



Centre for Population Health, Parramatta Office

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12th, August, 2016

To whom it may concern,

**RE: State Significant Development 7372
O'Connell Street Public School, Parramatta
Fencing of the former Kings School Parade Grounds**

The Population Health Service, of Western Sydney Local Health District (WSLHD) have been working closely with the City of Parramatta, to promote increased rates of physical activity amongst residents, workers and visitors in the Parramatta LGA.

The City of Parramatta is extremely concerned about the proposed 2.1 m high fencing of the Old Kings School Parade Ground, which sits between the school buildings and the Parramatta River. The Parade Ground is the only significant open and flat space in close proximity to the CBD. Erecting such a fence at this site, will impact significantly on opportunities for physical activity in this area.

Importance of Maintaining Open Space in the Parramatta CBD area:

Parramatta CBD has been earmarked for considerable growth at both local and state government level, characterised by increased population growth and prevalence of high density accommodation.

Population Growth:

- Parramatta CBD is the main employment centre for workers living in Greater Western Sydney.
- The number of residents have almost doubled between the 2006 - 11 Census periods, with projections that the population will triple in the next two decades to 27,498.

High Density Development:

- 96.7% of dwellings in Parramatta CBD are medium or high density, compared to 48% in Parramatta LGA.

Rates of Physical Inactivity and Impact on Chronic Disease:

In WSLHD, only 40% of adults participate in the recommended levels of physical activity. Increasing physical activity is a key modifiable risk factor to prevent a range of chronic diseases, specifically diabetes and obesity and improves mental health. WSLHD has been identified as a 'diabetes hot-spot' (rates of diabetes and obesity above the State average),¹ therefore it is imperative that residents have access to opportunities for participating in physical activity, in a pleasant and safe environment and are encouraged to do so. The evidence indicates people with access to high quality open space and green space are more likely to walk and undertake

¹ WSLHD, *Western Sydney Diabetes Prevention & Management Initiative 2013-18*, 2013 (p2)

physical activity than those who don't.² In addition to quality open space for recreation and exercise, the health literature indicates that the provision of 'green' space, in addition to the environmental benefits, has beneficial mental health outcomes.

Health Impacts of Living in High Density:

WSLHD, Population Health are also working with Council to examine the health impacts of living in high density accommodation. A key concern, relating to this proposal is that residents in high density housing, with fewer opportunities for private open space, rely on public open and green spaces in order to be physically active. In particular access to open space for children to play actively, is vitally important for their healthy development.

The Old Kings School Parade Ground, is part of Parramatta's City River Strategy that aims to encourage:

- Pedestrian and cycle movement along the northern bank of the river
- Public events and recreation opportunities.

Fencing the Parade Ground will limit the opportunities for physical activity in this location.

While Population Health recognise that the Department of Education's motivation for fencing the oval concerns the safety and security of their students, we support The City of Parramatta's request for:

- Innovative and sympathetic fencing solutions to be considered for this location.
- Arrangements to be put in place that enable community use of school ovals.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C Newman', is centered on the page. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a small dot at the end.

Christine Newman

Deputy Director Centre for Population Health, Health Promotion Manager

² Giles-Corti B, Ryan K, Foster S. *Evidence Review: Increasing density in Australia: maximising the health benefits and minimising harm*, Melbourne, National Heart Foundation of Australia, 20132.