

Friends of Callan Park

**THE FUTURE OF CALLAN PARK:
A SUGGESTED VISION AND WAY FORWARD**

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1. Introduction

Like Sydney's Royal Botanic Gardens and Centennial Park, Callan Park is a uniquely valuable site and cultural resource that is intensively used and greatly treasured by the local and wider community. Like them, Callan Park needs to be protected for the future by being well maintained and managed in response to community needs and issues.

The present status of Callan Park is not clear, and its future needs to be resolved with the constructive cooperation of all current stakeholders. These include:

- Callan Park Bushcare
- current lessees
- Friends of Callan Park (FOCP)
- the Heritage Council of New South Wales
- Leichhardt Council
- the NSW Minister for Infrastructure and Planning
- the NSW Minister for Tourism and Sport and Recreation
- NSW Health.

2. Friends of Callan Park

Friends of Callan Park (FOCP) was formed in December 1998 in response to community concerns about the future of the Park. It currently has over 800 members.

This document sets out FOCP's vision for the long-term management of Callan Park. An earlier draft was circulated during June–July 2003 to all FOCP members and made widely available within the local community, and feedback was strongly positive.

FOCP's priorities for Callan Park are:

- to maximise the open space within Callan Park for the benefit of the community
- to conserve the historic buildings and landscapes
- to find appropriate uses for the historic buildings that are not inconsistent with the above, or with the values of a major public park
- to maintain the psychiatric hospital on site.

3. What is Callan Park?

Callan Park covers about 61 hectares on the southern side of Iron Cove, on the Parramatta River in Sydney's Inner West. The area was once part of the land of the Wangal people, whose lands extended from present-day Leichhardt to Concord.

In 1839 John Ryan Brenan (the Crown Solicitor) acquired the land and commissioned Mortimer Lewis (the Colonial Architect) to build a house, Garry Owen. In 1841 Brenan bought an additional three acres to the west of his estate, and the following year built Broughton Hall.

In 1873 the Government acquired Callan Park, Garry Owen and the surrounding 104.5 acres in order to build a new lunatic asylum, to be operated according to the enlightened ideas of the American Dr Thomas Kirkbride. The so-called Kirkbride Block was completed in 1885 to the designs of the then Colonial Architect James Barnet. The last psychiatric patients left this complex in 1994. It was then converted for use by the University of Sydney's Sydney College for the Arts, and reopened in 1996.

In 1915 Broughton Hall was donated by its then owners to be used as a convalescent hospital for shell-shocked soldiers returning from World War I. Subsequently it was resumed by Government, and in 1921 became NSW's first psychiatric clinic for volunteer patients. The founder of the clinic, Dr Sydney Evan Jones, established a 25-acre garden which his patients tended as part of their therapy. Large parts of this garden survive. During the 1980s Broughton Hall suffered extensive fire damage, and it has since been boarded up.

Garry Owen House was also used for patients, and later as a training school for nurses. In 1991 it was converted for use as the NSW Writers' Centre.

During the twentieth century many additional facilities and buildings were built on the Callan Park grounds as part of the hospital complex. These include a sports ground, swimming pool, wards, staff residences and a central kitchen and laundry.

In 1976 the Broughton Hall Clinic was amalgamated with the Callan Park Mental Hospital to form the Rozelle Hospital. The hospital now has 250 beds and operates in various buildings scattered across the site.

For well over a century the general public has enjoyed access to the Callan Park grounds for recreation. The site is well established as an important public open space for the community of the Inner West.

Within the wider community there is increasing understanding of the site's cultural significance and social value. Callan Park incorporates many layers of archaeological, Aboriginal, historical, cultural, aesthetic and environmental heritage. It contains many heritage buildings, including the original houses (1839 and 1842) of the two estates on which it is based, and the magnificent Kirkbride Block (completed in 1885). The buildings are surrounded by many significant trees and landscape elements.

Specific heritage sites and elements within Callan Park need to be identified, defined and preserved.

4. Callan Park's recent history

4.1 The Callan Park Act

In May 2002 NSW Health released a Draft Master Plan for the Rozelle Hospital site at Callan Park, which proposed:

- the development of a purpose-built mental health unit at Concord Hospital, which would make the Rozelle Hospital surplus to its needs
- the sale of about 20% of the 61-hectare site for development as two- to four-storey housing
- the creation of a 47-hectare park in which all the significant heritage buildings and gardens would be protected.

