

Moore Park Golf Course parkland conversion proposal



Submission
October 2023

The City of Sydney acknowledges the Gadigal of the
Eora Nation as the Traditional Custodians of our local area.

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Aerial view of Moore Park Golf Course adjacent to growing residential communities to the west



Moore Park Golf Course

Key message

A transformation is taking place in Sydney in the areas neighbouring Moore Park.

Once industrial land, the area is increasingly devoted to high density housing with a population that will continue to grow.

In the face of increasing need for open space to support increased density, it's time to reconsider whether an 18-hole golf course remains the best use of precious public parkland.

Since 1995, it has been the policy of successive State Governments to increase housing in the Green Square urban renewal area.

By 2040, up to 80,000 more people will be living in the Green Square and Waterloo area within two kilometres of Moore Park.

It is imperative for such a growing community to have access to open space with parkland that is commensurate to its needs. Moore Park is clearly the solution.

However, over generations, much of the land originally set aside for parkland at Moore Park has been alienated for other purposes.

Our proposal involves the golf course having a smaller footprint reconfigured as a 9-hole course retaining its popular driving range. It would release 18.7 hectares of precious parkland for community open space.

When space at Moore Park was allocated for a golf course in 1913, surrounding land was predominantly industrial. It now borders one of the most densely populated communities in Australia.

And the City of Sydney is working with developers to create community facilities and small parks, playgrounds and a sports field. All are excellent but they can't provide the same recreational opportunities as open parkland.

The NSW Government must deliver the necessary State infrastructure for this growing community including access to parkland.

Reconfiguring the Moore Park Golf Course comes at a time when, in other parts of the world, 18-hole courses are being slimmed down to a modern 9-hole format.

This report recommends the Greater Sydney Parklands reduce the course from 18 holes to nine, making an area of parkland available for a range of community uses for a larger number of people.

Importantly, this proposal would see the club retain the larger portion of the land including its clubhouse, depots, car parking and the popular driving range.

It must also be recognised that as a sport, golf is well catered for in the district with 12 courses, including six that are accessible to the general public, located within a 10-kilometre radius of Moore Park.

In getting the balance of community green space needs right, we have to rethink how we use all of our scarce open space.

St Peters, Erskineville, Alexandria and Newtown have easy access to the wonderful Sydney Park. Paddington and Randwick residents have easy access to Centennial Park.

Under this proposal, Redfern, Waterloo and Green Square residents would have the same easy access to public parkland but at the moment, all they see are high fences covered in danger signs.

For the thousands of people moving into apartments in the Green Square urban renewal area, Moore Park is their "backyard".

It is now the NSW Government's turn to provide much needed open space for this fast-growing community.

Access to green spaces and parks is also good for the economy. People with access to recreational opportunities and natural beauty are more likely to be satisfied with their surroundings and lifestyle.

This can lead to a happier and more productive workforce, making it easier for businesses to attract and retain talented employees.

Overall, we see this as a question of equity for all and for putting our public land to its best use in the community interest.



Clover Moore AO
Lord Mayor of Sydney



Bob Carr
former Premier of New South Wales



Paul Nicolaou
Executive Director at Business Sydney

Introduction

It is time to prioritise the needs of the growing local community.

Founded 150 years ago, Moore Park is one of Australia's most significant parks. It includes distinctive landscapes, heritage features and 115 hectares of public open space.

At around 45 hectares, Moore Park Golf Course encompasses a significant area of that precious green space with an 18-hole facility, club house, golf driving range, carparking and maintenance depot.

By comparison, the City of Sydney's largest park Sydney Park in St Peter, is approximately 43 hectares.

When space was allocated for a golf course back in 1913 the surrounding land use was predominantly industrial. Now it borders one of the most densely populated communities in Australia.

