



FRIENDS OF CALLAN PARK
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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

As usual the past year recorded some encouraging developments but also some very dangerous ones too.

THE DRAFT PLAN OF MANAGEMENT BY THE GREATER SYDNEY PARKLANDS

This plan for the whole of Callan Park and Broughton Hall went on exhibition this year and was in general very positive. The architects of this plan:

- Acknowledged Callan Park's importance to First Nations forebears
- Respected the fact that it is a uniquely valuable heritage landscape
- Accepted its function as a place for both general well-being and mental health services, and
- Emphasised the natural values and beauty of the site

All that was very welcome. However, the old bugbear of raising money from Callan Park was still present and the accompanying Access, Movement and Parking Strategy needed more work as it expanded traffic and parking in Callan Park rather than limiting both and keeping them to the perimeter.

The Greater Sydney Parklands received a grant of \$4.8 million in the state budget to be spent on demolishing buildings in the centre of Callan Park to expand the open space in line with the Landscape Structure Plan adopted five years ago. Despite this grant – and the continuing restoration work at Kirkbride – the under-investment in Callan Park continues.

CHALLENGES

The Labor majority on the Inner West Council remains a problem. Principally because they appear to see Callan Park as a greenfield site open for any development. While it is encouraging that the Council adopted a Biodiversity Strategy this year that nominated Callan Park as a key biodiversity sanctuary, we are yet to see this guide Council's attitude to the site.

Confirmation of these discouraging attitudes is the impending Development Application from Council for two plastic grass sporting fields: Waterfront Oval, near Iron Cove and Balmain Road Field. We expect this DA to be advertised any day now. A public exhibition over Christmas-New Year is far from ideal. On this timetable, the DA will go to the Independent Planning Panel in February or March. Under the Callan Park (Special Provisions) Act 2002 Council, not the Minister, is the consent authority for DAs – a power that Council has delegated to the Planning Panel.

FOCP worked closely with the Natural Turf Alliance during the year and together presented a community forum, "Synthetic Grass or Natural Grass" at Writing NSW in July. There was a terrific turn up and Cat Carver (NTA), Rob Hanna, Daniel Haigh (Callan Park Dog Lovers), Dr Mick Battam (Soil Specialist), and Statistician, John Stamolis and Paul Power (FOCP) brought their expertise to the forum.

The Friends will naturally keep the community informed of the heritage, environmental and health damage such plastic turf fields entail and encourage public opinion to mobilise to stop this development. The better alternative to these synthetic fields is to upgrade the existing fields with **best-practice natural turf surfaces and an ongoing program of best standards of management and maintenance**. And as an added benefit for all the community - this alternative will be less expensive for residents and the fields will remain accessible to all.

PTO

Council is also intent on proceeding with the tidal pool situated off the western edge of Callan Point despite its many problems – water quality, protection of First Nations heritage sites, safety, interference with the rowing course etc. The Friends raised these issues in their submission to the public exhibition and will seek to discuss them with the Independent Planning Panel when it meets to consider the proposal. (FOCP's submission is on our website)

THE MOST SERIOUS DANGER: WEAKENING THE CALLAN PARK (SPECIAL PROVISIONS) ACT 2002

The parliamentary committee that conducted the review of the Greater Sydney Parklands Act 2022 reported back in June and basically adopted the recommendations of the GSP submission. As regards Callan Park, **the committee recommended changing the Callan Park (Special Provisions) Act to allow commercial activities by for-profit bodies (currently only permissible for arts and music events) and to strip out vital protections and transparency provisions from the Act.**

The state government is scheduled to respond with its intentions by the end of this year. The danger is that the government will move to implement the changes.

A LOSS: Margaret Armstrong who served as our Treasurer for more than a decade died this year and we certainly miss her critical intelligence, her frankness, her good humour and her close attention to what happens on a daily basis at Callan Park.

FINALLY – CELEBRATING CALLAN PARK'S HISTORY

The executive continues to work together for the best outcomes for this great cultural landscape or heritage vistas and buildings. Friends conduct regular tours for which there seems to be an inexhaustible demand. A continuing disappointment is that there is no public access to Kirkbride. We appreciate access in History Week and the tour lead by James Rongen-Hall in September – and the GSP is certainly aware of our lobbying to have this heritage wonder opened up on a regular basis.

While on the subject of Kirkbride, we marked History Week with a wonderful talk by Dr Sarah Luke on the early life of Dr Frederic Norton Manning, Inspector-General of the Insane in NSW, who was principally responsible, with James Barnet, for the existence of Kirkbride.

Other landmarks on Callan Park include two war memorials – 1925 Callan Park War Memorial and the 1931 Sydney Harbour Bridge War Memorial which Roslyn Burge has written about in FOCP's latest publication *Callan Park's Veterans: A century of connections*, and presented an illustrated talk for Heritage Festival about *Callan Park's Diggers: discovering their stories*.

Heather Jones (Dark Tales Inner West Sydney) generously lead a historic walking tour of Callan Park and spoke on local radio about the history of Callan Park, and we recognise the ongoing generosity of Dr Sarah Luke who has led historic tours year after year.

Pat Rodgers came to the August meeting to tell us about the excellent book he and Peter Lloyd wrote about the significant cricketer and Callan Park Attendant, *Bert Folkard, the Pride of Callan Park*.

Many people contact FOCP about academic and family history projects – all of whom are helped along the way. Roslyn Burge, Heather Jones, Dr Sarah Luke, Ted Moxon (who has published two volumes of his chronicles of Callan Park) together with Pat Rodgers and Peter Lloyd continue to enrich our knowledge of the history of Callan Park.

This knowledge makes us all the more determined to protect what is a national treasure.



Hall Greenland
President