

## Leichardt Oval Refurbishment Submission Feb 2026

### **Application Number**

SSD-85149458

### **Assessment Type**

State Significant Development

### **Development Type**

Sports & Recreation Activities

Dear Sir/Madam

I object to significant aspects of this updated and final Development Application.

As a local resident greatly sustained by her sense of 'place' , including its living environment, and who is highly familiar with that 'place' and the governmental policies as pertain to it, I identify, at least **5 serious problems** with the official reports and documentation that require revisitation and revision by planning authorities before proceeding with this proposal.

#### **1) Massive tree and canopy loss.**

The amount of trees being approved for removal has increased from earlier iterations and now stands at **1125 sq metres of canopy**, which, in an officially heating world is unacceptable and NOT simplistically offset as per the proposed mitigation/offset measures in the reports.

The trees' local heritage value and significance is also inadequately recognised in the official reports due to flawed assumptions made by the consultants and flimsy, performative community consultation.

What *is* striking about the arborist's report is just how many of these iconic Australian native Hills Figs wrapping the Oval's embankment are described as being in *GOOD HEALTH* and of *HIGH RETENTION VALUE*.

That 1125 sq metres of canopy should now be going in the name of a few people having extra plastic seats to sit on is **indefensible** and totally **misplaced priorities** in the year 2026 with polar icecaps melting, sea levels rising, heat islands expanding, whole nations (Tuvulu) beginning emigration from their homeland and tree-loss from wildfires like never before so that *trees have for 20 years now become NET carbon emitters*.

Furthermore:

a) It is NOT consistent with the Leichhardt Park POM and Masterplan 2020, which states as its key objectives:

- i) (P41) Top left under 'Sustainability' subheading as its *first key objective*: '*Protect and restore local ecologies and **prioritise the environment in decision-making.***

Prioritising plastic seating instead of the current arrangements is NOT prioritising the environment in decision-making

- ii) *To foster the identity of Leichhardt Oval and build on its character as a unique asset (p. 40)*

But the Oval's 'character' is very much shaped and enhanced and recognised (both from inside the oval grounds *and* from outside of it ) by the mass enwrapping of the iconic Figs with their huge shady canopy, so that **removing 1125sq m of canopy is NOT character-fostering**

The mass entangled and majestic root systems are also visually, aesthetically and culturally part of the 'character' of the entire site. A massive hole in this entanglement would totally compromise the character.

- iii) *To protect areas that are highly valued by the community. (p48)*

The local community (and it is a local council oval in a local council park, NOT a site under corporate ownership) ADORES those trees and the atmosphere and cooling created by them, including appreciating them as they go in and out of the Aquatic Centre area – so that **putting a huge 1125sqm hole in them that will be entirely visible and transformative of that area and its visual, aesthetic and cooling properties is NOT protecting highly valued areas. The loss of their staggering root systems is another breach of what is valued by the Leichhardt Park-frequenting community.**

In summary the objectives of the Leichhardt Park POM and Masterplan 2020 are NOT met by the removal of 1125sqm of iconic, loved and cooling tree canopy.

- b) The replacement options are not a like-for-like alternative to the vast canopies of these mature, magnificent Hills Figs.
- They are predominantly a different species proposed

- They would take DECADES to reach the same majesty and maturity and provide that vast cooling canopy
- Offsetting does NOT speak to the immediate cooling OR character loss from THAT site
- Council has a locally famous highly sub-par history in sensitively selecting 'offsetting' sites for tree-planting in Leichhardt Park. They simply bung them in without updated consultation as to where the most appropriate locations should be and block cherished water views that vast numbers of people appreciate in the process of their box-ticking exercise. (eg Leichhardt No 2 northern embankment)

c)The community consultations quoted in the Social Impact statement clearly showed that the local community did not want tree loss – 1125 sq m of mature canopy loss is not minimising tree loss as per the community's wishes

## **2) Errors in EIS on the description of surrounding residential environment.**

P7 of the EIS is incorrect in stating the area is bound to the south by 'low-density housing'. But housing is for the greater part (higher end of) *medium density* with small-to-modest block sizes that include many semi-detached town and terrace houses and federation-era workers' cottages and a considerable number of midrise apartment blocks of both private and public stock.

As such, there are thus a lot of people affected by regular 'huge' games, and those medium-density people inhabit narrow streets *where parking is routinely at a premium*, and they face routine challenges in peaks dealing with the 3 major City West intersections. (see You Tube video link)

A more accurate appreciation of the surrounding residential landscape would have implications for the traffic/parking assessment *and* the social impact statement – both of which need to be revisited.

