



SUBMISSION | Parramatta 2050

Friday 19 July 2024

Introduction

Western Sydney University welcomes the opportunity to comment on the City of Parramatta Council's draft vision statement, *Parramatta 2050*.

We look forward to being an integral part of ongoing consultations.

The draft plan identifies five key districts along the Sydney West Metro corridor from Westmead to Sydney Olympic Park. The Parramatta River is the spine for these districts which are the focus of this game changing' proposed transformation.

We strongly endorse Council's ambition to re-energise Parramatta City and cement it as dynamic region at the centre of Western Sydney's once-in-a-generation economic and social transition. Western Sydney University's strategic investments and placemaking make it a catalyst for economic development in Australia's fastest growing, most diverse and youthful region.

We particularly support the emphasis on positioning Parramatta as a global city and as a key player in the Asia-Pacific region. To achieve this, international investment and coordination will be key.

It is pleasing to see the proposed establishment of Parramatta International to attract global investment, students and talent while focusing on local initiatives. This can serve as a concierge-type service that can act as an 'economic matchmaker' and help navigate the local investment landscape.

Opportunity

Parramatta 2050 aligns with the key themes of the Centre for Western Sydney's *Unlimited Potential* blueprint to unlock and unleash Western Sydney's potential by deepening and diversifying the economy base. This includes attracting investment, creating new industries, better paid jobs, and ensuring more people can get the skills they need to thrive in an advanced, competitive global economy.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1

The proposed Model City District of Camellia-Rosehill be expanded to include nearby Rydalmere, including Western Sydney University's Parramatta South Campus.

Recommendation 2

Council investigate the concept of 'innovation districts', particularly for the redevelopment of Silverwater. Proven examples comprise a mix of education, residential and commercial along with shared community space, and a location 10-15 kms from central business districts.

1. A world leader in First Nations Partnerships

We applaud the Council's commitment to First Nations Peoples and its emphasis on meaningful partnerships to advance Indigenous opportunities. Western Sydney University shares similar ambitions, and will be an exemplar in Indigenous self-determination.

We suggest our landmark Indigenous Centre of Excellence be acknowledged as a leading institution for Parramatta to grow and sustain partnerships and engagement with First Nations peoples locally and globally.

Establishing, as the plan says, "clear, robust, and respectful partnership agreements between the Council and the Darug People" is an important step in collaboration, social justice, and accountability.

The leadership of Indigenous people in shaping Parramatta City's economy, as well as that of the region, is critical in delivering targeted and meaningful policies. It will help ensure First Nations People have a say in the region's growth, its society, and can fully participate in economic and educational opportunities.

The Centre for Western Sydney's *Bridging the Divide* paper in 2023 found only one in three people who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait living in Parramatta held a Certificate 3 or higher qualification. This is compared to two in three in North Sydney.

The lower level of qualifications translated to lower incomes for Indigenous Australians in Parramatta with 54.8 per cent earning less than \$800 a week, less than the minimum wage, compared to 36.3 per cent in North Sydney.

It's clear much more work needs to be done for communities in Parramatta.

Western Sydney University's Indigenous Leadership also suggest the Darug Nation should be acknowledged on each page of the document.

It has also put forward several useful suggestions, changes in bold.

Page 3	The City of Parramatta recognises the Dharug People as First Australians of this city. Peoples Descendants of the oldest continuous living culture in the world. Parramatta has been home to the Baramadagal Burramattagal and other Dharug peoples. The Baramadagal Burramattagal and other Dharug Peoples have cared for and nurtured the habitat, land, and waters of this area
Page 13	the Traditional Owners of the land, waterways and skies we call the City of Parramatta today. These partnerships will mark a significant step towards fostering culturally respectful, meaningful collaboration Through these Indigenous centred and Indigenous led actions, Parramatta can become a gathering place with Baramadagal Burramattagal and other Dharug peoples at the centre of it all.
Page 19	Parramatta's aesthetics, soundscapes, and aromas ambience .
Page 27	"It will also consider the site's potential as a place to examine Australia's history of First Nations incarceration in a culturally safe and appropriate manner." <i>Suggest looking at the sensitivities around the first time that First Nations is used in the body of the document it is in reference to jail.</i>

2. Western Sydney's Jobs Engine

Western Sydney University's vision for Parramatta to be the Western Sydney's jobs engine is commendable. We are keen to ramp up this ambition and believe Western Sydney can be the nation's economic powerhouse with Parramatta at its core – this is the focus of our *Unlimited Potential* project.

As Parramatta's draft vision states, it can capitalise on the opportunity of the new Western Sydney International Airport, due to open in 2026. This project underpins the region's economic and social transition.

It will be a catalyst for industry expansion and creation, including agribusiness, advanced manufacturing, and tourism. Combined with the new Metro line, Powerhouse Parramatta, the Bradfield City Centre and Aerotropolis, the region is undergoing profound change.