In response to widespread community concern, the NSW Parliament passed the Callan Park (Special Provisions) Act 2002 No 139. This was assented to on 24 December 2002. The stated objects of this Act are:

- (a) to ensure that the whole of Callan Park remains in public ownership and subject to public control, and*
- (b) to ensure the preservation of the areas of open space at Callan Park that were in existence immediately before the commencement of this Act, and that extend to and include the foreshore of Iron Cove on the Parramatta River, and*
- (c) to allow public access to that open space, including that foreshore, for public recreational purposes of both an active and a passive nature, and*
- (d) to preserve the heritage significance of Callan Park, including its historic buildings, gardens and other landscape features, and*
- (e) to impose appropriate controls on the future development of Callan Park.*

4.2 Deterioration and vandalism

Due to lack of use and lack of maintenance, many of the historic and other buildings on the site are deteriorating rapidly. The situation invites, and is being exacerbated by, increasing incidences of vandalism.

4.3 Increased community usage

Community usage of Callan Park has increased dramatically, due to a range of factors:

- the NSW Government's policy of urban consolidation, which is increasing the density of urban life and thus the desirability and value of open green spaces
- the nearby development of numerous high-density residential complexes
- increasing community awareness of the health benefits of exercise
- increasing awareness among the wider Sydney community of the Park's cultural values and amenities
- the development of the Bay Run around Iron Cove
- increasing use of the sporting facilities by local clubs and teams
- with the hospital's progressive vacation of buildings, the community's experience and perceptions of the Park have changed so that the former hospital domain is now principally regarded as a space for public access, enjoyment and relaxation.

5. A vision for Callan Park

The primary community benefit and long-term value of Callan Park is as a heritage site for passive recreation. This should be enshrined as the Park's main purpose. It should not be compromised by extensions to the Park's existing active recreational facilities.

We do not see this purpose as being incompatible with the continuance of Rozelle Hospital's existing mental health facilities. The historical association of Callan Park with mental health care is to be respected. However:

- at this point the mental health facilities should not be further extended
- the renovation and reconfiguration of existing buildings should be explored
- consideration should be given to consolidating the mental health facilities into the south-west corner of the Park, where hospital activities are currently concentrated.

Principles

1. Callan Park should become a Regional Park.
2. The best way to implement the objects of the Callan Park Act, the Community Vision outlined by Leichhardt Council (which was informed by wide community consultation) and the views of the FOCP is to establish a publicly funded Trust, to be known as the Callan Park Trust.
3. The Callan Park Trust should become either the legal owner of the Park, or the managing authority acting on behalf of the community.

4. Heritage items of both indigenous and European origins (including middens, buildings, gardens and relics) should be conserved and maintained, and indigenous flora and fauna protected and enhanced.
5. Permissible uses of the site should be limited to those associated with recreation, mental health treatment, education, arts and community activities, and by the capacity of the existing buildings.
6. Inappropriate buildings (ie those without intrinsic heritage significance or mental health use) should be removed from Callan Park, so that larger spaces and vistas can be opened up.
7. Vehicular traffic should be minimised and controlled, and pedestrian traffic given priority.
8. Callan Park should be carefully integrated with King George Oval, Leichhardt Park and all adjoining areas of open space – especially along the shore of Iron Cove.

6. Zoning and planning framework

Most of the zoning that surrounds Callan Park is Residential.

Since the County of Cumberland Plan of 1951, the Callan Park area has been zoned for Special Uses. In 2000 the Leichhardt Local Environmental Plan changed the zoning to Public Purpose.

The site is subject to State Environmental Planning Policy No 56 – Sydney Harbour Foreshores and Tributaries (SEPP 56).

Since the Callan Park Act, planning for the Park has been shared between Leichhardt Council and the Minister for Infrastructure and Planning. The division of responsibility is unclear.

Principles

9. Appropriate statutory controls be drafted for the site that reflect an agreed landuse strategy.
10. Responsibility for planning for Callan Park should be clarified.

7. Arrangements with existing leaseholders

Current leaseholders include:

- Just Enough Faith
- NSW Ambulance Service
- NSW Writers' Centre
- Rozelle Child Care Centre
- Rozelle Hospital
- Sudden Infant Death Association NSW
- University of Sydney's Sydney College of the Arts.

Principles

11. Until a Trust has been constituted and a management plan completed:
 - all existing lease arrangements should be respected
 - no further lease commitments should be entered into
 - no new buildings should be constructed.
12. Arrangements with existing leaseholders should be reviewed in the light of Principle 7 above.
13. Leasing arrangements should be transferred to the Callan Park Trust, as the landlord.
14. If the Rozelle Hospital remains within the Callan Park precinct, various issues need to be addressed, including:
 - the removal of inappropriate buildings and the consolidation of hospital activities into the buildings that have heritage significance
 - the legal and administrative arrangements between Rozelle Hospital and the Callan Park Trust.