*Why else does this description mistake in the EIS matter?*

Because it undermines our confidence in the accuracy of the conclusions reached and descriptions made in rest of the document and in the consultants generally. And, indeed, other errors are noted in several reports, upon which I will now elaborate.

## **3) Traffic & Parking Report by Traffix**

**Problem 1:** The traffic study wasn't done on ANY Big Game Days. The Traffix Report p 16 says the dates chosen and the crowd capacities were:

**Sun 14<sup>th</sup> September:** Junior NRL: 1500 patrons

**Friday 17<sup>th</sup> Oct:** Home soccer game Wests APIA: 4263 patrons

But how many attend the BIG GAME NRL matches? 16 000!

Whilst the official capacity (presumably anticipated to be met more often post-refurbishment) is for 19 000.

And other standard crowds come in at 5000 and 7500 – well above the crowds studies by the consultants.

**Point being : your traffic people AINT SEEN NOTHING!** (see attached photos and you tube link)

And if that crowd indeed bumps up 19000 as is the official capacity – your traffic report will look even more off the mark including for the local intersections at City West link (as per You Tube links).

### **Problem 2 No Local Community Traffic & Parking Workshops/Consults**

There has been no Local Community Consultation Forum for Locals (who are EXPERT on Game Day traffic) to give our feedback and advice on *what we think is needed* to tolerate the current Big Game Day traffic and any expansion in the annual numbers thereof. The Council Consultation did NOT address this aspect in any meaningful or detailed way with locals, and a group of 12-odd locals should be immediately convened to speak to the appropriate mitigation measures over probably 2 x 1.5 hr meetings.

P25 of the SEARS Report 2025 says it will consult with the broader community – but specifically this needs to happen with the local Lilyfield community, particularly those in the north-west corner adjacent to the proposal and specifically on traffic and parking!

We welcome the abandonment of the multi-tiered carpark in Leichhardt Park, which would have further butchered local character and merely drawn more gridlock into the area for a ridiculous expense

### **Problem 3: The Green Travel Plan**

This local input is especially important given what amounts to a comic/tragic 20-page taxpayer-dime Emperor-With-No-Clothes 'Green Travel Report' that simply – in effect – says: "Yeah ... maybe don't drive. Ride a bike or catch a bus. We'll give them a brochure or the like telling them that.'

Yeah, right. Like that's going to be enough to stop the gridlock on huge-crowd days!

Yet, essentially, that is what it spends 20 pages saying. There are no meaningful or convincing suggestions or solutions.

And yet, actually, we locals can give you some excellent solutions as to how to make sure people don't drive on Huge Game Days and it's called BLOCKING OFF GLOVER, WHARF, CAMPBELL, MARY, MALLYWALL, COTTAGE WAY and GARDEN WAY probably 2 hours before the game starts and UNTIL HALF TIME.

Just like the Balmain peninsula is blocked off on New Year's Eve to all but locals! A swimming-lesson pass can be issued for LPAC kids swimming lesson attendees.

If most people can't get a close park or even a park at all, they are greatly less likely to drive.

What's more, the gridlock in the streets Glover/ Chapel/Church/Campbell/Mary is beyond belief (see photos) and would be avoided if these roads were blocked off on Huge Game Days. (We can have a discussion about at what size crowd the line is clearly crossed. But mechanisms not to flood Callan Park or Le Montage area with vehicles would need to be employed also.

#### **Problem 4: Erroneous Conclusion on Traffic & Parking Impacts:**

The reports repeatedly state: "The proposal is not considered traffic generating."

Given *Traffix* did the study on the pitifully wrong games to get a meaningful readout, this claim is not credible.

What's more, there will likely be MORE big-game events to justify this exorbitant upgrade (a solid hunk of that 30 million – which will anyway blow out to more – could have been spent paying nurses properly or on public housing, which are arguably as good or better for 'the economy'), so that WILL mean more Big Game and Big Event traffic and parking MORE OFTEN<sup>1</sup> for both local roads AND main intersections(eg City West Link), so that the claim that the traffic and parking impacts it will be exactly the same IS MISLEADING and ERRONEOUS

And this is all one more reason why planners should convene the locals for their traffic expertise and seriously engage with blocking the precinct off on Big Game Days IF they are to be more than the 3 a year we all signed onto over the past 20 years when we moved here.

Because, yes, we were all told for the past 20 years that the days of huge NRL or other crowds at Leichhardt Oval were over!

And remember for those games pre the year 2000, *the crowds were anyway much more localised and therefore walked*. It was not a corporatised game back then but, rather, a highly local game for local mostly walking crowds.

