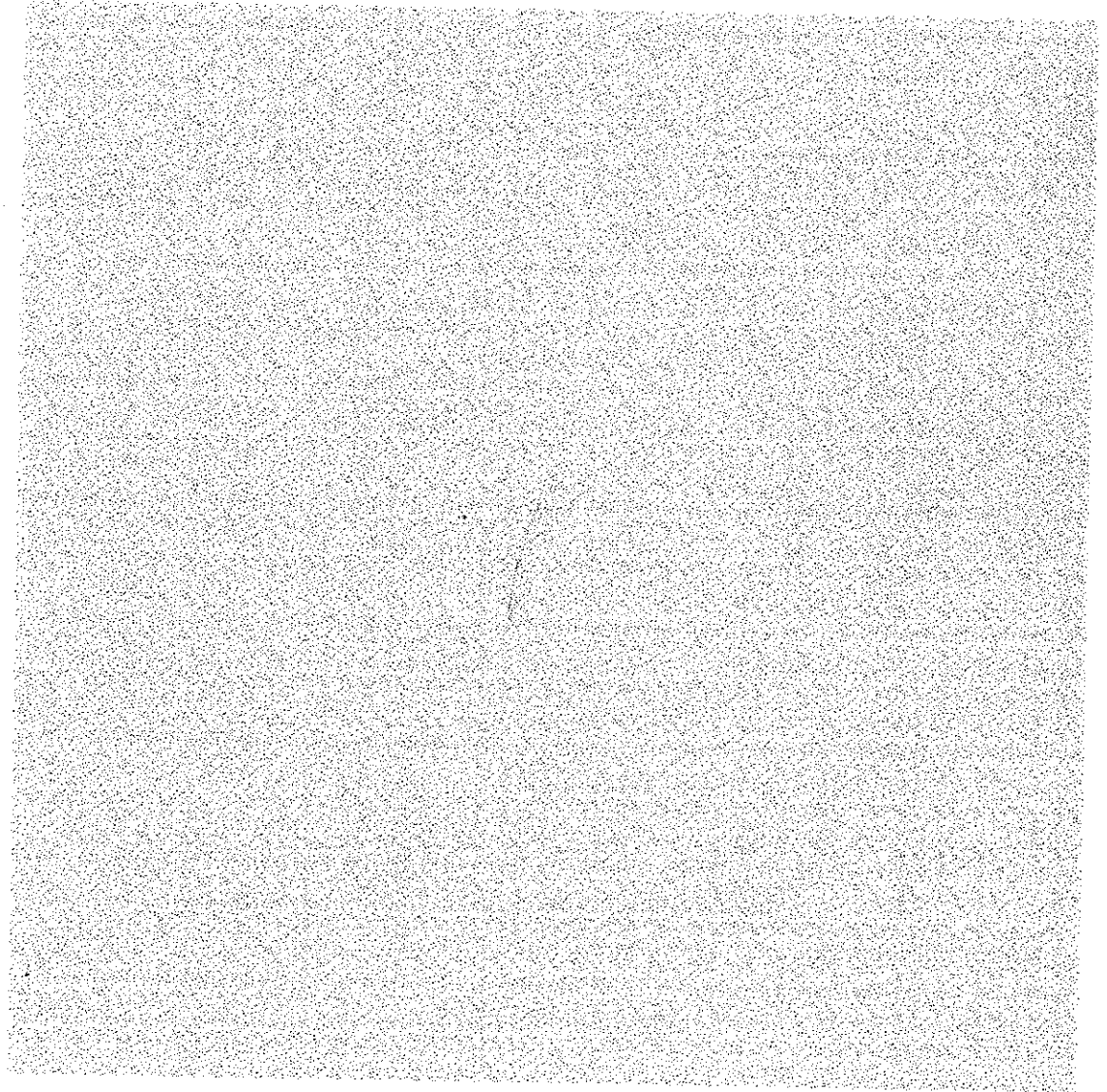


PLAN OF MANAGEMENT
1996

CHRISTISON PARK



WOOLLAHRA MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

FINAL DOCUMENT AS APPROVED BY COUNCIL
AT ITS MEETING 13 MAY, 1996



Plan of Management

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1

Introduction

1.1 Background

In June 1993, the Local Government Act (1993) was enacted. The Act includes specific requirements relating to the preparation of Plans of Management for community land.

Plans of Management will regulate the use and management of the land. They do not replace existing legislation/systems relating to the approval of activities and development.

