

Analysis of Woollahra Council's Crown Lands Survey Response Report as it relates to Christison Park

This analysis and summary report is derived from information in the Woollahra Council's document: *Crown Land Reserves Survey: Survey Response Report 26 March 2018 – 20 April 2021*. Responses were received to the survey between 12 May 2020 and 21 August 2020.

This report, authored by Dr Marian Tulloch*, was sought by the Save Christison Park Action Group as the Survey Response Report which Woollahra Council has provided has no analysis of responses to open-ended questions, no summary of Christison Park data and is 584 pages long.

An initial overarching question was asked of all respondents:

What do you value about Council's Crown Land Reserves? (Select all that apply)

The three most nominated responses of why Crown Land Reserves are important to users throughout the Woollahra municipality were:

- biodiversity (264 responses)
- Aesthetic quality e.g. the views (246 responses)
- Health and well-being opportunities, space for escape, enjoyment, inspiration and reflection (226 responses)

114 (37%) online respondents specifically elected to complete the section on **Christison Park**.

In addition **15 residents submitted a short paper version of the Christison Park survey**. These appear as an unsorted addendum to the formal report. These responses have been collated and added to the reported survey totals.

Four multiple choice questions were asked about Christison Park.

Q 35. How often do you visit? (n=127)

Daily	54%
Weekly	23%
Monthly	8%
Occasionally	14%
Rarely	5%

Q36. When do you visit? (n=124)

Weekdays	81%
Weekends	77%
Public Holidays	30%
Other Comments	5%

Q37. How do you get there? (n=124)

On foot	73%
Car	40%
Bike	3%
Public Transport	3%

Respondents are primarily locals. They visit the park very regularly, over half of them on a daily basis.

Q38. What do you do there? (n=127)

Go for a walk on the Bi-Centennial Coastal Cliff Walk	84%
Appreciate the place, the environment, the space, the views	83%
Walk my dog	61%
Enjoy passive recreation e.g. picnic, personal reflection	35%
Enjoy active recreation e.g. running, bike riding scooter	20%
Participate in social gatherings	20%
Use the outdoor fitness equipment	16%
Use facilities	14%
Use basketball court	10%
Participate in or take others to organised sport	9%
Other activities	13%

Over 80% of respondents nominate appreciating the natural environment and walking the Bi-Centennial Coastal Cliff Walk as their park activities. Over 60% of respondents walk their dogs there. Over a third of residents enjoy passive recreation and over a fifth nominate social gatherings and individual active recreational activities. Between 10-15% nominate their use of facilities including fitness equipment, basketball courts or organised sport.

Responses to open-ended questions: method of analysis

A series of open-ended questions were asked both about Woollahra Crown Land Reserves in general and about individual reserves. This report concentrates on responses to issues that are specifically identified as comments on Christison Park. These comments may appear under open-ended questions about your favourite reserve or special characteristic of a reserve (Q2), Biggest Concerns (Q3), Improvements to Reserves (Q4) and Anything else to add (Q147) and in the section of the survey dedicated to open-ended questions about Christison Park: Issues concerning Christison Park

(Q39), Suggested Improvements (Q40) and Other Comments (Q41). (The printed survey did not include Q2, Q3, or Q4.)

Responses to different questions are partially but not totally overlapping; some respondents raise their key issues multiple times throughout the survey. Although all Screen Names are redacted from the report, each comment is tagged with a date and time of submission. It is therefore possible to identify multiple comments attributable to one person. In discussing the **number of respondents** raising a particular issue, in this report each respondent is only counted once. In this way issues are reported by number of respondents who raised an issue not by number of times the issue was raised. The same principle was used in counting the responses in the paper surveys.

Respondent feedback is organised under four key themes that characterised the feedback. Although the specific context of each reserve is different the thrust of the feedback is very clear and aligns with the overall values of respondents to the Woollahra Crown Land Reserves survey in its prioritisation of the natural environment.

Overdevelopment

Christison Park is highly valued for its beautiful ocean views and its open natural coastal environment.

Overdevelopment was the dominate concern regarding Christison Park. There were **60 respondents** whose concerns can be characterised as wanting the preservation of the park's open space and a rejection of current or future overdevelopment of the park towards a built environment. These respondents value the open natural environment, the ocean views including whale watching.