#### **4) Social Impact Statement Flaws:**

A) I give credit to these consultants for correctly identifying the impacted area.

**B) *Beyond that, the claims about the extent and nature of community consultation need some modification and revisiting:***

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<sup>1</sup> The Mayor is already talking publicly about Live music events also. See Feb 17 2026 IWC papers Item 20 & numerous social posts

**P18 claim** *Inner West Council has undertaken significant community and stakeholder engagement regarding the Leichhardt Oval Master Plan.*

“Significant” risks being interpreted as “substantial”. More accurate with respect of the experience of the local community would be “some” consultation interpreted as ‘a bit of’ consultation, noting that poorly publicised, box-ticking consultation that is not listened to at an earlier stage<sup>2</sup> is different from well-publicised, meaningful consultation that is duly listened to.

Also, the ‘local community’ is different from ‘the community’. Sports clubs are effective in rounding up lots of sports patrons for consults, which risks inflating their concerns in the final results relative to community’s less easily reached in their totality: i.e., the local community. This skewing of results is even more so when the Mayor – who has been pushing this project – has a personal history attached to the Tigers and therefore has connections to these sporting networks. They will not miss a consult. The message that it is ‘on’ will always reach them.

Meanwhile, there were some very odd things that took place with mail drops about consults in 2022-23 where vast numbers of locals showed no receipt of consult info whilst the Council’s records showed they were dropped.

Whatever, the ultimate truth: it has been MUCH easier for locals to miss consults than the Tigers networks, and that is reflected in the result.

“Improve facilities to meet safety requirements and improve spectator amenities” and “Improve player amenities to accommodate female athletes” are concerns of the Tigers-notified community not the local geographic community, for example

**P18** *“The original master plan was exhibited publicly in 2023, while workshops and other engagement activities have taken place between 2022 and 2024.”*

I don’t recall many or any engagement activities in 2024 with the immediately local Lilyfield community.

*“The broader community was engaged in 2022 and 2023 through multiple rounds of engagement regarding community expectations”*

*Most people in the local Lilyfield community would not say they were meaningfully engaged in MULTIPLE ROUNDS*

### **C) Unaddressed Social Impacts that also flow from poor traffic report:**

The main challenges for locals on Huge Game Days are that you can’t even get IN or OUT of your streets even before you get to the question of parking anywhere near one’s home.

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<sup>2</sup> It was pointed out by an Inner West Councillor in the meeting addressing the community consultation that 80% of respondents didn’t want the upgrade as it stood. But this result was ignored as the majority council pushed it through to the next stage (Ask me for an exact reference in the Council records if desired)

Friends can't visit; no birthdays or any social events can be organised at one's own home, and trips *out* must be planned well in advance not to coincide with arrivals or departures and parking challenges – this can mean blocking out a 5 hour slab of exiting.

If anyone makes a mistake on this, they **WILL** be stuck for 45-60 minutes in gridlock.

And **NO** parking police ever appear to monitor the waste-of-money signs – it's a famous local joke. This is why the signs are **ALWAYS** ignored by ground patrons – because there is no fear of a fine. Parking on corners illegally to create dangerous blind corners is also routine.

**It is obviously dangerous for emergencies. No ambulance or fire trucks could or would get in or out.**

So, is that all, in sum, *no social impact* as stated in the sorry study?

Now, there is a big difference between living with this state of affairs 3 times a year and negotiating one's affairs accordingly (as was the custom for 20-odd years) to living with bumping **BIG EVENTS** up **WELL** beyond that (to justify the upgrade) whilst a traffic report and social impact study say there are *no additional impacts* so that no serious mitigation measures are planned.

#### **d) Negative Social Impacts on WHOS**

The drug and alcohol facility directly across the road does **NOT** need alcoholic beverages served routinely right opposite it. Impacts ignored – and despite this unwanted impact being reported by its director Mr Garth Poole at several earlier intervals in community engagement

#### **5) The epic Loudhailer**

**P 19 of the Noise Report:** *Furthermore, there will be no change to the use or capacity of the site as a result of the proposed redevelopment and, therefore; events noise levels are not expected to increase above the existing levels.*

Simply untrue as outlined already. There **WILL** be **MORE** events of all sizes (to justify the upgrade and new Live Music events) including and especially Huge Ones.

The impact of amplified sound – particularly in Chapel, Church, Mary, Morton & Glover streets – if more often than this historical custom would also be a *huge social impact* - and yet the Social Impact Report doesn't mention it.

