

**NSW Department of Planning
Via Email**

22 November 2016

Dear Sir / Madam

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on the Sydney Olympic Park Master Plan 2030 (2016 Review).

Please find attached a joint submission made by the Sydney Olympic Business Association, the Sydney Business Chamber, Western Sydney and the National Roads and Motorists Association (NRMA).

We would be pleased to meet with you to discuss the recommendations we have put forward in the submission.

Sincerely

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SYDNEY OLYMPIC PARK MASTER PLAN 2030 – 2016 REVIEW SUBMISSION

This submission has been produced by the Sydney Olympic Park Business Association, the Sydney Business Chamber Western Sydney and the National Roads and Motorists Association (NRMA).

These groups have joined together to provide a common position in relation to the Sydney Olympic Park Master Plan (2016 Review). We welcome the opportunity to provide comment to the NSW Government about the Master Plan.

The Sydney Olympic Park Master Plan (2016 Review) has several positive suggestions to expand the scale of activity at Sydney Olympic Park and to recognise the role that it plays in greater Sydney.

We generally agree with the “future desired character” described in the Master Plan of “an active and energised town centre”.

However we remain concerned that the Master Plan update as presented does not provide for the park to maximise its potential as a precinct that is able to deliver increased commercial activity, job creation and residential development for greater Sydney.

The potential of the Sydney Olympic Park precinct cannot be realised without significant improvements to transport connectivity. Existing roads and public transport services are congested and provide limited capacity and flexibility. It is imperative that the Park is connected and accessible to the wider Sydney transport network.

We believe that Sydney Olympic Park requires a bolder vision that is not constrained by current accessibility problems. The targets contained in the Master Plan that relate to employment are not sufficiently ambitious to realise an expanded vision for the park and allow it to reach its potential.

SYDNEY OLYMPIC PARK'S UNIQUE ROLE IN THE REGION

Sydney Olympic Park is uniquely placed at the centre of Sydney and within the Greater Parramatta and Olympic Peninsula (GPOP).

Modelling undertaken by PWC indicates that Sydney Olympic Park ranks among Australia's top 20 performing locations for economic output. A number of significant corporations are located in the park and this area has the potential to generate knowledge jobs for the greater Sydney region.

The park currently accommodates more than 200 businesses including the Commonwealth Bank, QBE and Samsung to name a few. Major company relocations to the park in recent years have included Lion (843 staff), Thales Australia (560 staff), GWS Giants (100 staff). In early 2017, NRMA will be relocating 500 staff to the park.

Sydney Olympic Park is also described as a Super Lifestyle Precinct as a place offering an enviable lifestyle with parkland living and proximity to major entertainment and sporting venues.

Sydney Olympic Park was designed more than 20 years ago and was master planned with the intention of keeping vehicles out of the precinct. Given the changed character of the precinct and its development as a mixed use commercial centre, we believe this position will hamper the growth of the park.

Sydney Olympic Park encompasses a vast area with very large lots and an incomplete street network. These early planning decisions to restrict access and movement through the park have unfortunately led to the lack of a strong retail presence and also significant congestion particularly on major event days.

We believe that transport and access; activation of the precinct; creating effective gateways into and out of the park and supporting the park's commercial role are critical issues that need to be addressed.

ACCESS: ADDRESSING SYDNEY OLYMPIC PARK'S CENTRAL CHALLENGE

The central challenge facing the park is the movement of large numbers of residents, employees, students and event patrons to and from the precinct.

We believe that improved transport and access options are crucial for the amenity and appeal of Sydney Olympic Park and are critical to its sustainable development.

We urge the NSW Government to develop an integrated transport solution that encompasses major improvements to road, rail and pedestrian access.

Improved access is the key to the precinct's success as a residential, retail, commercial centre and education and major event venue.

Such a plan would also go towards realising the lifestyle potential of Sydney Olympic Park and support the permanent community who live, work and study there.

RAIL ACCESS

Sydney Olympic Park has suffered from a lack of direct connectivity to the main Western Line and to the Sydney CBD. The 'loop' train line from Lidcombe is inadequate to ensure large numbers of employees, residents, students and visitors travelling to and from Sydney Olympic Park, can access other parts of Sydney within a reasonable amount of time.

The current service requires commuters to change trains at Lidcombe coming into and leaving the precinct. This provides a poor commuter experience and doesn't support the needs of tenants, residents and event patrons.

We support the upgrade of Lidcombe station including lift and/or escalator access directly to the sprint platform, improved signage and amenities that will all improve the experience. Additionally, later model carriages, preferably air-conditioned, would provide a level of comfort in line with expectations and more patrons would be likely to use the service.

This is a critical interim measure for the years until the direct transport options are in place.

The lack of direct transport and adequate access is an impediment to the park's economic and investment attraction potential, has real effect on business costs and is a major consideration for businesses considering relocating to the precinct.