Council manages 80 open space areas covering 100 hectares. Additional open space within the Municipality is managed by other authorities, such as Sydney Harbour National Park. Overall, there are 85 open space areas incorporating approximately 144 hectares of land within the Municipality. Of Council administered land, 72 per cent is Council owned and the remainder is Crown Land.

Council is currently preparing Plans of Management for all of its community land. Each plan functions as a decision-making tool for Council staff and as a document to inform the local community of the future of parks and reserves in their area.

This plan is devoted to Christison Park. The importance and uniqueness of the park within Woollahra's open space system necessitates this specific Plan of Management.

Christison Park attracts a range of local, regional and international visitors. Located in a world-class tourist area, it is linked to the many coastal attractions concentrated in Vaucluse and Watsons Bay.

1.2 Aims

The major aims of this report are:

- To establish objectives and priorities that will inform short and long term management at Christison Park.
- To create a reference document relating to future works programming and resource management for Christison Park.

1.3 Council's Land Management Goals

- To ensure the preservation of open space as a community resource for public access and recreation.
- To develop a regional co-ordinated approach to the management of open space.
- To encourage community participation in the management of open space.
- To satisfy district and regional needs for sporting and recreation facilities.

1.4 Category of Land

Christison Park is classified as community land and is categorised under the Local Government Act (1993) as:

- (a) a natural area (foreshore)
- (b) a sportsground
- (c) a park
- (d) general community use

1.5 Structure of the Plan of Management

The structure of this Plan of Management has been developed to facilitate its implementation.

The first section explores the history of Christison Park. A review of the current function, character and value of the park follows. This establishes a framework for the identification of issues relating to its management.

An action plan, formulating a practical response to each management issue, is presented in the final section of the document. It clearly sets out future actions, the department responsible for these actions, performance objectives and evaluation methods.

2

History

Christison Park was formed from a portion of land reserved for lighthouse purposes in December 1918. It is named after H. D. A. Christison, Mayor of Vaocluse in 1918.

The park was used by Council as a rubbish dumping site before World War II. Dumping halted in the late 1950s, with a Council decision to convert the area into sporting fields.

In the early 1960s, the park was levelled to create sporting fields using existing garbage fill and imported fill. Gun and bunker emplacements dating back to World War II were covered over as a result.

In 1964, a grandstand and amenities block were constructed, transforming the park into a fully-equipped playing fields area.

The profile of the park increased in 1988, with the advent of the Bicentennial Coastal Cliff Walk. This linked the site to adjoining harbour recreation areas, particularly Lighthouse Reserve, Signal Hill Reserve and Gap Park.

Recent improvements to the park include the construction of fitness structures and upgrading of the handball court in 1991.

3

Existing Situation

The Woollahra Municipality possesses approximately 24 kilometres of ocean cliff and harbour foreshore. Christison Park forms part of the 61 per cent that is directly accessible to the public.

The park is characterised by flat grass playing fields. Situated in an elevated position above a coastal cliff line, it offers extensive views of the ocean and harbour.

Christison Park is located along Old South Head Road, Vaucluse. It adjoins Lighthouse Reserve, and is surrounded by residential areas to the south, Old South Head Road to the west and steep vertical cliffs to the east.

Christison Park forms the starting point for the Bicentennial Coastal Cliff Walk, which stretches 1.5 kilometres to Gap Park. This walk offers local residents and visitors an opportunity to observe the harbour and ocean from a variety of vantage points. Much of Woollahra's prime foreshore land at South Head can be seen from Christison Park. The park is also visible from many points in Sydney Harbour.

The park landscape is relatively featureless. Its original landform was levelled to suit active recreation purposes, with an earth berm to the east and raised embankment to the west.

Vegetation, consisting of native plant regeneration areas and New Zealand Christmas Bush, is concentrated mainly along the Old South Head Road boundary. The coastal cliff area hosts some patches of remnant coastal scrub and many weed species. The rough, unkempt edge of the reserve adjacent to the cliff line contrasts greatly with mown grass embankments and plantings along Old South Head Road.

3.1 Area

Approximately 6.22 hectares.

3.2 Ownership

Crown Land reserved from sale and controlled by Council.

3.3 Facilities

Christison Park is equipped with numerous facilities, including:

- 4 cricket wickets;
- 6 football fields;
- handball court;
- walking track;
- fitness/exercise stations;
- grandstand;
- amenities block;
- seating;
- bubblers;
- rubbish bins;
- dog toilet.

3.4 Present Usage

Christison Park is a multi-purpose recreation venue catering for both active and passive recreation. It attracts a range of visitors throughout the year. Local residents, schools, sporting associations, clubs and visiting tourists use the park for a variety of purposes.

