

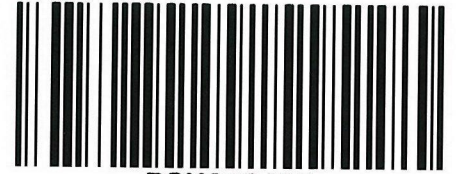


## Cumberland Bird Observers Club

PO Box 550, Baulkham Hills NSW 1755

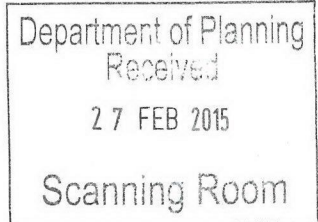
[www.cboc.org.au](http://www.cboc.org.au)

24 February 2015



PCU058460

Director, Urban Renewal,  
Department of Planning and Environment,  
GPO Box 39  
SYDNEY NSW 2001



Dear Sir/Madam,

**Re: Proposed amendments to planning controls in Sydney Olympic Park**

On behalf of Cumberland Bird Observers Club Inc (CBOC), I thank you for the opportunity to comment on changes to permissible uses in RE1-zoned areas of Sydney Olympic Park (SOP), mooted by the Department of Planning and Environment.

CBOC is a community organization with about 500 members. We are very keen on observing birds in Sydney and wider afield, and are especially concerned with the conservation of birds and their habitats. CBOC has regarded SOP as a particularly special area for birds since the start of its development about 25 years ago. Few major cities in the world have such a large area of important wetlands, woodlands and grasslands within a few kilometers of their central business districts.

CBOC has been closely associated with the park and its ecology staff for much of the past 25 years, and many of our members have taken part in annual bird surveys there, for the Sydney Olympic Park Authority (SOPA), in each of the past 11 years. These surveys sample 49 sites with diverse habitats throughout SOP over eight weeks in spring. As a result, CBOC has an extensive knowledge of the ecology of most of SOP and an understanding of the fragile nature of many of its habitats.

Since 2000, an impressive 200 (two hundred) bird species have been recorded in SOP, with 129 species recorded in the 2013 spring surveys. Species diversity is rising as habitats (natural and man-made) improve, in many cases through targeted management. The bird list for SOP includes nationally threatened species like Australian Painted Snipe, local rarities like Mangrove Gerygone, and regionally special nesting White-bellied Sea-Eagles (known to numerous people through Eagle-cam). The diversity of bird habitats is likely to keep attracting additional unusual species, particularly migratory shorebirds. Ornithologists from around the world who visit SOP marvel at its range of birdlife and all say how lucky people in Sydney are to have it.

**CBOC considers it most important that the present mix of recreation zones and environmental management zones in SOP is strictly maintained in the long term.** The latter zones include natural and planted woodlands, lakes/ponds, other freshwater wetlands, saltmarsh, and mangroves. These

habitats are being actively and successfully managed by SOPA staff to improve their value for birds and other wildlife. It is vital that this management is allowed to continue and expand without any threats from commercial or other disturbing developments. We understand there is a legislated obligation for SOPA to at least maintain existing biodiversity in SOP.

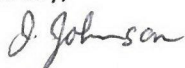
CBOC does not oppose the development of additional appropriate facilities for passive recreation in current RE1-zoned areas of SOP, to cater for the already very large numbers of people who visit these sites on weekends and holidays. Under present zoning, these people and their activities are coexisting satisfactorily with the wildlife habitats. A few extra cafes, temporary markets and visitor education centres should not create problems if they were well-planned and kept away from environmentally sensitive areas. The careful "sympathetic reuse" of some of the old naval buildings on the Armory land for tourist accommodation and other low-impact uses may also be possible.

If any new buildings or car parks etc are constructed on RE1-zoned land, adequate buffer zones must be created (within RE1 land) and maintained between such developments and woodland, wetland or natural grassland areas, to prevent inappropriate disturbance of these natural areas.

We strongly oppose the notion of permitting the establishment (other than possibly in some existing buildings, and of small scale) of certain of the facilities proposed in RE1 areas of SOP – including child care centres, places of worship, public administration buildings, markets (if permanent), commercial function centres, and day care centres. These imply the possibility of sizeable new constructions with extra car-parking areas, which could alienate areas of open space (even if only exotic grass) from public recreational use and use by wildlife. A claim that such developments would "increase the space for recreation [in SOP]" made in DPE's *Frequently Asked Questions* document about the proposals (Jan 2015) is not credible. New developments of moderate to large scale would in fact have the opposite effect and we consider they should have no place in such a special parkland area as SOP.

CBOC trusts that Sydney Olympic Park Authority and the Dept of Planning and Environment will continue to recognise the great natural values of SOP and will work to maintain or enhance these values through careful management. We look forward to continuing working with SOPA in future to monitor the rich birdlife in the parklands and encourage more people to observe and appreciate it.

Yours faithfully,



**I. G. Johnson**

Ian Johnson

**Conservation Officer,  
Cumberland Bird Observers Club Inc.**