



Safer Cities Parramatta Park

What we heard



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Safer Cities Parramatta Park

Transport for NSW's Safer Cities program is a \$30 million investment aiming to improve perception of safety across NSW, in particular for women, girls and gender diverse people.

The Safer Cities program objectives align with the United Nations Safer Cities for Girls program that support the delivery of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals in NSW to

- Increase women and girl's safety and access to public spaces
- Increase women and girls active and meaningful participation in urban development and governance
- Increase women and girl's autonomous mobility in the city

Parramatta Park is collaborating with Transport for NSW to deliver a project under the Safer Cities program. The project in the park will

- Provide a lit evening-time pedestrian path from Parramatta CBD to Westmead
- Investigate the potential for night-time surveillance
- Investigate the potential for night-time activation

A foundational part of the program was research and co-design with women and girls prior to project planning to find out what would make Parramatta Park feel safer for women and girls, particularly in the early mornings and evening. This research will directly inform the design development and detail planning of the delivery of the program objectives.



Who we spoke to

Five workshops with women and girls were designed and delivered in the Park. Participants included both younger and older women, mothers with small children, women who live and work nearby, women who visit the Park on occasion and those who use it every day, both day and night and First Nations women who have a cultural and spiritual connection to the Park. There was also a mix of short-term and long-term residents.

The workshops were conducted with three cohorts:

- **Women aged over 18**
3 workshops with 33 people in total
- **High school girls**
1 workshop with 22 girls followed by a design charette workshop, and
- **First Nations women**
1 workshop (conducted as a focus group on-site due to inclement weather) with 12 First Nations women.



What we heard

Women and girls told us that they use the Park during the day but they feel nervous and scared accessing the Park at night-time.

Some participants told us they would visit the Park with companions at night, others claimed they would stay away from it entirely because of safety concerns.

Women and girls told us more and varied lighting will make them feel safer when using Parramatta Park, particularly at night. This includes lighting along walkways, near toilets, in the tunnel and along the routes to Westmead and Westmead Train Station.

In particular, they told us lighting along the pathway and motion-sensor lighting that gets brighter on approach will make them feel safe and help protect local wildlife.

Some women and girls also want fun and creative lighting in the Park.

“I live in Westmead. I use the Park every day because I walk to the gym in Parramatta and use this pathway all the time because it is a great alternative to public transport and walking along the busy road. It’s scary at night though, so I have to plan around the timing so I’m not here at night”

-Women’s walkshop participant

“With more varied forms of lighting people are better aware of their surroundings and can find comfort in the presence of lights.”

-High school girl’s walkshop participant

“Pathway lighting would be good so you can see what’s on the ground and it doesn’t disturb the trees.”

-High school girl’s walkshop participant

“Festival lighting would be fun for families. We can bring our children to come see these fun lights and it will also give families a reason to visit the Park at night.”

-Women’s walkshop participant





Image source: Greater Sydney Parklands

Women and girls told us they want to see Parramatta Park more activated during the day and particularly at night.

Popular ideas from the research include festivals and cultural events, night-time picnics, outdoor movies, food trucks and sporting activations.

First Nations women told us that they would like to see more First Nations people in the Park to feel welcome and safe.

“Sports practice would be the most practical thing here at night as it can happen all year round.”

-High school girl’s walkshop participant

“Creating or facilitating a more diverse nightlife culture on a larger scale might make public spaces feel safer.”

-High school girl’s walkshop participant

“What a great idea to hold night events. This would motivate us to walk rather than drive. I would love to see food trucks, cultural festivals and similar.”

-Women’s walkshop participant

“You feel safer with your own mob.”

-First Nation’s walkshop participant

Women and girls told us they want more emergency help points and SOS buttons in Parramatta Park.

They told us they want to see the CCTV in a mix of locations such as on the paths, in carparks, at entrances, near amenities and in the playgrounds. They also want the CCTV to be high up and not easily accessible to be tampered with.

Other safety and security measures participants want to see include more police or security presence, a community hotline and a refuge hub.

“The Park can be very dark and isolating so it’s good to know there’s “eyes on it.”

-Women’s walkshop participant

“A refuge hub would be beneficial. A virtual helpline would make this area feel more secure as well.”