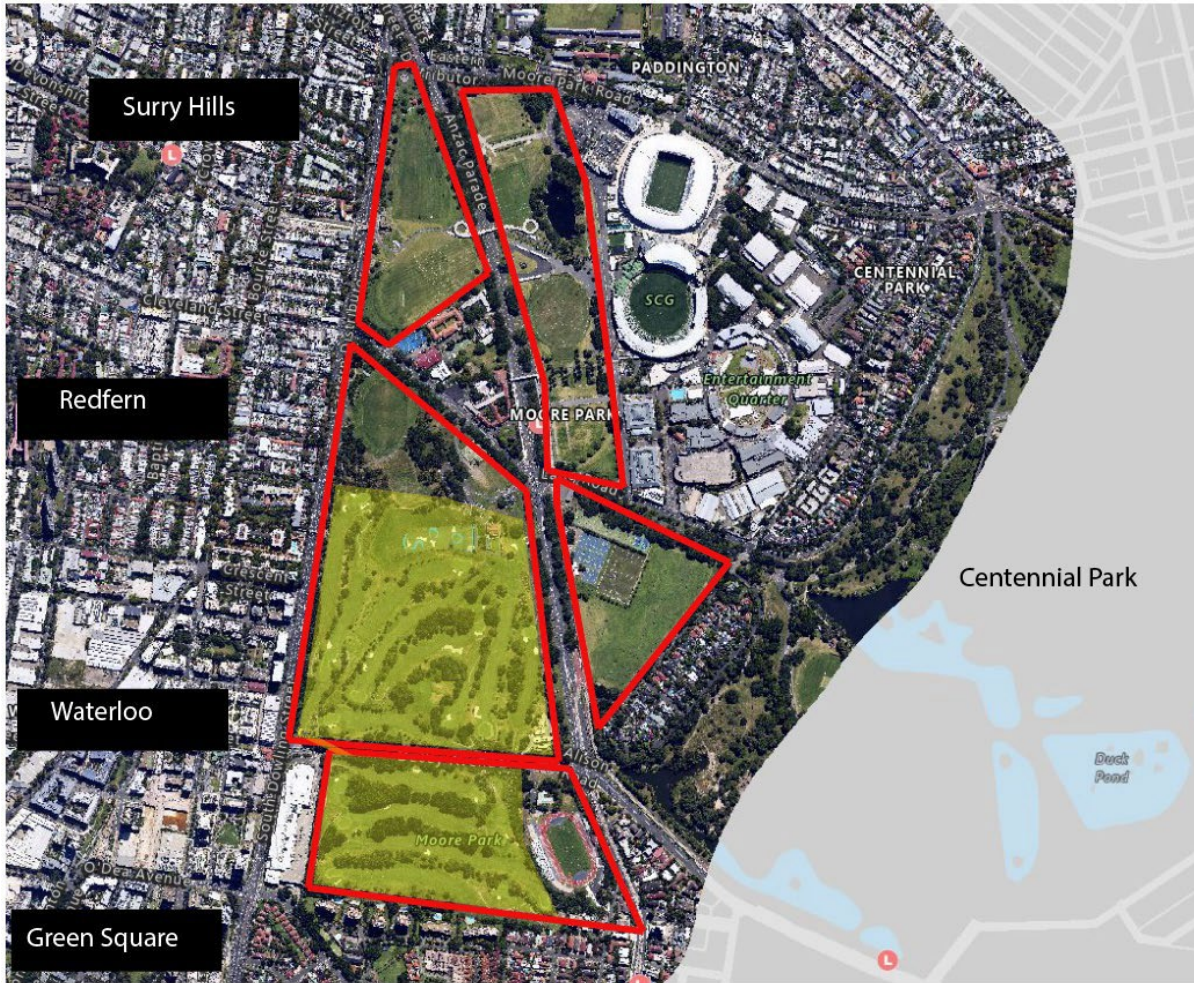
By 2040, there will be up to 80,000 residents within two kilometres of Moore Park.

Golf requires a huge amount of green space, exclusive of other recreational opportunities. As surrounding density increases so does demand for open space, meaning it has never been a better time to rethink Moore Park Golf Course's contribution to the recreational needs of the area.

The City of Sydney's strategic plan Sustainable Sydney 2030-2050 Continuing the Vision includes The Green City project idea of unlocking existing Crown Land at Moore Park for wider public use.

Our proposal is not to lock out golfers, but to reconfigure the course from 18 holes to nine, which would return up to 18 hectares to public parkland for general recreation, leaving the golfers with at least 25 hectares, the clubhouse, depots, parking and the popular driving range.

