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White Paper - Parklands for People

WalkSydney is a community group advocating for walking and exploring the issues that confront those who want to walk in Greater Sydney (Wollongong to Newcastle, and the ocean to the Blue Mountains). Our mission is to make walking convenient, accessible, safe and enjoyable for everyone. Our objectives are to:

- Promote walking as a safe, efficient and pleasant method of transport.
- Participate in the design of an urban environment to encourage pedestrian transport and amenity.
- Provide opportunity for members and non-members to express and promote their views regarding walking as active transport.
- A commitment to healthy, just, efficient, accessible and sustainable communities and to work together to overcome the physical, social and institutional barriers that often limit people's choices to walk.
- Advocate for improved pedestrian priority on existing and future transport networks.
- Promote the design of streets for people.
- Promote investment in infrastructure for walking.
- Co-operate and work with other groups and organisations to improve and promote walking as a viable and valid mode of transport.

We are pleased to provide comment on the *White Paper – Parklands for People*.

WalkSydney strongly supports the recent establishment of the Greater Sydney Parklands agency to enable a city-wide approach to planning and managing parklands in Greater Sydney, and facilitate the delivery of a city-wide Green Grid. This network of high-quality green areas connecting parks, town centres and public transport networks will be essential to Sydney's ongoing success as a liveable, equitable and sustainable city.

As outlined in numerous government policies, including the *Future Transport Strategy 2056*, the *Practitioners Guide to Movement and Place*, the *Greater Sydney Regional Plan* and the District Plans, there is a pressing need to reduce reliance on cars in Sydney.

To achieve these commitments to more sustainable transport and more liveable cities, we need to make public transport, walking and cycling more attractive options. The Green Grid is a crucial step toward this, and to achieving the social, economic and environmental benefits of reduced car dependence now and in the future. Parks can play valuable roles in encouraging active transport. The bicycle education centre at Sydney Park is an excellent example, Centennial and Parramatta Park are places where less confident cyclists can go to develop skills and confidence to enable them to cycle more.

WalkSydney strongly supports the proposal in the White Paper that new legislation could take a city-wide approach that looks outside the parkland boundaries to make Green Grid connections. The *Future Transport Strategy 2056* and the *Practitioners Guide to Movement and Place* emphasise the need to allocate road space in a way that improves the liveability of places. This is especially necessary for Green Grid connections, particularly between parks and high-density precincts. With increasing temperatures, this need will increase, especially in Western Sydney.

The preferred approach put forward in the White Paper is to introduce legislation to strengthen the capabilities of the Greater Sydney Parklands agency to deliver the Green Grid. Consolidating and streamlining the existing legislation and funding mechanisms to manage Sydney's major parklands and connections between them is outlined as the preferred step in achieving the strategic directions.

To maximise the benefits of the new legislation, WalkSydney makes the following recommendations:

1. Objectives to maximise green space support the Green Grid

The legislation must include objectives to:

- Maintain, protect and increase the amount and proportion of green space provided for walking, cycling and passive recreation;
- Reduce and minimise the amount and proportion of park space allocated to roads and car parking; and
- Facilitate the delivery of the Green Grid beyond the parkland boundaries to provide high quality shaded connections to support walking, cycling and biodiversity.

2. Minimise impacts on walking access from commercial and fundraising activities

The new governance framework must be designed so that commercial and/or fundraising activities in the parks, either through the existing WSP business-hub model or any other model, ensure that walking access is not restricted through parklands. This is especially important where parklands provide connection for walking and cycling between destinations. As an example, event bookings of Tumbalong Park in the City of Sydney LGA frequently restrict direct and convenient walking access through the park between local suburbs and public transport facilities.

3. Ensure that board members are independent and representative of the community

As well as having skills relevant to park management, members of the community trustee boards and the GSP Trust need to represent the diversity of the community, including age, gender, disability and cultural diversity. There is a large literature suggesting that parks and other public spaces are not inclusive and are less accessible to people that are already marginalised in other ways. Ensuring that the board is diverse and inclusive is an important step to ensure that parks are managed to maximise their accessibility for everyone.

Board members must be appointed through a transparent process, avoiding conflicts of interest (political, commercial, actual, potential, perceived, etc) and ensuring legitimacy and acceptance by the community.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the options. WalkSydney would be pleased to discuss this submission in further detail. We can be contacted at walksydney1@gmail.com.