

# Newsletter

June 2008



The Friends meet on the first Monday of the month in the Writers' Centre in Callan Park. Next meeting is July 7. All welcome. **Information**

**NEWS** A recommendation to sign a deal with Sydney University over the proposed 5 ovals at Callan Park came before Council at its May meeting. Under the deal Council would get two ovals (the existing ones on the foreshore) – the University three, including a new synthetic field, located right on the foreshore of Iron Cove.

## ***Let the people decide***

The deal between Leichhardt Council and the University of Sydney over the sporting ovals at Callan Park now hangs in the balance.

In dramatic circumstances at Council's meeting on May 27, Labor councilors requested an adjournment and then joined their Green colleagues in deferring any decision until Council's June 24 meeting. Both groups of councilors expressed the hope of finding a consensus position that would keep the community united in opposing Frank Sartor's plans for Callan Park. Councilor Hannaford (Lib) took a similar position.

Trouble is the current Mayor, Carolyn Allen, and some staff are sticking to the deal, in the belief that almost anything is justified to get Council's hands on the two foreshore ovals.

**FOCP's position is that the sporting ovals – like everything else at Callan Park – should be part of a master planning process that allows everyone to have a genuine say about the future of the whole of Callan Park. If Leichhardt Council wants to do a deal with the University over the ovals ahead of a proper master plan, then at least put the deal on public exhibition to gauge community response.**

There's plenty of time because local users have been guaranteed use of one and possibly two of the "Council claimed" ovals through 2009 – and SHFA is unlikely to ever exclude locals.

The Friends believe the current deal has four drawbacks:

### **It would undermine the community.**

The community - in various ways - has shown its opposition to the proposed University takeover at Callan Park. Even the government's own push poll showed a majority against the takeover and it's far from a done deal, as the University itself admits.

So why is the Council negotiating with the University as though the latter has a right to dispose of Callan Park ovals? Certainly this is what Frank Sartor wants Council to do, but there has been no community approval of this backroom dealing.

### **It would be contrary to Open Council.**

Leichhardt Council is justly renowned for its openness and for encouraging public participation in decisions. Why now depart from this tradition?

### **It is bad planning.**

The deal accepts a third oval on the waterfront – where the veterans cottages now are. The University proposes to build a fenced-in, synthetic-surface field here, right on the foreshore of a heritage site, and the Council has accepted this. But there are other alternatives for this area – continued veterans wards, or landscaping with the creek restored or

### **A sporting chance for the people ...**

If you want the public to have the chance to decide these issues, please come to the Council meeting on

**Tuesday, June 24, at 7pm  
upstairs at Leichhardt  
Town Hall**

(Note there will also be Callan Park Taskforce meeting to discuss this deal at 5pm the same night in the conference room downstairs at Leichhardt Town Hall. All welcome.)

You can also contact the mayor Carolyn Allen 0439 432885 and Councillor Alice Murphy (Labor) 0407 296073.

a city farm. Such are the merits of all these options, that public consideration of the advantages of each is required – not an attempt to pre-empt alternatives by the University and Council.

### **And it's simply a bad deal**

Of the 5 proposed ovals, the deal only delivers 2 to the Council. Yes, the others will have local access but that will be at the ultimate say-so of the University. ***Surely there should be priority for local teams and current users for ALL ovals.***

The Friends' position, decided at the last monthly meeting, is that if Council is determined to pursue a deal (despite all the convincing arguments against it) then at least put it on public exhibition before Council accepts or rejects it.

- Hall Greenland, for Friends of Callan Park

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## **Hotline**

SHFA have set up a hotline for residents and visitors to Callan Park who want to report something or make a suggestion.

**1300 22 55 26**

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## ***University secrecy over Callan Park***

In rejecting Friends of Callan Park's Freedom of Information request for details of the university's negotiations with the state government over Callan Park, the University of Sydney has hidden behind the usual exemptions available under the Act.

Over 99% of the relevant documents have been refused release as 'Cabinet in confidence' or 'not in the public interest' or 'confidential to the university's internal workings'. This behaviour is scarcely befitting an institution supposedly committed to the free flow of information and open, informed debate.

Nevertheless, there are some important revelations in the letter from the University registrar and the handful of documents released:

- The university's stated aim was for 2000 students living on Callan Park and 20,000 day students in the original versions of the Memorandum of Understanding with the state government. These figures were deleted in later versions and the university now talks of 'minimum' numbers - 700 living on campus and 5000 day students, But the earlier figure confirms the suspicions of both the Balmain Association and the Friends that the university's proposed building program would accommodate significantly more than the minimum.
- The university was part of a shadowy 'Callan Park Interagency Working Group' making recommendations to the state cabinet. Its minutes and advice have been withheld. The existence, let alone the workings, of this group was not revealed to the public members of the Community Reference Panel which was set up last year 'to monitor' the planning process at Callan Park. It confirms that this Community Reference Panel was just window dressing.
- Negotiations to lease the bulk of Callan Park for 99-years to the university are continuing (and despite promises from minister Frank Sartor, there has never been any report to the Community Reference Panel on these negotiations).
- From the beginning of negotiations, despite later public assurances, there was an understanding by the university and state government that the Callan Park (Special Provisions) Act of 2002 would need major amendment if the university takeover and expansion was to occur.

These revelations confirm the validity of the community's continued opposition to the Frank Sartor/University of Sydney deal to take over Callan Park. FOCP will be attempting to have more of the hundreds of documents involved released.

FOCP has also contacted the University to apply for an appointment with the new Vice-Chancellor Michael Spence in the hope that he will not be so attached to the takeover plans for Callan Park as his predecessor.

- See FOCP's website [www.callanpark.com](http://www.callanpark.com) for full details of the letter from the Registrar and the documents released.

All correspondence, donations, renewals of membership should be sent to  
Friends of Callan Park, 17 North Avenue, Leichhardt NSW 2040