The report clearly illustrates the urgency for more publicly accessible green space based on population growth, recreation participation trends, community research, strategic planning directions and ease of implementing the proposal.



- Moore Park green space (115ha)
- Moore Park golf course (45ha)

History

Sydney Common

In 1811 Governor Lachlan Macquarie made a bequest of 405 hectares of land, known as the Sydney Common.

To meet the public's demands, Sydney City Council dedicated 378 acres (153 hectares) of the north-west section of Sydney Common as a space for public recreation.

The area was named Moore Park in 1867 after Charles Moore, the Mayor of Sydney City Council 1867-1869.

The area now known as Moore Park was part of Sydney Common.

The green open space component of Moore Park is now approximately 115 hectares. Over the years, Moore Park has endured a history of encroachment and alienation of green space due to development, professional sport, the Eastern Distributor, Tibby Cotter Bridge and light rail.

It is imperative to protect what's left of Lachlan Macquarie's 1811 Sydney Common bequest.

Moore Park Golf Course

A 9-hole golf course known as the Moore Park Municipal Golf Links opened in 1913.

In 1922, the course doubled in size to 18 holes with the acquisition of land on the southern side of Dacey Avenue and became Moore Park Golf Course.

In 1996, a three-tiered all weather driving range was added as part of the club's facilities.



Sydney Common boundary (Dictionary of Sydney)



Moore Park Golf Course circa 1930s (City of Sydney Archives)

The proposal

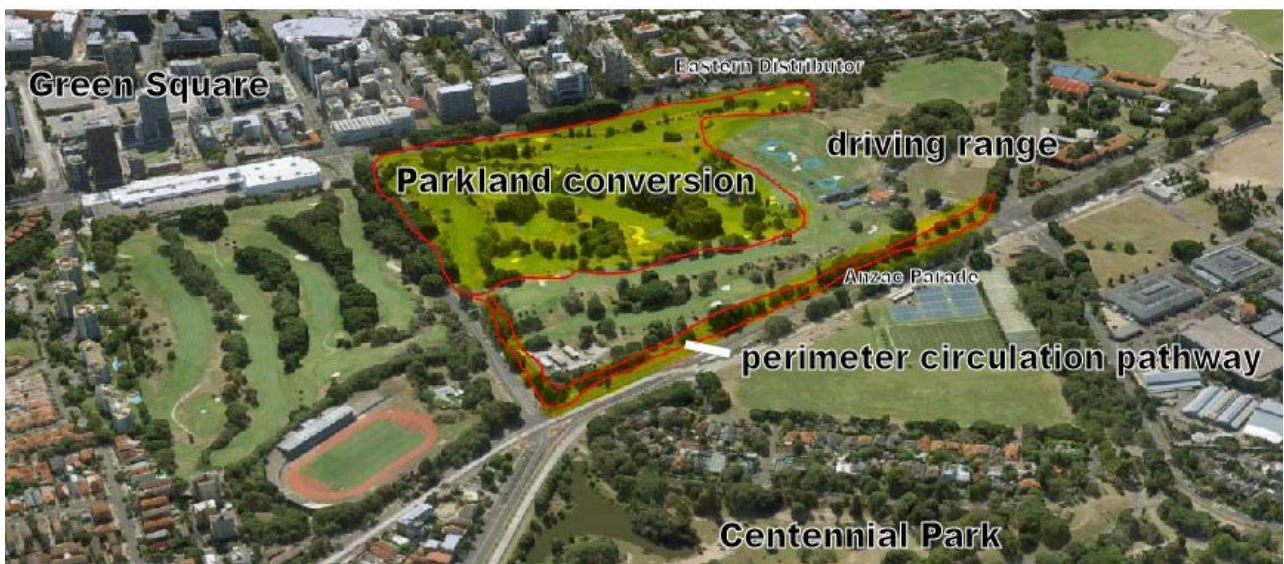
The proposal provides the opportunity for Moore Park to respond to the demands of 21st century recreation and population pressures