Western Sydney can draw on its strengths – which include is innovative and diverse people, it's existing manufacturing base and skills – to attract future industries to the region. This would place the region, especially Greater Parramatta, at the forefront of innovation and technology.

The area is well placed to excel in advanced manufacturing, medical technologies, the circular economy, renewable energy, and clean technologies and play a significant role in huge global supply chains.

Levelling up employment opportunities

Council has pledged to see no further reduction in its local jobs density of 1 job for every 1.5 residents. This would mean at least 150,000 new jobs by 2050 to keep pace with population growth.

Again, we are keen to see a greater level of ambition. Unlimited Potential argues employment opportunities in Western Sydney (where there are 81 jobs for every 100 workers) should level up to those in the Rest of Sydney (where there are 124 jobs for every 100 workers).

The report found if the Western Sydney economy experienced the same jobs-to-worker ratio as the rest of Sydney – 400,000 new jobs would be delivered by 2036 compared to business-as-usual growth.

Growing the economy would see Western Sydney add \$100 billion to the state's economy and become a leading economic powerhouse.

This translates to an increase of \$20,000 per person on average in Western Sydney, from \$59,805 per person today to \$81,222 by 2036.

Depending on the industry, most of this \$20,000 average increase in real dollars goes to workers as extra income or local business owners and entrepreneurs, boosting the long-term wealth of Western Sydney residents.ⁱ

Addressing existing gaps

The Centre for Western is keen to work closely with Council on its stated aim of addressing the City's existing gaps in employment offerings, particularly for highly skilled workers and for women. The Centre recently produced *Unlocking Women's Potential, labour force participation in Western Sydney*.

3. The Epicentre of Creativity

Western Sydney University's Indigenous Centre of Excellence will form part of the cultural ribbon of Parramatta which includes the Roxy, Riverside Theatre, and Powerhouse Parramatta. It will be a world-leading destination for First Nations art and culture.

The University's creative vision dovetails with Council's aspirations. We will contribute to the delivery of the new creative infrastructure identified including contemporary art gallery, live music venue and production/rehearsal spaces across the Parramatta campuses to further integrate and contribute to the cultural fabric of Parramatta. This would form part of the integrated precinct development we are advancing.

We also believe the strategic vision for Parramatta's could be further strengthened by emphasising several key areas:

Embracing the Creative Economy and Creative Industries

The creative economy is a dynamic sector that not only enriches cultural life but also drives significant economic growth. Parramatta has the potential to become a powerhouse within this economy by:

- i. **Fostering Innovation and Entrepreneurship:** Establishing innovation hubs and creative incubators that support startups and entrepreneurs in the arts and creative industries.
- ii. **Facilitating Collaborations:** Encouraging partnerships between artists, tech companies, and other industries to create interdisciplinary projects that push the boundaries of traditional art forms.
- iii. **Promoting Cultural Tourism:** Developing strategic marketing campaigns to attract tourists, positioning Parramatta as a must-visit destination for cultural experiences.

Supporting Small to Medium Arts Organisations

Small to medium arts organisations are the backbone of a vibrant arts ecosystem. They often take creative risks and engage deeply with communities, providing invaluable cultural contributions. Parramatta can enhance its support for these organisations by:

- i. **Providing Financial Support:** Offering grants, subsidies, and financial incentives tailored to the needs of small to medium arts organisations and artists.
- ii. **Creating Affordable Spaces:** Ensuring access to affordable rehearsal, performance, production and exhibition spaces to foster artistic expression and community engagement.
- iii. **Building Networks:** Facilitating networking opportunities that connect small to medium arts organisations with larger institutions, sponsors, and potential collaborators.

Place-Based Tertiary Visual Arts and Performing Arts Education

To build a sustainable creative future, it is crucial to invest in education that equips young people with the necessary skills for tomorrow's creative economy. Parramatta should focus on:

- i. **Establishing Local Art Institutions:** Developing/partnering with tertiary institutions that specialise in visual and performing arts, ensuring that students have access to high-quality education within their community.
- ii. **Promoting Industry Integration:** Supporting programs that integrate students with local arts organisations and industry professionals, providing practical experience, training and fostering career pathways

4. Asia Pacific's Centre for Best-In-Class Education

Council refers to 'an opportunity for a significant new university to anchor Parramatta's identity as a knowledge city'. Western Sydney University should be acknowledged at the existing and already significant anchor tertiary institution in Greater Parramatta and Western Sydney region.

We also believe that the plan should identify the strengths of education in all of its districts.

We are unsure about the practicalities of Council's ambition for all 40 Australian universities to 'establish a presence in Parramatta' as well as international institutions. Instead, we believe the focus should be on quality, rather than quantity, especially given uncertainty in the tertiary education landscape.

No other university has our deep ties and commitment to the local community. Parramatta is the geographic centre of our operations.

