

16 September, 2015

Troy Grant
Deputy Premier of New South Wales
as NSW Minister for the Arts

Mark Speakman
NSW Minister for the Environment

WESTERN SYDNEY CREATIVE CENTRE
MAYS HILL GATEHOUSE – PARRAMATTA PARK

Deputy Premier Grant and Minister Speakman,

I write to you in your capacities as Ministers for the Arts and Environment respectively in regards to the Mays Hill Gatehouse, a restored heritage cottage located within the grounds of Parramatta Park. Throughout 2014 and early 2015, \$1.3 million was allocated towards restoration works to protect this 1869 Gatehouse, and in June 2015 the Parramatta Park Trust called for Expressions of Interest to lease the facility as a commercial premises.

A decision has been made by Park Director Suellen Fitzgerald to award a long-term lease for the Mays Hill Gatehouse to a private operator, even though alternate proposals demonstrated far superior public access usage. As a facility owned and operated by the NSW Government on the behalf of its people, the Gatehouse is a rare commodity that is highly sought after by the community, and rightfully should be awarded to an operator who will use the space to enrich the community.

My colleagues and I submitted one of four EOIs received by the Parramatta Park Trust to establish the Gatehouse as the Western Sydney Creative Centre, a creative co-working facility built upon the principles of similar facilities focused on tech startups, providing a home for individuals and organisations operating in the Arts and Culture sectors focused on fostering the arts in Western Sydney. Our ultimate objective is to establish a permanent home within the mooted Parramatta Arts and Culture Precinct in the coming years, and to establish a temporary home immediately at the Gatehouse. A copy of our Expression of Interest has been attached for your consideration.

I seek Ministerial intervention to immediately override Director Fitzgerald's flawed decision to award the Mays Hill Gatehouse to a private lessor at the expense of at least two public use proposals. We have been advised that our proposed use would expose the driveway to the facility to too much traffic – even though we have indicated on several occasions that traffic would be mostly limited to disabled access (we do not believe that any other tender for a 170 square metre facility, public or otherwise, could realistically limit traffic to the extent indicated by the Parramatta Park Trust), and that our intended term of lease is too short – even though it is unlikely that any move to the new Arts and Culture Precinct (an unfunded project without a definite location) would occur within the next decade.

The Mays Hill Gatehouse remains an optimal site for the Western Sydney Creative Centre, and we contend the Parramatta Park Trust has provided no *valid* reason to justify its decision to reject our proposal in favour of a private bidder. As a heated discussion with both the Park Director and a representative of Arts NSW has indicated, there is no other feasible publicly-owned location for the Western Sydney Creative Centre, and we cannot hope to lease a privately owned space without subsidy if we wish to provide these essential services to not-for-profit organisations. Unless we are able to utilise a space like the Mays Hill Gatehouse, or immediately receive financial support towards a commercial lease for an appropriate space, the Creative Centre initiative will die.

As you will note in the attached correspondence between myself and Park Director Fitzgerald, our proposal has the full support of both the Liberal Member for Parramatta Dr. Geoff Lee, the Labor Member for Granville Julia Finn, and the Federal Member for Parramatta Julie Owens. These bipartisan endorsements highlight that **the Western Sydney Creative Centre is an ideal expression of the Arts and Culture policy of the NSW Government.** It represents an economically responsible approach to raising the profile of Western Sydney, Greater Sydney and New South Wales as the centre of Australia's creative industries. It will be the individuals and organisations within our Creative Centre that will form the foundation for the future Arts and Culture Precinct, and the work we will embark on within the Centre will enrich every arts and culture project in Western Sydney for the next three decades.

Our proposal may not be perfect, and the Mays Hill Gatehouse may not prove a perfect location for our Creative Centre – but without any other options available to us, the Mays Hill Gatehouse would allow this Government to tangibly and publicly foster and support Arts and Culture in Western Sydney immediately. We ask for immediate intervention in this decision, and to be considered as part of the Arts and Culture planning for Western Sydney from this point onwards.

Regards,

Andrew Quah

Senior Partner, Head of Creative Arts – The O-vation Group
on behalf of the Western Sydney Creative Centre Consortium