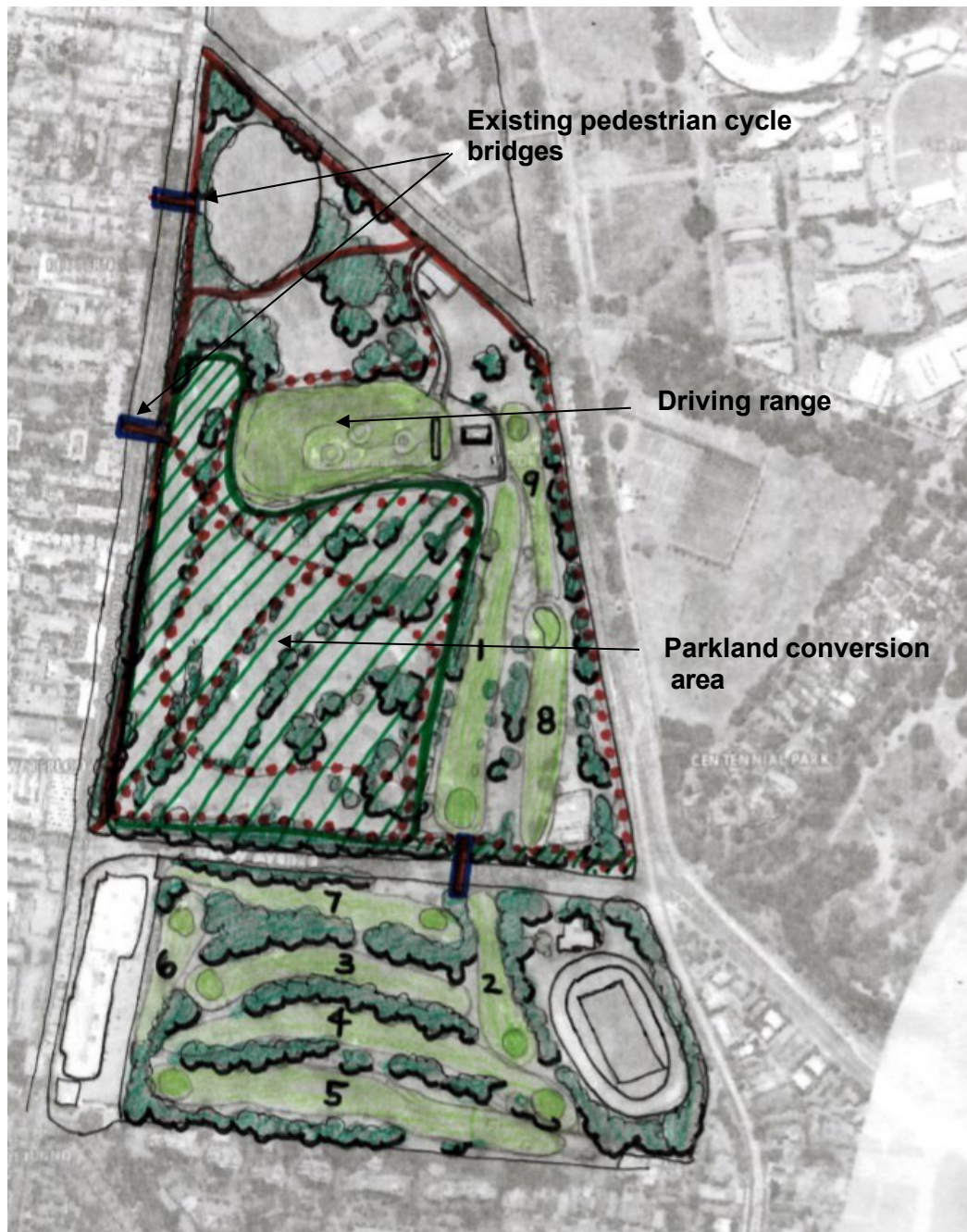
The proposal aims to provide green space for community recreation through a reallocation of land currently occupied by the 18-hole golf course. The proposal provides a 9-hole golf facility, retaining the clubhouse, driving range, carparking and maintenance depot.







The proposed parkland conversion is situated on the western side of the golf course (north of Dacey Avenue) defined by Eastern Distributor and suburb of Redfern.