Our campuses at Parramatta South, the Parramatta CBD and Westmead are major employers and generate substantial economic activity for the local community along with research and innovation.

Western Sydney University's innovative placemaking model – which works with industry, community and governments to breathe new life into city centres – also serves as a key economic and social catalyst in Western Sydney.

Our investment and strategic vision helped to revitalise Parramatta Square and make it a model CBD redevelopment. The University should be seen as first movers with a serious stake in Greater Parramatta's future.

The 2022 report, *Parramatta 2035*, produced by Western Sydney University and the Centre for Western Sydney recommended the NSW Government incentivise and fund deep and

integrated co-located between universities and industry to globally elevate and diversify Parramatta's innovation ecosystem.

It also called on the Commonwealth Government to structurally incentivise targeted university collaborations to make Parramatta Australia's first 'University City' where universities can partner in large scale city shaping social and economic initiatives.

The report found that one of Greater Parramatta's critical strengths is as a global education destination, which is home to several world-class universities and knowledge centres, innovation hubs, and a thriving international student community.

Transnational education opportunities

Strategic partnership opportunities also exist between Council and the University in relations to our transnational education strategy. This would help create a global ecosystem of learning and skills for future Parramatta workforce.

Western Sydney University is opening a campus in the Indonesian city of Surabaya later this year, providing a direct link for students studying in Indonesia to benefit from existing campuses in Greater Parramatta.

We are well positioned to directly assist Council on delivering the initiative of facilitating international exchanges, through our ventures in Indonesia and Vietnam and the subsequent opportunity created for direct links between students.

5. Camellia-Rosehill: A Model City

Camellia and Rosehill are designated as the 'Model City District'. The plan fails to recognise Rydalmere as part of this district.

We strongly recommend Council's strategy include Western Sydney University's Parramatta South campus and Rydalmere in this district based on the opportunity for integrated place outcomes including education.

Stage 1 and Stage 2 of the Parramatta Light Rail enhances connectivity between Camellia, Rosehill and Rydalmere, further underscoring the rationale for three these hubs as a district.

If this district is to be 'a living lab', then the university should be part of this.

Recommendation 1

The proposed Model City District of Camellia-Rosehill be expanded to include nearby Rydalmere, including Western Sydney University's Parramatta South Campus.

6. Silverwater: Jobs for the Future

We believe repositioning Silverwater into a magnet for jobs for the future is a solid strategy to help to address Parramatta's economic complexity.

The strategy should investigate the concept of 'Innovation districts' where proven examples comprise a mix of education, residential and commercial along with shared community space, and a location 10-15 kms from central business districts.

It is important for precincts to be designed where people want to go and are dynamic and active. They can be categorised as:

- **Physical assets:** high amenity, mixed-use urban development
- **Economic Assets:** anchor manufacturing businesses, research bodies, and training institutions, and
- **Networking Assets:** world class meeting and working spaces that support entrepreneurial activity.

Recommendation 2

Council investigate the concept of 'innovation districts', particularly for the redevelopment of Silverwater. Proven examples comprise a mix of education, residential and commercial along with shared community space, and a location 10-15 kms from central business districts.

7. Parramatta International

As part of our Unlimited Potential project, the Centre for Western Sydney has been consulting with a range of key stakeholders including international business leaders.

It is clear that to ensure Western Sydney, and therefore Greater Parramatta, can attract international investment, a type of concierge service is needed. Investors need to be able to cut through red tape and know exactly where to go to discuss international partnerships, global trade and investment.

Council's ambition to establish Parramatta International as an entity to foster economic development in Global Parramatta would solve this issue. Western Sydney University looks forward to assisting with establishing such a collaborative venture.

8. Conclusion

Sustainability

Noting the planning horizon of 2050, the plan could do more to address how Parramatta will transition to carbon positive or be a truly sustainable city. There is the Model City district to test Green urban transformation which is one key move.

Western Sydney University has topped the Times Higher Education's Global Impact Rankings for global sustainability for three years in a row. We stand ready to partner with Parramatta City on advancing and aligning the United Nations sustainable development goals in the region.

We are keen to see more detail on how Parramatta can meet carbon zero or carbon positive commitments.

Centre of Tourism

Parramatta's centricity should be leveraged to attract greater tourism. It sits right in the middle of Sydney City and the Blue Mountains, offering an ideal location to be based to experience the best of Sydney, yet this rarely is levered or promoted, and the infrastructure mix should provide a platform for this.

Housing

Whilst it's not in the purview of Council to be addressing all issues surrounding the housing crisis, its priority and importance along with the strain it has on economic growth suggests that its vision statement should go further in outlining measures to address the ongoing challenge of affordable housing supply to address growing inequality impact this region.

ⁱ Unlimited Potential, The Centre for Western Sydney, February 2024. Page 7.