-Women’s walkshop participant

“CCTV and police or ranger presence would make more people willing to spend time outside at the Park.”

-High school girl’s walkshop participant



Participants told us they want more signage and wayfinding, particularly in key nodes of the Park such as carparks, near entrances and exits and near amenities.

They also told us more illuminated signage that shows where they are in the Park will help them if they need to give their location to police or a loved one. One idea was to use signs with easy to remember identification labels such as “Red kangaroo”.

Women and girls told us they want to see more well-lit and clean toilets in Parramatta Park.

They also want to see other amenities including more tables and seating, more bins, more handwashing stations, more bubblers and dog facilities.

“The buttons at Parramatta Lake with codes to identify your area to the police are helpful. You could use coloured animals so that it doubles as a scavenger hunt for kids.”

-Women’s walkshop participant

“I can’t tell where the bathrooms are located, there’s no signage. The ones that exist are too deep into the Park, I wouldn’t go there at night, I’d rather find a pub. I would be scared about who is lingering around.”

-Women’s walkshop participant

“Toilets that are well lit might make the Park more attractive.”

-Women’s walkshop participant



Women and girls want to feel safer to walk more in Parramatta Park. This includes widening the footpaths and reducing car traffic.

First Nations participants want to see more of their culture visible in Parramatta Park. This includes more First Nations art, historical information and events.

“Widening the footpaths and reducing cars will give us more leg room to walk around freely and reduces our sense of fear, especially as women walking alone in the Park.”

-Women’s walkshop participant

“There is no representation for Aboriginal people in this Park.”

-First Nation’s walkshop participant

“Indigenous plants and more of our culture visible and acknowledged”

-First Nation’s walkshop participant



Image source: Greater Sydney Parklands

Some participants highlighted the opportunity for the Park to embrace and celebrate the rich cultural diversity of Parramatta with opportunities for diverse festivals such as Lunar New Year or Diwali.

What we're doing

What women and girls said will help them feel safer in Parramatta Park

Women and girls told us that they use the Park during the day, but they feel nervous and scared accessing the Park at night-time. Lack of lighting in the Park at night was the most discussed safety issue, particularly in areas with dense bushland where people can hide. Other safety issues include speeding cars and bicycles, a lack of people around and narrow pathways.

While some participants told us they would visit the Park with companions at night, others claimed they would stay away from it entirely because of safety concerns.

As part of these workshops we asked women and girls what would make them feel safer using the Park both during the day and after dark. Key findings are summarised below.



More and varied lighting

Research participants told us more and varied lighting will make them feel safer when using Parramatta Park, particularly at night. They want to see more lighting along the walkways, near toilets, near the BBQs, in the tunnel and along the route to Westmead train station. However, some participants expressed concerns that bright lighting can make them feel exposed and therefore more unsafe. There was some concern that too much lighting could ruin the atmosphere of the Park.

Women and girls also want more types of lighting including lighting of trees, ground level lighting, fairy lights, lighting on poles and lighting on existing monuments. They told us motion-sensor lighting that gets brighter on approach would make them feel safest and would be better for the wildlife who call Parramatta Park home. The high school participants also told us there is an opportunity for sustainable lighting including the use of solar-powered lights in the Park. First Nations workshop participants shared ideas for including First Nations culture and stories in creative lighting at the Park. Ideas include lighting that represents Aboriginal animal prints and symbols.

What we're doing

We are providing a night-time lit path from the George and Macquarie Street Gatehouses to the West Domain car park and on to Jessie Street near Coleman Oval. These lights have motion sensors to increase brightness upon approach, timers for early and later evening modes and lighting levels can be adjusted to respond to environmental factors as needed.

We have included lighting of trees and landscapes with the provision for future lighting of the monuments. The lights along the boulevard to the George Street Gatehouse in the park also have the provision for projecting light art along the footpath and we will be displaying First Nations art commissioned for projects in the park. We will investigate opportunities for lighting the railway underpass tunnel.





Image source: Greater Sydney Parklands

Improve walkability

Participants told us they want to feel safer to walk more in Paramatta Park. Ideas include widening the footpaths and reducing cars movement and parking along walking paths. They told us this will make walking safer, improve visibility and reduce the risk of accidents or potential incidents such as attempted abductions into cars. Participants also told us they would like separated walking and cycling paths, so people can enjoy walking at a leisurely pace without having to worry about speeding bicycles.