Key features include:

- Parkland gain of approximately 18 hectares, providing a large park format giving people room for casual exercise, walking, socialising and connecting with nature;
- Use of existing rolling topography and fairway structure, providing interesting park landscape with a network of access pathways and the opportunity to increase canopy cover and habitat;
- Use of pedestrian/cycle bridges at Moore Park Gardens and Charles Street, providing easy access to the park for Surry Hills, Redfern, Waterloo and Green Square residents.
- Park perimeter loop and linkages, providing improved access around the park as well as connection to Centennial Park.





	Additional parkland
	New / improved connections for park users
	Existing bridge connections
	Existing pathways
	Existing tree canopy
	Golf fairways

Ease of conversion

The proposal provides a workable and low impact solution for conversion.

Minimal modification of fairways and relocation of greens can be achieved to deliver a 9-hole facility. Key assets such as the driving range, club house, carparking and maintenance depot are retained.

The existing canopy and topography provide a distinctive landscape and would require only minor grading adjustments for accessibility.





More community greenspace by converting golf course from an 18- to 9-hole facility



Perimeter loop for better pedestrian and cycle connectivity

Urgent need

A changing land use context – from industrial to high density residential

When parkland at Moore Park was allocated for a 9-hole golf course back in 1913 and later extended to 18 holes in 1922, the surrounding land uses were predominantly industrial.

Now on Moore Park's doorstep, the Green Square urban renewal area is transforming a former industrial land to the densest residential area in Australia. By 2036, the population is expected to be around 63,000 people and 22,000 workers. Around 33,000 residents – more than half of the total population – have already moved in.

In addition, the NSW Government's Land and Housing Corporation is undertaking a program of redevelopment of its property assets in nearby Redfern and Waterloo. This will see an additional 14,000 people move into the area.

By 2040 up to 80,000 people will be living within 2 kilometres of Moore Park.

The City of Sydney is working with Green Square developers to create 40 urban parks and playgrounds as part of urban renewal. However, small parks do not provide people living in (often small) high-density apartments with the opportunity to stride out, de-stress, renew or commune with nature.



To meet the challenge of increasing population, it is critical to ensure that Moore Park provides the most appropriate allocation of public parkland for multipurpose recreation.



Circa 1930 photo of the area now known as Moore Park. Looking towards South Dowling and Dacey Avenue with industrial and racecourse uses.



Moore Park Golf Course 2020 with high density residential development

Use pressures on Centennial Parklands

The Centennial Parklands strategic plan - *Moore Park Master Plan 2040* highlights the increasing use pressures generated by population within a 1-kilometre catchment of Moore Park.

31 million people visit Centennial Parklands annually while just 70,000 rounds of golf are played on the course each year (2018/19 Annual Report).

A reconfiguration of the golf course will significantly expand the amount of publicly accessible green space available to serve the needs of a greater number of people.

The recent Covid-19 pandemic has only reinforced the value and popularity of parks for people to gain respite, exercise and contact with nature.

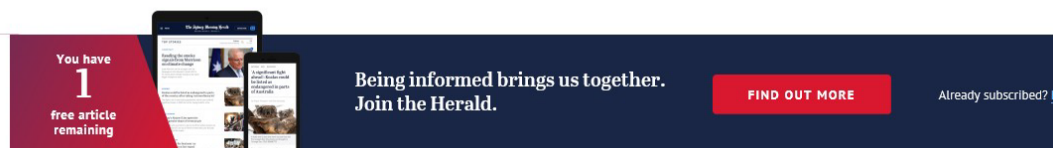
The land currently used to host the Moore Park 18-hole golf course provides minimal contribution to the recreational needs of the growing population surrounding the park.

In built-up inner city areas where land is so expensive, we need to re-evaluate the highest and best use of existing land uses.

“With no sizeable additional green space close to the City, Moore Park must utilise its green space to cope with increasing demands.”

Centennial Parklands. Moore Park 2040. Future Directions. 2017.

'Why aren't they parks?': golf's huge footprint on Sydney's open space



By [Caitlin Fitzsimmons](#)
April 7, 2019 — 12.00am



Golf courses account for almost one in 10 Crown land parcels in Sydney despite declining participation in the sport, *The Sun-Herald* can reveal.

