

Resolution of Council

17 February 2025

Item 3.3

City of Sydney's Proposal for Wentworth Park

Minute by the Lord Mayor

To Council:

Wentworth Park was proclaimed in 1885 and is currently dominated by a greyhound racing track and grandstand which dissects this significant public parkland.

The former NSW Government committed to return all of Wentworth Park as public open space for the growing community when the greyhound lease expires in 2027. This was envisaged in the Pyrmont Peninsula Place Strategy to plan for future growth.

I am extremely concerned that the NSW Government is considering reversing the former Government's commitment by allowing greyhound racing to continue at Wentworth Park. Considering the former NSW Government's commitment, in 2019, the City of Sydney in consultation with the community, developed a vision for the park when the greyhound lease expires and the land is returned to the community as public open parkland.

Overwhelmingly, the community supported removing the greyhound racing track and associated parking and grandstand to create more public parkland. People told us they want to connect to nature, have a place for exercise and play that supports social activity and a place that is easy to move through.

Pyrmont Peninsula Place Strategy

In December 2020, the NSW Government finalised the Pyrmont Peninsula Place Strategy (PPPS) which provides a 20-year plan for growth, including 23,000 jobs and 4,000 homes.

One of the actions in the Place Strategy is to facilitate the return of the Wentworth Park as newly activated, publicly accessible open space to support the planned growth when the greyhound lease expires in 2027. When consolidated, Wentworth Park would provide 125,000 square metres of public open space, similar in size to Hyde Park.

In February 2024, notwithstanding the previous NSW Government commitment about the greyhound race track as well as future planning for the Pyrmont Peninsula, the Minister for Lands and Property, Steve Kamper, and the Minister for Gaming and Racing, David Harris, have considered supporting Greyhound Racing NSW and the Greyhound Breeders, Owners and Trainers Association's proposal to extend its lease after it expires in 2027.

This would reverse the commitment made to the community and the City by the former NSW Government, that the parkland would be returned to the community to meet the public open space requirements of the adopted PPPS.

I have previously written to the NSW Government urging the honouring of the formal commitment to remove greyhound racing from Wentworth Park and return the parkland to the public as part of the PPPS. I have also requested NSW Government Ministers meet to discuss their plans for this important public parkland. Even though meetings with greyhound racing groups have been held, Government Ministers have not agreed to meet with the City.

Blackwattle Bay State Significant Precinct

In 2021, Infrastructure NSW (INSW) lodged a State Significant Precinct (SSP) rezoning proposal for the current Fish Market site. The proposal was a gross overdevelopment of the site with inadequate public open space to support the proposed density.

The City's review argued the need for the return of Wentworth Park as public open space as proposed in the PPPS. In response, the NSW Government reduced the scale of the project along with a commitment to investigate the return of Wentworth Park based on the PPPS.

In July 2024, in response to the NSW Government's new housing targets, INSW is planning to increase density from 1,200 to around 1,500 new homes. This increase reinforces the need for the return of Wentworth Park to meet growing demand.

Ultimo Pyrmont Planning Proposal

The City has been tasked by the NSW Government to deliver 18,900 new private homes by July 2029.

The City's draft Ultimo Pyrmont Planning Proposal can deliver up to 4,100 additional homes for 8,000 people and space for 23,000 jobs. Following 2 years of planning and early consultation, the proposal was placed on formal public exhibition in late-2024 and will soon be reported to Council with a final recommendation.

The proposal is a direct response to Direction 9 of the PPPS, which focuses on housing growth and opportunities for more social and affordable rental housing in residential areas including around Wentworth Park.

Returning Wentworth Park to the public and removing the greyhound racing track, its stand, carparking, and surrounding infrastructure ensures open space to support this increase in density, rather than the NSW Government having to purchase costly private land for this purpose.

