

The Director  
General Purpose Standing Committee No.6  
Legislative Council  
Parliament House, Macquarie Street  
Sydney NSW 2000

July 14, 2016

Dear Director

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission to the Inquiry into Crown Land.

The Sisters of Mercy Parramatta oppose the NSW State Government's proposal to take the land currently leased by Parramatta City Council for a public swimming pool (Crown Land: Lot2 DP 862127) for a stadium precinct, with private commercial buildings to be placed on the site as well as the Stadium Expansion by Venues NSW and the State Government.

The land that the War Memorial swimming pool uses is being taken by the State Government to sell for private commercial development. This proposal and planning has occurred without consulting the general community. We believe that such a public facility available for use by the whole community including local schools and clubs should not be sacrificed to the interests of football and private developers.

In 2014 the NSW Government declared a \$2 billion redevelopment of the heritage precinct of North Parramatta involving sale of some of the land to private developers for high rise apartments to accommodate thousands of residents. We oppose this redevelopment also as it will impact adversely on heritage listed buildings and the landscape of the 1848 Cumberland Hospital, the 1818 Female Factory, the 1866 Wisteria Gardens, the 1835 Parramatta Gaol and the 1841 former Roman Catholic Orphan School redeveloped as the Parramatta Girl's Home in 1887.

The Sisters of Mercy came to Parramatta in 1888 and have a strong connection to and appreciation of the history and culture of this early white Australian settlement. The Sisters were untiring in their efforts to establish schools and, in the early days, to visit the asylum hospitals, the Parramatta Girls' Home and the Parramatta Gaol in order to bring compassion and comfort to the people suffering within the walls of these institutions. We have come to understand and respect more recently the importance of the historic Aboriginal presence in the area that continues to the present. Evidence of this can be seen in sections of the precinct under threat by the proposed development. The history and culture of such places should never be compromised by unsympathetic and inappropriate development to satisfy purely private commercial benefit.

We understand the need for more housing in the Parramatta area, especially social and low cost housing, neither of which seem to be part of the proposed high rise apartment development. Community groups have made approaches to Government, Council and UrbanGrowth NSW suggesting alternative sites away from this uniquely historic precinct.

In opposing the proposed sale of public land in Parramatta it is our hope that your inquiry will cause the Government to pause the current process spearheaded by UrbanGrowth NSW to allow for genuine community consultation to ensure that public land used by the swimming pool and in the North Parramatta precinct with its national heritage, river connectivity and open space and parkland, be allowed to realise its full historic, cultural, and artistic potential for future generations to experience and enjoy.

I close with the following quote from Pope Francis in his landmark document *Laudato Si: On Care for Our Common Home*:

*Together with the patrimony of nature, there is also an historic, artistic and cultural patrimony which is likewise under threat. This patrimony is a part of the shared identity of each place and a foundation upon which to build a habitable city. It is not a matter of tearing down and building new cities, supposedly more respectful of the environment yet not always more attractive to live in. Rather, there is a need to incorporate the history, culture and architecture of each place, thus preserving its original identity. Ecology, then, also involves protecting the cultural treasures of humanity in the broadest sense. (145)* Pope Francis. *Laudato Si* 2015.

Yours sincerely

Sister Catherine Ryan  
**Congregation Leader.**  
**Sisters of Mercy Parramatta**