The loudhailer has already been a huge challenge over the years because, for some mysterious reason, the volume has been epic for piddling crowd games also and detectable and intrusive right up to Perry St.

That kind of epic volume, deemed acceptable for a handful of huge games a year, would obviously have a much greater debilitating and intrusive if it was done more often.

That the epic loudhailer use usually coincides with periods of home relaxation and restoration for most people i.e., on weekends would obviously be part of the negative social impact.

Yet total silence in the social impact study on the existence of it, let alone the impact of it!

Recently (the last 2 winters) Council was asked to revisit the volume of the PA system for small and midsize crowds and some improvement has been noted with less volume on loudhailers for smaller crowds. This kind of policy would need to be more closely looked at in the context of the upgrade.

The noise consultants are – once again – IN ERROR - to say there have been no noise complaints in the last 10 years – because this kind of (documented) communication about the loudhailer DID take place a few years ago. (The pandemic also effectively ruled out 2 winters)

What's more the frequency of all-level games – and particularly big events including non NRL and music events – ARE likely to increase, as already outlined.

**P32 and again p33 of Noise Report:** Noise impacts at the nearest noise sensitive receivers, are expected to be noticeable. However, these noise impacts are not expected to increase the noise impacts currently experienced as *the use and capacity of the Leichhardt Oval will not change.*

Simply not true – as stated

**P24 of Noise Report** ...*whilst there are no relevant standards or guidelines to set a specific criteria for noise emissions from events PA systems, noise emissions from the PA system do have the potential to impact the amenity of nearby noise sensitive receivers.*

Why aren't there standards and guidelines?

Why not talk about the *average noise receiver* in addition to the noise sensitive receiver? The language risks minimising impacts on average people!

## **6) Project Justification**

- a) Leichhardt Park is a park – not a beverage outlet. Improved access to food and beverages is not a justification for a 30 million corporatised project in living, natural community parklands
- b) The scale of the 30 million dollar (before blowouts) budget has not been showed in the EIS to be justified relative other social, economic and environmental opportunities on which public money might be spent.

A more modest and cheaper proposal that includes losing the proposed northern grandstand might be shown to be more justified



- c) The EIS states p 58 : The proposed development does not result in any adverse environmental, social or economic impacts and remains suitable for the site.

This submission has shown that statement to be at best requiring revisitation and at worst outright untrue.

**Conclusion:**

There are gravely troubling omissions and errors in key reports that need to be revisited before proceeding with a development of this budget and deemed 'state significant.'

As an immediate priority, a traffic report on a 16 000 crowd day should be secured. The current one is utterly null and void. The northern grandstand should be shrunk dramatically, redesigned or abolished to preserve the mature and magnificent tree canopy as required to be compliant with numerous official documents. The social impact study should be revisited and the noise impacts of the PA also. The myth (a kinder word than 'lie') that there will be no change to the routine impacts for locals on various of these fronts needs to be corrected. And a local traffic workshop where planners can receive and test ideas FROM local expert residents should be urgently convened before proceeding any further with this proposal to test whether the increased impacts can in fact be mitigated or not

Kind Regards

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(details removed because your site seems to say don't put in attachments)

Please do not publish my identifying details with this submission due to the personal safety hazards in my work.

Ps Please see links in appendix below.

And please see in a separate second attachment to this submission marked "Leichhardt Oval Local Gridlock" a quick snapshot video (48 secs) of local game day gridlock – ignored by consultants

## Appendix 1: Traffic Dramas

Showing Perry St famous queues on Saturday and weekdays pms as blocked from City West Link and James North WITHOUT Leichhardt Oval traffic impacts added to it

**Copy and Paste each link into a search engine making sure not to accidentally include the ordering number of the link (i.e., those numbers between 1 and 7 at the beginning of each line. Then go into the selected link which will appear right at the top of the search page:**

1. <https://youtu.be/2inSzaZjpYM>

( 4 cars turn hazardously out of James-Perry -Balmain Queue at Lilyfield Rd Lights (TL B) where nothing moves on the green light – on a Saturday)

2. <https://youtube.com/shorts/7hZarcyKZQQ>

- 3 <https://youtu.be/tW9reXqupnE>

- 4 <https://youtu.be/8JFCTMeE7Yg>  
a cloudy sat 11 am james-perry queue

- 5 [https://youtu.be/gnDM\\_uA5MxM](https://youtu.be/gnDM_uA5MxM)

- 6 <https://youtu.be/m0tLYVelpdw>  
James perry q pedestrian crossing blindness ear school

7. <https://youtu.be/xV508eTPXtY>  
james perry q near school pedestrian crossing