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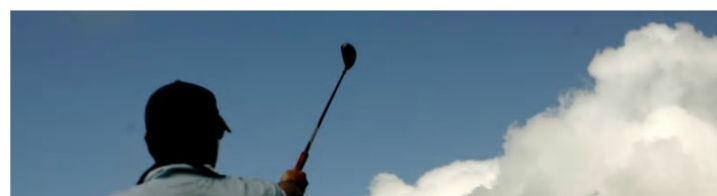
CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

JobKeeper may need to be extended: RPA governor



Open space in Sydney has hit the big time on the political agenda, with the appointment of Stokes as Minister for Planning and Public Spaces last month, amid growing concern about population density and development.

With growing [tension over access to open space](#), councils and communities are questioning footprint of golf, which is played regularly by 2-3 per cent of the population.



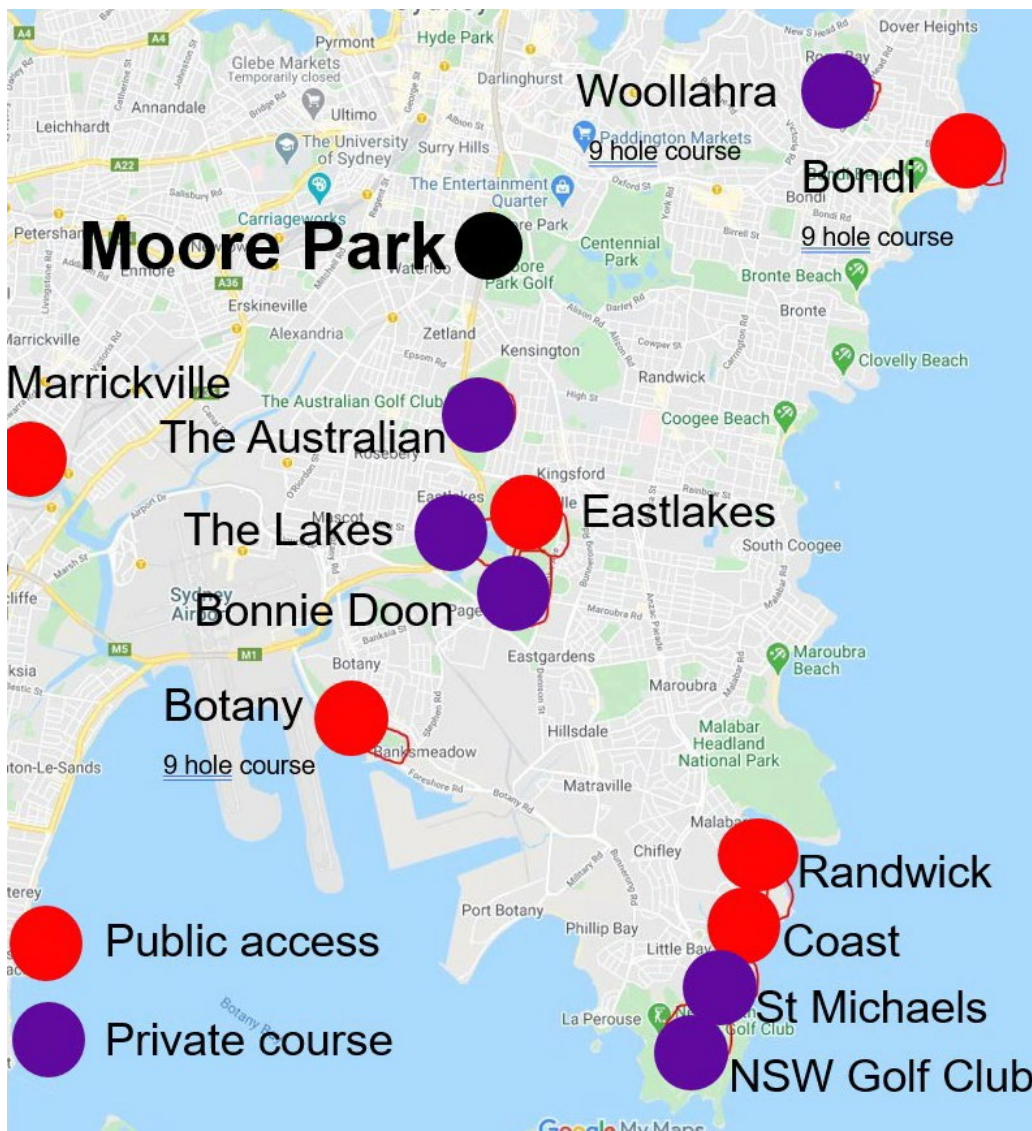
Sydney Morning Herald, 7 April 2009

Golf Course distribution

Golf as a recreational activity is well provided for in the Sydney metropolitan area. Within a 10-kilometre radius of Moore Park there are twelve golf courses (some 9-hole), of which six are accessible to the general public.

Reducing the size of Moore Park Golf Course would be a more equitable use of public open space, providing spaces for casual recreation that appeal to a wider demographic.

With increasing demand for parkland to support a growing Sydney population, the large footprint that golf requires and its low carrying capacity is seriously questioned.



Golf course distribution within 10 kilometres of Moore Park

Recreation trends

The proposal provides a more equitable and diverse allocation of green space for multipurpose recreation.

Community recreational needs and trends are constantly evolving. People are increasingly time-poor, resulting in a demand for informal recreation and non-organised health, fitness and leisure activities.

Many sports now offer condensed formats to attract participation and membership.

