

## **Executive summary**

This discussion describes the existing recreational facilities on Callan Park. It provides a brief summary of key information contained in the Recreation and Open Space Needs Study 2005, the current recreational facilities in Leichhardt and the pressures on these facilities. The paper also makes reference to the Review of Leichhardt Council Recreational Sports Fields Proposal 2007 as a source of feasibility information. Based on these documents and discussions on site with Council staff, a SCORE analysis of Callan Park is presented for further development.

The SCORE process draws out the following points:

- Callan Park's strengths as a place that already caters for a diverse range of passive and active recreational activities, and that is large enough to accommodate additional uses
- The location of heritage buildings, trees and the impact that changes to Callan Park could have on the overall landscape setting could be a constraint against new recreational facilities. This paper also questions whether the Callan Park Act could prohibit or limit the management and operational aspects of any new facilities.
- There are a range of potential opportunities to incorporate a variety of formal playing pitches within Callan Park and to dedicate currently vacant buildings for use in association with any new facilities.
- The principle risks associated with recreational use are contamination, infrastructure, parking and potential negative affects of over development of the formal recreation offer on Callan Park.
- The Expectation is that the Master Plan will find the correct balance between the recreational needs of all the users of Callan Park in the context of the natural setting and heritage landscape of Callan Park.

## **Introduction**

Every urban public green open space is used for passive and active recreation. Callan Park has existing patterns of recreational use and the master plan process will be the opportunity to formalise these uses and identify the potential for appropriate new uses. There is currently a single large sports pitch on Callan Park as well as a tennis court, swimming pool and basketball court, all maintained to different levels. At over 60 hectares Callan Park would seem to be under utilised as a recreational asset, however the history of the site, its natural topography and vegetation cover mean the addition of new facilities has to be carefully considered.

There are a large number of passive and informal recreational activities that are carried out on Callan Park. Callan Park is popular for socialising, dog walking, personal fitness and many visitors enjoy Callan Park for its culture and heritage buildings.

It is also important to consider the sub regional role that Callan Park has in serving not just Leichhardt but other areas within the inner Western suburbs of Sydney.

## **Context**

Like many urban areas Leichhardt has a deficiency in public open space. Leichhardt has an open space ratio of 1.7 ha per one thousand residents; the national benchmark is 2.8 hectares per one thousand residents.

The Recreation and Open Space Needs Study prepared for Leichhardt Council in 2005 highlights the deficiency in formal sports fields with Leichhardt. The study provides the following information:

- Participation trends in formal recreation and the impact projected demographics will have on future participation
- The existing provision of popular sports facilities and the current deficiency

- An inventory of the different sports clubs based in Leichhardt with membership data that highlights the majority of clubs has either stable or growing memberships.
- The report stresses the importance of the existing network of open space within Leichhardt and identifies the following pressures:
  - Popularity and high demand for formal pitches and custom built facilities
  - The inflexibility of the smaller parks and reserves
  - That there is limited provision for young people in the 14 – 24 year age bracket
  - Lack of parking capacity
  - The lack of diversity in play spaces for children

The Study makes the following recommendations for Council to address these pressures, including:

- Working with Councils and landowners to help meet the needs of Leichhardt residents.
- Developing pedestrian links between open spaces within Leichhardt
- Optimising the recreational use of existing open space through flexible multi-use strategies
- Undertaking a comprehensive play ground strategy to better meet the needs of children in Leichhardt

The Recreation and Open Space Needs Study gives a broad understanding of participation in formal sports and recreation but does not give details about informal and passive recreation.

A study to assess the capacity of Callan Park to accommodate new sports pitches was part of the 2007 Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority Land Use Plan. This study demonstrated the spatial implications of locating new sports pitches in specific destinations within Callan Park.

### **Strengths**

- At just over sixty hectares Callan Park offers the potential for a range of active recreational uses from large international sized playing pitches to small courts and exercise areas.
- The 7km Bay Run circuit is already well used, with an estimated 15,000 daily users during summer and between 5,000 and 10,000 during the winter. The Bay Run is the location of an annual fun run event that has entry categories for running, walking, team, pet walking and schools.
- The existing Sports Pavilion is well used and maintained to a good standard.
- The groups that use Callan Park are respectful of other users. For example there appear to be few (if any) problems of dogs fouling areas popular with dog walkers.
- Some of the level areas of Callan Park have historically been used for active recreation.
- The size of Callan Park prevents different uses coming into conflict with each another.
- Callan Park has the ability to offer recreational users a different experience on every visit.

### **Constraints**

- The topography of the site and the location of existing trees and buildings on the site could limit the development of suitable sports pitches.
- Many of the level areas of the site are adjacent to the waterfront. Locating new pitches here could reduce the access to popular parts of Callan Park.
- The requirements of the Callan Park (Special Provisions) Act 2002 could have implications on the management of any new facilities.
- The needs of existing occupants of some of Callan Park buildings could limit the locations for new recreational facilities

### **Opportunities**

- Connections to the neighbouring Leichhardt Park and King George's Park could create a linked network of recreational facilities, making management and maintenance more efficient than a stand-alone facility.
- A number of existing areas within Callan Park have reasonably level ground. Funding permitting, these areas could be quickly converted into playing fields, pitches or courts
- Callan Park is currently well used by runners, walkers and cyclists. These uses could be formalised with signage and circuits.
- Interpretive signage and trails could be used to describe the heritage and ecological features of Callan Park and introduce art and sculptural elements
- The large number of existing vacant buildings throughout the site creates opportunities to consider whether some can be used as support or storage facilities for recreation.
- An existing swimming pool is located in the centre of the site that is currently maintained by SHFA could be made available for wider use
- The topography of the site could provide natural seating areas next to new sports pitches.
- The existing natural landscape could be used to create areas for exploratory play opportunities for children.
- An opportunity to fulfil an identified need for recreational facilities for teens

### **Risks**

- The extent of site contamination needs further assessment; much of the understanding of existing contamination is anecdotal and further technical studies will be required to inform decision making.
- Any over development of Callan Park for recreational activities such as team sports could lead to the isolation of other recreational user groups.
- Any over development of Callan Park for recreational activities could lead to Callan Park losing its flexible character, becoming informally 'zoned' according to activities or users.
- The construction and maintenance of sports fields, pitches and courts will require significant investment and ongoing funding.
- Opening up new areas of Callan Park to recreational uses could lead to damage to heritage items such as the Callan Point rock engravings.

### **Expectations**

The Master Planning process will build on the work already carried out in the Open Space Needs Study 2005 to:

- Achieve a balance between different recreational uses on Callan Park
- Ensure that unstructured uses such as bird watchers or orienteer's are not compromised
- To consider concepts of exploratory play for children in suitable areas
- To consider the recreational needs of youths and teenagers in suitable areas