These access concerns within the park have also had impact on employment potential in the park. We note the decision of the Commonwealth Bank of Australia (CBA) to move its 3,500 staff from its key premium business site, adjacent to the Sydney Olympic Park railway station into Australia Technology Park. While there are many factors that have influenced CBA's decision to move out of the park, one of the critical factors was the lack of transport and poor connectivity to particularly commuter rail. The Commonwealth Bank spends close to \$1 million a year operating its own private bus service, to compensate for this lack of rail connectivity.

METRO RAIL

We commend the Government on its recent announcement of a metro rail incorporating a stop at Sydney Olympic Park. We believe this has potential to transform the park and improve its attractiveness as a commercial location. The metro rail will provide a frequent, busy, high quality mass transit system. This will be particularly useful in getting large crowds to major events but also encourage additional commercial and residential development within the precinct.

The Sydney Olympic Park Master Plan 2030 (2016 Review) was prepared prior to the announcement of metro rail. We believe the Master Plan should be revisited and updated as a result of the metro rail decision.

Notwithstanding the metro rail decision and its likely commencement of operations being 10 years away, we believe that the light rail is also an important element of a total transport solution for the park.

LIGHT RAIL

Metro rail and light rail should work in conjunction. Both modes will help strengthen patronage throughout the precinct and consideration needs to be given to the vast scale of Sydney Olympic Park and the challenges of getting commuters to the metro rail station.

Presumably there will be only one metro rail stop at the park, however the park covers a size of 640 hectares and light rail will be useful to get commuters to the train station.

By way of comparison, the area of the Park between Kevin Coombes Avenue and Rod Laver Drive is the equivalent footprint covered by Circular Quay to Central which has seven train stations in this area as well as the Light Rail which will be operational in the near future. A similar area covered by the Inner West Light Rail has six stops.

We note that block sizes in Sydney Olympic Park are very large and are far longer than typical blocks in more walkable 19th century downtowns. The park is spread across a large area which makes simply walking to the metro rail station unviable for many people because of time constraints and the distance that would need to be covered. Therefore we believe the light rail is a much needed transport system that will help people travel around the park and to the metro rail.

We urge the NSW Government to build the entire light rail route to Sydney Olympic Park in the first stage.

SHUTTLE BUSES

We note that the Master Plan includes the operation of shuttle buses around the precinct. We would propose that consideration be given to establishing driverless shuttle bus services in Sydney Olympic Park particularly in the precinct that includes Wentworth Point and Newington.

Last mile connections between major public transport hubs, car parks, offices and recreational venues present a major challenge for the precinct.

Traditionally the catchment for public transport varies between 400 metres for bus and light rail to 800 metres for heavy rail or metro. This potential catchment is further impaired by poor weather.

The core of the precinct is at the limits of what is traditionally considered as walkable, with access limited to key neighbouring sites including Wentworth Point, the ferry terminal, the Newington Armory and the Blaxland Waterside Parklands.

In order to improve the attractiveness of the core precinct to businesses and their employees and the adjacent areas to visitors, steps will need to be taken to improve last mile connectivity through the use of improved all-weather walking options, cycling infrastructure and last-mile shuttles.

A driverless shuttle bus is an innovative solution to the 'last mile' problem at Sydney Olympic Park by providing an exciting and attractive mobility solution for people moving between car parks and their office or other destinations in the precinct.

It will also be a key drawcard and attraction for people visiting Sydney Olympic Park and for cultural and recreational events.

The deployment of an autonomous vehicle could further be integrated into the Sydney Olympic Park Authority's science-based education programs for high school students.

By actively demonstrating that autonomous vehicles are useful, safe and real, this trial will help to allay any fears of people currently sceptical and or fearful of driverless vehicles.

Sydney Olympic Park is an ideal location for a trial with a view to running a publically available shuttle service due to its wide boulevards and special event precinct status.

Seamlessly incorporating an electric and autonomous shuttle as part of the Opal integrated transport payment network would provide a ground-breaking opportunity to integrate an autonomous vehicle into the NSW public transport fleet.

The Royal Automobile Club of Western Australia recently commenced a trial of an autonomous shuttle in South Perth, while global public transport operator Keolis has commenced timetabled services with a similar vehicle in Lyon, France.

FERRY ACCESS

Access by water has not been explored by the Master Plan. Increasing ferry services at the Sydney Olympic Park wharf could offer residents and workers an additional avenue to access the park and thereby help to achieve the 40% non-car usage target contained in the Master Plan.

ROAD ACCESS

Increased road usage has exacerbated congestion on the arterial roads around the park, namely Silverwater Road, Parramatta Road, Hill Road, Homebush Bay Drive, and the M4. These roads are already beyond capacity during peak periods. When a major event is hosted this 'beyond capacity' situation is further intensified.

The roundabout at Australia Avenue and Homebush Bay Drive is a significant deterrent in accessing the park. It is already beyond maximum capacity during peak periods and has the reputation as 'Australia's worst roundabout'.

We believe the NSW Government needs to consider several options to alleviate traffic congestion.

While the master plan recommends upgrade of major intersection gateways into the park, we believe that these upgrades need to be guaranteed as part of an integrated transport solution for the precinct.