Overall respondents were strongly opposed to overdevelopment, asking that the park be well maintained but otherwise left alone with the natural environment preserved; for example

Stop spoiling the natural environment

Leave it alone

No built environment in the park

Protect the natural environment and the peace and quiet

Preserve the open space, natural coastal environment

I would be deeply concerned with more development on the park, its open space and location is amazing, more lights/development would do nothing to benefit the nature of the park.

Sporting Facilities

5 respondents commented on the value of the existing sport and exercise facilities. There were limited respondents wishing to extend sporting facilities or sports hours (**6 respondents**). These included proposals for netball courts (3), a kid's bike track (1) and a synthetic soccer field (2).

One of these responses contained a detailed proposal for a sporting precinct excavated underneath part of Christison Park with multiple basketball courts and parking, with a synthetic multipurpose oval on top with *'the existing aesthetics and ambience of Christison Park being largely maintained'*.

This respondent notes that other reserves in the municipality should be kept largely the way they are.

One response specifically addresses such a proposal:

I have been visiting this park for over thirty years. I'm sure I speak for many visitors both local and overseas who have enjoyed this unspoiled natural location with interesting heritage features nearby. Please consider the uniqueness of this location in planning for your Municipality there must be other ways of meeting needs for formal sports facilities.

45 respondents made specific negative comments about recent or proposed sporting/built additions to the park: rejecting the recent addition of a second basketball court and installation of sports lighting, opposing artificial turf, increased organised sport or a sporting precinct. The comments align with the broad thrust of concern about overdevelopment and extension of built environment in the park. Several respondents commented on the value of the space for informal games by children and grandchildren. A variety of detailed comments point to ways in which the natural features of the park could be enhanced by specified maintenance.

Lights

The recently installed sporting lights around the new courts and bollard lights along the Bi-Centennial Coastal Cliff Walk were the biggest single issue affecting not only Christison Park (**43 responses**) but neighbouring Lighthouse and Signal Hill Reserves. The lights were cited as one of the primary examples of overdevelopment, light pollution (loss of night sky and

has degraded the opportunity to be close to nature for a few moments.

21 of these respondents forcefully requested removal of these lights. There was strong condemnation of a perceived lack of proper community consultation about these initiatives. There detracted from striking beauty of lighthouse) and destruction of the natural environment. The recently installed bollard lights were described variously as: ugly, awful, an eyesore and a disaster.

It has turned a lovely walk into a walk down an aeroplane runway of shiny landing lights. Massively over specified in quantity and unnecessary in the first place. Really was only one positive comment on the new bollard lights with two respondents requesting more lighting and video surveillance.

Dogs

As the multiple choice item Q39 indicated, dog walkers are major regular users of Christison Park. In line with other parts of the municipality, the question of dogs was somewhat divisive. **Many respondents (35)** indicated they valued Christison Park as a dog off-leash park. Some wanted extension of off lease times (**5 respondents**) and many (**21 respondents**) were anxious that dog off-leash time might be curtailed or impeded by developments. There were **8 respondents** who complained about dog faeces and/or dog behaviour. Absence of poo bags and bins was mentioned, including by some dog owners. Regular ranger visits were also suggested to ensure rule compliance.

Summary

Christison Park is clearly one of the highly valued Crown Land Reserves in the Woollahra municipality. **Over a third of survey participants** responded to the Christison Park section of the survey with three quarters of these visiting the park on a daily or weekly basis. The opportunity for

walking (in many cases with dogs), the open space and views are highly valued in the city environment. The multiple uses of the park are accepted by most respondents as long as there is not an increase in the built environment of the park. Council could assist in the management of dogs by better provision of bags, and regular Ranger visits. The new lighting has been strongly objected to as spoiling the natural ambience of the park which many comments suggest is under further threat.

Dr Marian Tulloch PhD, is the author of this analysis based solely on material in the Woollahra Council Crown Lands Survey Response Report. She taught Research Methods at Charles Sturt University for over 15 years and has published refereed articles using quantitative and qualitative research methodology. In a senior executive role she has reported on survey data for policy development. She resides outside the Sydney metropolitan area.*