In their *2019 Golf Club Participation Report of Australia*, Golf Australia reported a 33 per cent increase in the number of 9-hole competition rounds compared with 2018.

Ausplay and Golf Australia participation data indicates that the main motivation for people playing golf is for social and recreation purposes. This suggests that conversion to a 9-hole facility would not inhibit most participants from using and enjoying a 9-hole facility at Moore Park.

The proposal is compatible with the trend towards casual and social participation in golf.

Recreation trend data consistently shows that walking is popular across a broad spectrum of demographic groups. This highlights the importance of large parks for recreation, as well as linkages between green spaces.



Masterplan for Elsternwick Nature Park Reserve envisions the conversion of a decommissioned golf course into a biodiverse parkland and wetland (McGreggor Coxall)



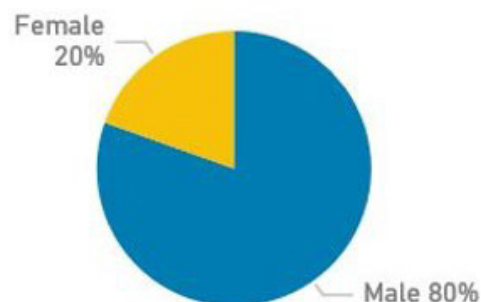
of the Adult 15+ population



of the Children 0-14 population



Adult participation by
Gender



Source : AusPlay Sports
Participation Data 2019

Community Research

In 2020, the City of Sydney undertook community research and consultation, seeking community feedback on the idea of reconfiguring Moore Park Golf Course to provide more public space for community recreation.

This included:

- Random phone survey of 402 households in a 5km radius of the course – August 2020;
- Broad community on-line survey– November/December 2020;

The community was notified of the survey via a letterbox drop and social media.

Letters were sent to over 40 stakeholders including local Members of Parliament, Greater Sydney Parklands, Golf Australia, Golf NSW, Moore Park Golf Course, and Parks and Leisure Australia.

10,299 people completed the online survey making this the largest online survey ever conducted by the City of Sydney.