We also believe the Holker Street Bridge should be duplicated and consideration should be given for cars to be able to access Holker Street throughout the entire precinct. The current road network in Sydney Olympic Park is confusing it provides for poor 'way finding'. Holker Street is the only street that passes through the whole park and it should be available for cars and buses, possibly in separate laneways.

Sydney Olympic Park is currently surrounded by a number of challenging physical barriers that impede access and movement through the park. These include the M4 motorway, the Parramatta River, the walls behind the Silverwater industrial estate and Homebush Bay Drive.

Consideration should be given to creating new connections through each of these in North, South, East and West directions.

Access could also be expanded to include the construction of new bridges across the Parramatta River. A number of groups have suggested a connection from Wentworth Point across Parramatta River to Meadowbank to connect with streets on that side of the river. There may well be other connection points and we need some creative thinking to consider these.

ACTIVATION: A KEY PRIORITY TO ACHIEVE A VIBRANT TOWN CENTRE

We believe activation of Sydney Olympic Park should be a key priority of the Master Plan. Currently the park is very busy during events when large crowds arrive both by rail and road however this activation is transitory and lasts only during and on the shoulder of those major events.

During the week in key places like Olympic Boulevard and Sydney Olympic Park train station surrounds, very low pedestrian counts are perceived. We are concerned that neighbourhoods adjacent to Sydney Olympic Park of Wentworth Point and Newington are not using the park sufficiently.

Some consideration also needs to be made to preserve the park's role as a major event centre. As such noise is a significant issue that has been acknowledged throughout the Master Plan.

The great sporting stadia are located on building templates that provide vast unused spaces in between them. These large open spaces create a sense of isolation and lack of activation. We urge the NSW Government to consider a strategy to redevelop land between these templates to enable an urban, pedestrianised town centre and encourage densification and activation of the precinct.

One of the reasons for the lack of patronage of the park is the insufficient level of retail presence for a precinct of this scale. Retail has not grown strongly in the park because of lack of access and through movement and the inability to stop at points in the park.

Whilst we fully support the proposal to increase the retail potential of park from its current 33,000 square metres to 100,000 square metres, we believe there are also strong opportunities within the lands to the east of Sydney Olympic Park train station.

Therefore we believe that a strategy needs to be developed to encourage further investment in retail.

Olympic Boulevard is a very wide boulevard which unfortunately does not connect with the street network with the park. Unlike the world's great boulevards, Olympic Boulevard is also disconnected from the street system of Sydney. As a result it is not an effective thoroughfare to enable movement through the park.

We believe the NSW Government needs to deliver a clear strategy to maximise activation through the redevelopment of its own land. The NSW Government owns significant land holdings throughout the park but particularly in Olympic Boulevard. Consideration should be given to a strategy to bring this land to market and allow the private sector to find an appropriate land use that is consistent with objectives to the park.

There are 1300 students in the precinct now and the Master Plan indicates this is expected to grow to 5000 in 2030.

The forecast growth in this area seems very conservative. The Australian College of Physical Education alone, is looking to reach 3000 enrolments by the end of 2017. S P Jain School of Global Management also have ambitious enrolment targets and Western Sydney College is currently in the process of setting up their Sydney Olympic Park campus as a pathway course to Western Sydney University. Add in a high school and we anticipate the numbers will be far greater than stated in the Master Plan 2016 review.

Consideration should be given to set aside land use for student housing particularly in the precinct around Olympic Boulevard.

Placing student accommodation within the park will also help activate the park outside of event times as students need places to eat and shop, and entertainment options. They will

also be a valuable casual workforce for events and venues and having onsite accommodation will help facilitate this.

The inclusion of playing fields and courts for community use will also assist in activating the site as well as providing important amenities for the growing residential community within the park and in the neighbouring precincts of Carter Street, Newington, and Wentworth Point.

SUPPORTING SYDNEY OLYMPIC PARK'S COMMERCIAL ROLE

While we support the increase in residential and retail land use as an avenue to activate the precinct, we believe that Sydney Olympic Park's role as a commercial centre, one of the top three office precincts in Sydney needs to be supported.

While we understand that employment numbers have increased, we believe the target of 34,000 jobs underestimates the park's potential.

The Greater Western Sydney's recently released Central West Draft District Plan projects a more ambitious jobs target of 45,000 jobs for Sydney Olympic Park by 2036.

The Master Plan has made significant increases in land uses in residential land use from 575,000m² to 855,000m²; education from 105,000m² to 186,000m², temporary accommodation from 81,000m² to 192,000m² and retail 33,000m² to 100,000m².

We believe the jobs target in the Master Plan should be informed by the Draft District Plan and be revised upward.

To some extent to accommodate residential development, gross floor area for commercial uses has been reduced from existing 479,000m² in the current masterplan to 412,000m² in the Master Plan 2016 Review.

Sydney Olympic Park's important role as a generator of jobs in the western Sydney region and a growing knowledge jobs centre should be supported through setting aside sufficient land use for this purpose.

We believe that residential development should not be at the expense of potential commercial office uses and further reviews of the Master Plan should not erode land use for this function.

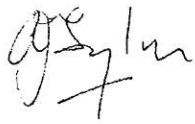
We would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to further discuss proposals recommended in this submission.



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