Plansforyourarea/Infrastructurefunding/Metropolitan-Greenspace-Program)
- **NSW Public Spaces Charter:** <https://www.dpie.nsw.gov.au/premiers-priorities/great-public-spaces/festival-of-place/public-space-charter>

- **Parks for People:** [planning.nsw.gov.au/Policy-and-Legislation/Open-space-and-parklands/Parks-for-People](http://planning.nsw.gov.au/Policy-and-Legislation/Open-space-and-parklands/Parks-for-People)
- **Premier's Priorities:** [nsw.gov.au/premiers-priorities](http://nsw.gov.au/premiers-priorities)
- **Smart Infrastructure Policy:** <https://www.digital.nsw.gov.au/policy/smart-infrastructure-policy>
- **Streets as Shared Spaces:** [dpie.nsw.gov.au/premiers-priorities/great-public-spaces/streets](http://dpie.nsw.gov.au/premiers-priorities/great-public-spaces/streets)
- **Sydney Green Grid:** [governmentarchitect.nsw.gov.au/projects/sydney-green-grid](http://governmentarchitect.nsw.gov.au/projects/sydney-green-grid)
- **Transport for NSW Future Transport Strategy 2056:** [future.transport.nsw.gov.au/plans/future-transport-strategy](http://future.transport.nsw.gov.au/plans/future-transport-strategy)

In addition, the NSW Government has other initiatives underway to support the vision including:

- Design and Place State Environmental Planning Policy (SEPP)
- Greener Places Design Guide
- Creating Quality Public Open Space in NSW
- Environment SEPP
- NSW Public Open Space Strategy
- Strategic Open Space Program
- NSW Public Spaces Charter
- Place-based infrastructure compacts
- Urban Greening and Canopy Strategy