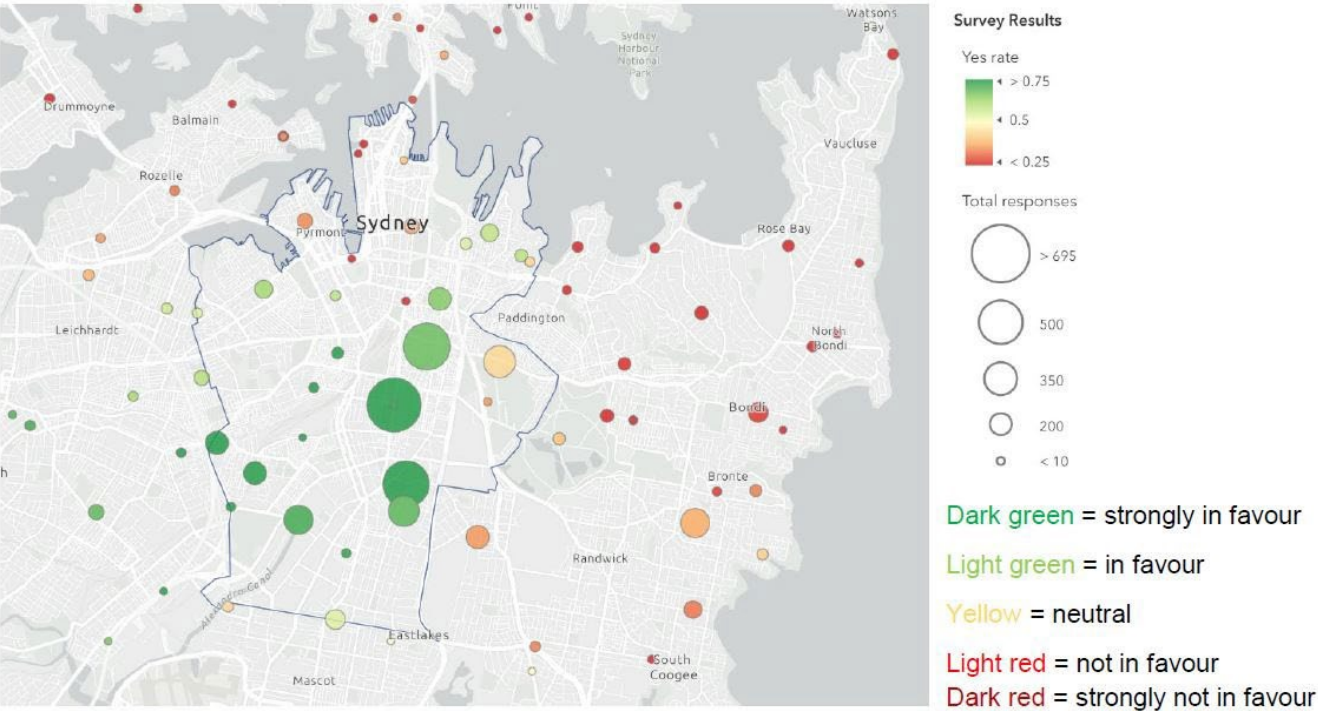
The key outcomes were:

- Phone survey indicated significant community support for creating more public parkland. The preferred approach was to reconfigure the golf course to nine holes.
- 50 per cent of online survey respondents supported a change to the course to create more parkland.
- 49 per cent of online survey respondents wanted to retain the 18-hole course.
- There was a significant difference in the views of men and women – 73 per cent of women supported reducing the course to provide more parkland. 59 per cent of men wanted to retain the 18-hole course.
- Views were strongly shaped by where people live. Respondents living immediately to the west of the course were overwhelming supportive of reconfiguring the course to create more public parkland. Whereas respondents who wanted to retain the 18-hole course are more likely to live in the eastern suburbs and other parts of Sydney.

Comparison between surveys

Overall preference	Phone survey	Online survey
Retain 18-hole course	23%	49%
Reconfigure the course / convert all to parkland	77%	50%

Geographic distribution of online survey responses



Conclusion

Moore Park is public land that is part of the original Governor Macquarie 1811 Sydney Common bequest for the benefit of the people of Sydney. The NSW Government has stewardship over this gift.

For decades, Moore Park has suffered significant losses including the ongoing alienation and reduction in parkland from the Eastern Distributor, light rail, Tibby Cotter Bridge and over five hectares of parkland for event parking.

The NSW Government's urban consolidation policies that respond to continued population growth have necessitated higher residential densities in urban renewal areas such as Green Square.

Repurposing Moore Park Golf Course is an appropriate response to the rapidly changing open space needs of the area and would make optimum use of public parkland.

This proposal provides a fair and reasonable solution to the urgent need for more publicly accessible green space to meet local demand.



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