8. Historic buildings and gardens

8.1 Significance

Callan Park is a place of national significance, for:

- the surviving evidence of its rich history, including Aboriginal occupation; the remains of the buildings, gardens and grounds of two significant colonial houses; and many exceptionally fine buildings associated with its long use as a mental hospital
- the large amount of open space it contains in an otherwise densely populated area, and the remains of several important gardens and many large and significant trees
- the opportunity it presents for the conservation of important built and environmental assets, and for the provision of public open space on a north-facing slope overlooking Iron Cove.

8.2 Present condition

Many of the important historic buildings are empty, neglected and rapidly deteriorating. Roofing materials have been dislodged, allowing water to penetrate interiors and causing damage that will be expensive to repair. Drainage systems are becoming dysfunctional, causing further problems. In some instances fires have caused extensive damage. Vehicular traffic has caused considerable damage to garden structures and vegetation, particularly around Broughton Hall.

Almost all empty buildings have been subject to extensive vandalism.

The grounds are in relatively good condition, and the 24-hour operation of Rozelle Hospital and the regular security patrols provided by the hospital and the University of Sydney have helped to ensure this. However, some of the more structured landscapes – such as the garden elements once belonging to Broughton Hall – have deteriorated and are in need of urgent and specialised attention.

Principles

15. Emergency work should be undertaken to prevent any further deterioration to existing historic buildings.
16. Urgent work should be undertaken to prevent further deterioration of the Broughton Hall garden.

9. The preferred management option

As stated above, FOCP believes that the best way to effectively manage the entire property is to establish a Trust.

Principles

17. A Callan Park Trust, similar to both the Centennial Park Trust and the Parramatta Park Trust, should be established by Act of Parliament in accordance with national and international best practice models for the management of major cultural and recreational facilities. It should consist of nine members with expertise in:
 - park management
 - cultural heritage management
 - local community affairs
 - landscape history
 - finance
 - planning law.

18. The Callan Park Trust should be responsible to the NSW Minister for Sport and Recreation, who should appoint a Director recommended by the Trust.
19. The objects of the Callan Park Trust should be:
 - to maintain and improve Trust lands
 - to encourage the use and enjoyment of Trust lands by the public – by promoting and increasing the recreational, historical, scientific, educational, cultural and environmental value of the lands
 - to maintain the right of the public to use the lands
 - to define and respect the usage rights of lessees
 - to ensure the protection of the environment within the Trust lands.
20. The broad functions of the Callan Park Trust should be:
 - to develop a Management Plan for the Park for the approval of the Minister for Sport and Recreation, and to implement the Plan
 - to establish a Community Consultative Committee that will report directly to the Trust
 - to control and manage the Park
 - to permit uses, and impose appropriate conditions, on any activities that are not inconsistent with the objects of the Trust
 - to establish specialist committees to assist the Trust in the exercise of its functions
 - to enter into any commercial arrangements that are not inconsistent with the objects of the Trust
 - to employ a Director and staff in accordance with the Public Sector Management Act
 - to develop by-laws that are not inconsistent with the objects of the Trust
 - to develop a mechanism to regularly review and coordinate the events, calendars and access needs of tenants, and clarify management interface issues
 - to prepare an Annual Report of its activities.
21. The Trust should meet in open session, and encourage community participation in its decision-making processes and activities.

10. Interim management arrangement

FOCP recognises that the establishment of the Trust is likely to take several years. If the Park is left unprotected during this period it will continue to deteriorate, and actions may be taken that prove contrary to the Park's long-term interests. An interim mechanism for making decisions about Callan Park is therefore urgently needed.

Given that the Minister for Infrastructure and Planning is responsible for the Callan Park Act, FOCP believes that the Minister for Infrastructure and Planning should facilitate the establishment of a Callan Park Trust, and as a matter of priority should work with Leichhardt Council to implement a Development Control Plan as an interim arrangement.

Principles

22. The Minister for Infrastructure and Planning and Leichhardt Council should develop and implement a Development Control Plan for Callan Park, to guide its management until such time as a Trust is established and a long-term management plan is adopted.
23. FOCP seeks to have the principles set out in this document endorsed by Leichhardt Council and the Minister for Infrastructure and Planning.
24. FOCP calls on the Minister for Infrastructure and Planning to facilitate the establishment of the Callan Park Trust as a matter of priority.