One First Nations participant told us that reducing cars in the Park could mean less families are able to visit the Park as it can be harder to travel with kids by walking or public transport. Less families coming to the park would affect feelings of safety.

What we're doing

As funding becomes available, we will continue to onboard the Peoples Loop project and remove cars from the West Domain. This will provide the opportunity to widen and separate the cycling paths in this part of the park. Vehicular access will still be available in the rest of the park and to the West Domain from Park Avenue

More activations in the Park during the day and especially after dark

Participants told us that activations would encourage more people to use the Park which would make them feel safer. It would also build excitement and provide reasons for people to go to the Park. They want to see more activations during the day but especially after dark when the Park feels less safe.

Popular ideas include festivals and cultural events, night-time picnics, outdoor movies, food trucks and sporting activations. Other ideas include live music, audio installations, cafes and exercise groups. In particular, First Nations participants told us they want cultural activations that bring more First Nations people to the Park to make them feel safe and welcome.

High school girl participants told us they can feel unsafe when there are intoxicated people around. They expressed a preference for alcohol-free activities and advocated for more family-friendly events.

Participants also told us it is important to balance planned and self-sustaining activities to encourage regular visits to the park and avoid solely relying on scheduled events to ensure there are people in the park, particularly after dark. Some participants from the women's walkshop told us they want to see Parramatta Park have more dog friendly spaces.

What we're doing

Parramatta Park has an active and varied schedule of events throughout the year including Symphony under the Stars, Australia Day, and NAIDOC celebrations. As part of the Safer Cities project, we have included provision for future lighting of the monuments, including light displays, and small event and activity infrastructure to support regular activation of the park such as food trucks in the early evening.

We will work with our First Nations communities to program more cultural activations in the park. We will also investigate opportunities for dog-friendly spaces, including at Mays Hill near the pool.





Image source: Greater Sydney Parklands

More safety and security measures

Women and girls told us that a range of safety and security measures would help make them feel safer when using Parramatta Park. They told us more emergency help points will allow them to easily call for help if they do not have wifi or phone reception. However, they told us they also want guaranteed wifi or phone service in every location at the Park so they do not have to rely on the emergency buttons.

Participants suggested integrating emergency help points discreetly into signage or lighting poles to ensure that women and girls can call for assistance when feeling unsafe without making it obvious.

While most participants told us they want more CCTV cameras to make them feel more safe, some participants did not agree. Some participants from the women's workshop told us CCTV cameras can feel intrusive to their personal sense of privacy. Others told us they can increase a sense of unease as they give the impression that surveillance is necessary in the Park. However, all participants agreed that if CCTV was to be installed it needs to be installed in a mix of locations, and in high up locations that are not easily tampered with.

What we're doing

We have been working with the City of Parramatta to include infrastructure to support a future CCTV network linked to the City of Parramatta network. This network will be onboarded with the extension of the City of Parramatta network west as funding becomes available. These cameras will be provided in a mix of locations.

As funds become available, we will also investigate an online camera network that showcases the park's day and night time animal life including water dragons, birds, and flying-fox.

First Nations culture represented

First Nations participants told us they do not feel represented in the Park which makes them feel less safe and welcome. To address this, they told us they want to see more of their culture and heritage visible. This could include more art, historical information and events that bring First Nations culture to the Park.

What we're doing

We have hosted NAIDOC and National Reconciliation Week events in the park and will continue to do so. We have commissioned an Aboriginal artist to prepare an artwork concept plan for the Buttons Bridge and shall commence our Freshwater Connections with Country project next year.

More multicultural representation

Several participants highlighted the opportunity for the park to embrace and celebrate the rich cultural diversity of Parramatta and the wider Western Sydney Region, to enhance the sense of welcome and belonging. Ideas included decorating the park to commemorate diverse festivals such as Lunar New Year, Diwali, Ramadan, and others.

What we're doing

We have hosted Diwali and Eid al-Fitr events in the Park and will continue to do so. We are also looking to expand our event program to include more multi-cultural events in the Park.



