



PRESERVING OUR HERITAGE

PO Box 85, Hunters Hill, NSW 2110

www.huntershilltrust.org.au

FAO: The Mayor, Councillors & General Manager

SUBMISSION FOR FIGTREE PARK - NSW PUBLIC SPACES LEGACY PROGRAM

The Hunters Hill Trust is responding to Council's invitation to provide feedback and suggestions regarding the NSW Public Spaces Legacy Program Grant for Figtree Park.

Figtree Park is highly valued by locals as a 'green oasis'. It provides a place for passive and active enjoyment and an open-air refuge for all age groups. Far from being 'underutilised', as Council's own research has shown, it is in fact in constant use for quiet relaxation, recreation, exercise, dog walking and socializing. This has been particularly important during the pandemic.

One of the major requirements for the many young families who frequent the park is the need for play equipment for their pre-school children. Older children are already provided for with the new play space at the Priory and playgrounds at Boronia Park, Church Street, High Street and Hillcrest Avenue, in addition to the Skatepark. Therefore a small play park for the very young, reinstated in its previous location to ensure no encroachment on the limited amount of open space, would be very well received.

Noise reducing dense planting and perhaps earth mounds where appropriate as well as safety fencing should be installed along Ryde Road to maximize the usability of the green space and in addition, there is a need for more shade trees, picnic tables and seating. A key goal of the State Strategic Plan for Crown Land 2031 is to manage open spaces for climate change resilience, so maintaining and enhancing Figtree Park with porous grassed areas, increased biodiversity, tree cover and rainwater capture will satisfy this requirement and the needs of park users.

The necessity for a toilet block has not been strongly identified in community consultations, especially not one of the scale envisaged in the Council proposal. There is concern that this type of structure will attract vandalism and graffiti and require ongoing maintenance. However if there is a proven need for more facilities, an option to make the toilets in the community hall available to the public could be explored.

Limiting lighting around the perimeter of the park is acceptable but if the suggestion is that lighting should be erected inside the area, then there could be unintended consequences. Apart from the disruption to our nocturnal native wildlife, after hours use of the park with the inevitable problems of increased noise, rubbish and noisy gatherings could affect residents, as housing is in close proximity to the Park. Families with young children and those in the Respite Centre and care homes could be adversely affected. The use of the Croquet Club after 8pm is not allowed for this very reason.

Figtree Park is not an appropriate location for 'events' - open green space is limited and the all-grass surface churns into mud very easily. Parking is already impossible in the area and event traffic is likely to cause major congestion. Other nearby and much larger parkland areas are already well positioned to hold the many local events that the community enjoys.

In relation to the proposed additional concrete paths and artwork - with the exception of restoring the fountain donated by the Rotary Club - the Trust does not see any need to clutter this beautiful space with unnecessary infrastructure and additional items requiring maintenance into the future.

Hunters Hill is fortunate to have a well-maintained croquet lawn, said to be the best in Sydney, as part of the crown land of Figtree Park. The Croquet Club plays an important role in the community, teaching this strategic sport to schools and introducing enthusiastic locals to a new skill. Its historic hall is used by many groups and the community treasures this little gem of quiet enjoyment. The Trust and its members congratulate Council on their clear intention, as expressed in its Grant application, to retain this significant landmark.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alister Sharp'.

Dr Alister Sharp
President
Hunters Hill Trust