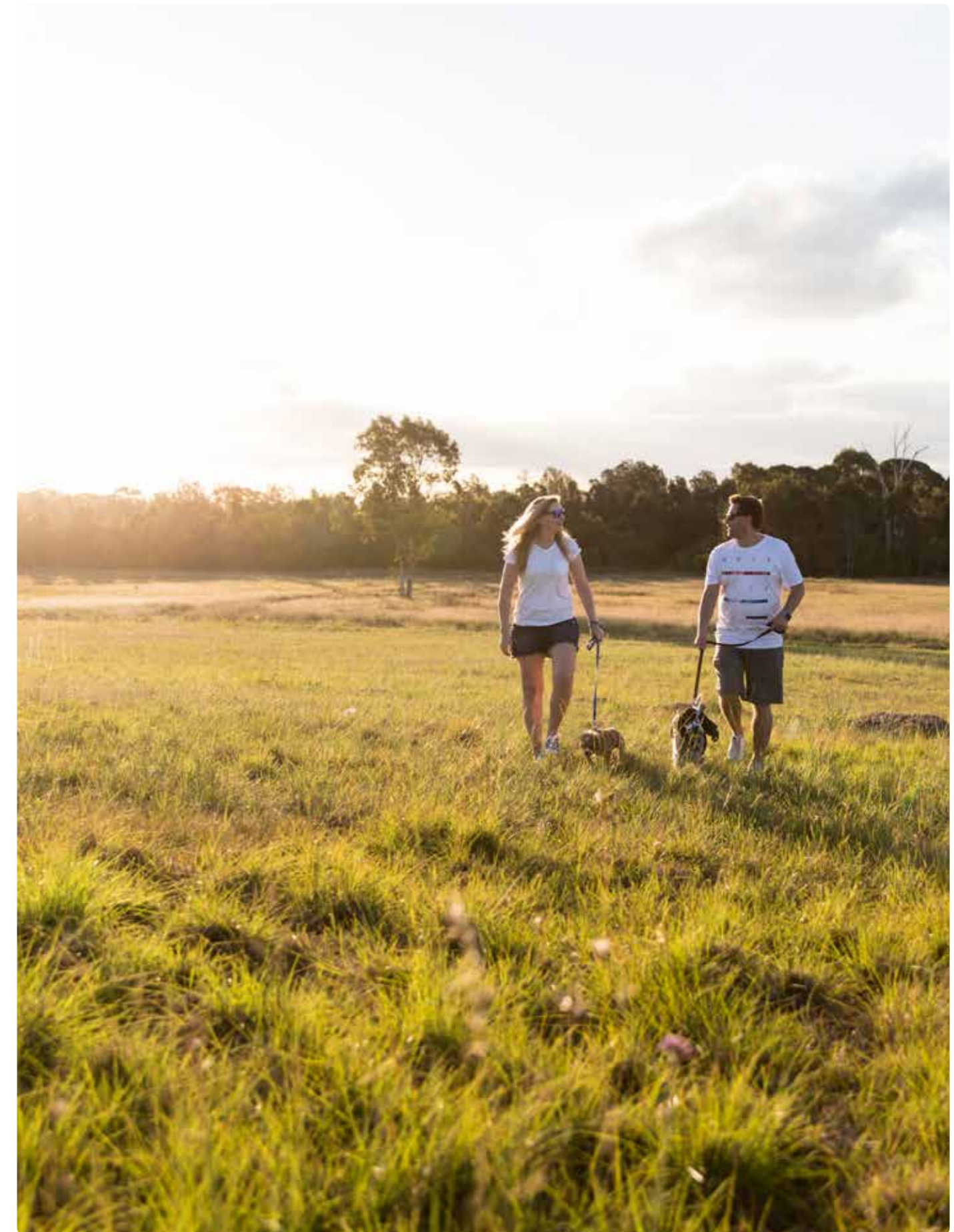
Parramatta River, Parramatta Park



## GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS

- **Active open space:** land set aside for formal outdoor sports – team sports, training and competition – featuring playing fields, change rooms, seating and car parking.
- **Bushland:** passive open space that includes either natural vegetation or, if altered, vegetation that is similar to natural vegetation. Bushland can include biodiversity corridors, reserves, national parks and wetlands. Many of these spaces provide more limited recreation or public access opportunities than other types of open space.
- **Country:** includes all living things. It incorporates people, plants and animals. It embraces the seasons, stories and creation spirits. Country is both a place and belonging and a way of believing for Aboriginal people.
- **Designing with Country:** considers how to respond to Aboriginal cultural connections to Country when designing and planning new projects. It stems from a growing desire to respect and celebrate the value and significance of contemporary Aboriginal culture and Aboriginal heritage.
- **Greater Sydney:** Defined as the 33 local government areas of Bayside, Blacktown, Blue Mountains, Burwood, Camden, Campbelltown, Canada Bay, Canterbury-Bankstown, Cumberland, Fairfield, Georges River, Hawkesbury, The Hills, Hornsby, Hunters Hill, Inner West, Ku-ring-gai, Lane Cove, Liverpool, Mosman, Northern Beaches, North Sydney, City of Parramatta, Penrith, Randwick, City of Ryde, Strathfield, Sutherland, City of Sydney, Waverley, Willoughby, Wollondilly and Woollahra.
- **Green space:** an area of grass, trees or other vegetation set aside for people to enjoy in an urban or suburban environment.
- **High quality green space:** multifunctional space designed to produce social, environmental, ecological and economic benefits.
- **Iconic parks:** State-owned destination parks within Greater Sydney.
- **Inclusive access:** utilises principles of universal design and accessibility, creating places and spaces for people of all ages, cultural backgrounds and abilities.
- **Open space and parklands:** includes national, regional and local parks; the harbour, beaches, wetlands, creeks and rivers; playgrounds, playing fields, golf courses or cemeteries as well as the linkages between them, such as green corridors, transport routes, streets, and walking and cycle paths. Represents land set aside from development to accommodate recreation or relief from the built environment for personal and social recreation, sport and physical activity, active transport, waterway and riparian corridors, biodiversity and fauna conservation, and visual and landscape amenity.
- **Passive open space:** land set aside for parks, gardens, linear corridors, conservation bushland and nature reserves that are available for passive use.
- **Public open space:** differentiated into local, district and regional open space, reflecting the likely catchment and facilities provided. Local public open space serves a single neighbourhood; district open space serves multiple neighbourhoods and may extend beyond council boundaries; and regional open space serves a citywide or metropolitan catchment.
- **Smart solutions:** using technology to capture data and insights on the built and natural environment.
- **Greater Sydney Green and Blue Grid:** a network of high quality green space and waterways that connects town centres, public transport hubs and major residential areas across Greater Sydney.

Bungarribee Park, Western Sydney Parklands



An aerial photograph of a lush green landscape. In the foreground, there is a dense forest of tall, leafy trees. A river or stream flows through the middle ground, winding its way through the forest. The background shows a wide, open field of green grass, possibly a park or a large field, with some trees scattered across it. The overall scene is vibrant and natural.

Planning now for Sydney's next 50 years...