If the NSW Government allows greyhound racing to remain at Wentworth Park beyond 2027, it may jeopardise the urgent delivery of housing in this area. It will require the Ultimo Pyrmont Planning Proposal, the associated Contributions Plan and increased density to be reconsidered. The NSW Government and the City may also need to consider providing the required alternative open space in locations currently proposed for housing.

It is also critical that the NSW Government invests in additional and expanded active and public transport options in the area to meet the growing demand for more light rail, bus and ferry services, as well as safe walking and separated cycling connections. This includes essential upgrades to the L1 light rail line noting the operator's investigations into ways to achieve this.

Animal welfare

This parkland should be for the benefit of the wider community, not for the exclusive use of an industry that has admitted to killing up to 17,000 healthy dogs each year, has been shown to live-bait, and causes real problems and suffering for people with a gambling problem. Reforms introduced by former NSW Governments have not improved animal welfare. It was devastating when the former NSW Government backflipped on its decision to ban greyhound racing in 2017.

Since 2020, 36 dogs have been killed and 1,576 injured at Wentworth Park. The number of dogs killed does not include the many who are put down because of their injuries. In 2024, 5 dogs were killed and 391 dogs injured at Wentworth Park, which is truly heartbreaking. The greyhound racing track at Wentworth Park recorded the sixth-highest number of injuries in Australia in 2024. This year alone, there have already been 16 greyhound deaths and 1,240 injured across Australia.

Following damning reports by former Greyhound Racing NSW Chief Veterinary Officer, Dr. Alex Brittan, greyhound racing is subject to an Inquiry by the Greyhound Welfare and Integrity Commission. The Commissioner's report is due on 30 April 2025. To progress or further investigate any proposal to retain greyhound racing at Wentworth Park before that report is irresponsible.

COUNCILLOR CLOVER MOORE AO

Lord Mayor

Moved by the Chair (the Lord Mayor) –

It is resolved that:

(A) Council note that:

- (i) in 2022, the City of Sydney consulted with the community and developed a community vision for Wentworth Park for when the greyhound lease expires and the land is returned to the public;
- (ii) the NSW Government's Pyrmont Peninsula Place Strategy provides a 20-year plan for housing and jobs growth and commits to facilitating the return of Wentworth Park to support this growth;
- (iii) the new Sydney Fish Market and proposed redevelopment of the current Fish Market site into housing will have significant impacts on the local community around Wentworth Park;
- (iv) in response to the Pyrmont Peninsula Place Strategy, the City of Sydney developed draft planning controls to deliver the housing and jobs growth outlined in the strategy; and

- (v) the City of Sydney remains opposed to the cruel practice of greyhound racing;
- (B) the Chief Executive Officer be requested to:
 - (i) develop a concept plan for a reunited Wentworth Park in response to the community consultation and vision;
 - (ii) incorporate the impact of the new Sydney Fish Market and proposed housing development at the current Fish Market site and the associated impacts on local residents in the development of the City's concept plan;
 - (iii) promote the City's proposal through its various communication channels; and
 - (iv) allocate appropriate resources in the 2025/26 budget;
- (C) the Lord Mayor be requested to write to:
 - (i) the Minister for Agriculture, Tara Moriarty, and the Minister for Local Government, Ron Hoenig, who are responsible for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979 reiterating Council's longstanding concerns about the cruel practice of greyhound racing at Wentworth Park; and
 - (ii) the Minister for Roads and Transport, John Graham, about investment needed in additional and augmented active and public transport options including the L1 light rail, to support planned growth around Wentworth Park; and
- (D) when the City's concept plan is finalised, the Lord Mayor be requested to write to:
 - (i) the Premier, Chris Minns, the Minister for Lands and Property, Steve Kamper, the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces, Paul Scully, and the Minister for Gaming and Racing, David Harris, to request a meeting to present the City's proposal and consultation report; and
 - (ii) the Federal Member for Sydney, Tanya Plibersek, and the NSW Member for Balmain, Kobi Shetty, with a copy of the City's proposal asking for their support.

The Minute, as varied by consent, was carried unanimously.

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