The playing fields support active pursuits including cricket, football, soccer and handball. Local sporting clubs, such as the Sunday Seagulls Soccer Club, use the fields to conduct matches and training sessions.

Passive recreation takes the form of walking, jogging and harbour viewing. Flat recreation areas, exposed to high winds, provide an ideal setting for kite flying.

Christison Park is occasionally used for organised functions and commercial activities such as filming and photography. Traditionally, the area is transformed into a viewing and car parking area during the Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race. Funds raised from this community event are donated to a local charity.

4

Basis for Management

4.1 Value and Role of Christison Park

Council bases its approach to the management of Christison Park on an assessment of its community value. The community value of a park is reflected in patterns of usage and visitor appreciation.

By identifying the valued aspects of Christison Park, Council is able to determine the role that it should play as a community resource.

Christison Park is located within a popular tourist area concentrated in Vaucluse and Watsons Bay. Thousands of visitors arrive each year to admire the natural features and historic character defining this part of Sydney Harbour.

Starting in Christison Park, visitors can undertake a long walk through Australia's colonial, maritime and natural history. The Coastal Cliff Walk highlights impressive cliff formations, the first operational lighthouse in Australia, and the site of a lookout post erected by early European settlers.

Christison Park, which forms part of this overall area, is valued as a community resource for the following aspects:

Recreation

- ▶ Multi-purpose recreation space.
- ▶ Start of Bicentennial Coastal Cliff Walk.
- ▶ Located within a popular Sydney tourist area.

Physical Environment

- ▶ Offers panoramic views of the harbour and water-based activities, such as the famous Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race.
- ▶ Flat grassed areas suitable for active recreation.
- ▶ Forms part of the unique geography of South Head, and is visible from many points in and around Sydney Harbour.

Heritage

- ▶ Former military function observable in remnant gun emplacements.
- ▶ Surrounded by historic sites such as Macquarie Lighthouse and Signal Hill, both reminders of Australia's colonial beginnings and maritime history.

4.2 Management Objective

Council intends to maintain and strengthen the sporting function of Christison Park and to further develop its passive recreation potential.

Attempts should be made to link the park to adjoining coastal recreation spaces, establishing a consistent approach to foreshore public open space provision.

5

Management Issues

This section identifies and explores issues relating to the management of Christison Park. These issues reflect input from park staff, previous reports, park user exit surveys and letters from the community.

5.1 Recreational Use

Council intends to strengthen and enhance recreational use at Christison Park by establishing linkages with adjoining public open space areas.

The Coastal Cliff Walk, which effectively joins public coastal areas from Christison Park to Gap Park, was created with this intention in mind. Further links can be achieved by maintaining continuity in landscaping, signage and planting throughout coastal cliff parks.

Council should further extend links to recreational and foreshore parks in the Waverley Municipality, especially the neighbouring Clarke Reserve. To this end, Council should establish a commitment with Waverley Council to ensure that developments in each park complement each other.

5.2 Views and Vistas

Harbour and ocean views contribute significantly to the visual character of Christison Park. These views should be protected and wherever possible improved by tree pruning and lopping if necessary.

Because of its escarpment nature, Christison Park is visible from many points in and around Sydney Harbour. Preservation of the park's skyline is of great importance.

Council should prohibit those developments which threaten to obstruct the natural skyline of Christison Park.

5.3 Maintenance

Facilities at Christison Park should be upgraded to accommodate a possible increase in recreational use.

Improvements will focus on improving the condition and appearance of the playing fields and existing built structures.

5.4 Cleanliness, Safety and Accessibility

To ensure public enjoyment and comfort at Christison Park, every attempt will be made to establish a clean, safe and accessible public open space. Council has identified a number of priorities dedicated to achieving this aim:

- Maintain clean public facilities and keep grounds of the park clear of litter and refuse.
- Protect the safety of park users by providing safe facilities and equipment.
- Maintain protective fencing along the cliff top.
- Provide adequate lighting to enhance the security of park users.
- The park is easily accessible by car, bus, cyclist or pedestrian. Grassed banks fronting the park make wheelchair access possible but not easy. To ensure that public access to the park is not restricted, Council will explore options for improving wheelchair access.

Park users have recently complained about dog droppings throughout the park. Measures should be taken to promote responsible behaviour among pet owners, by encouraging proper use of the dog toilet.

5.5 Parking and Traffic Generation

Inadequate parking and traffic congestion are a recurring problem for residents and park visitors throughout Watsons Bay and Vacluse.

Popular leisure periods, such as weekends and school holidays, lead to an increase in the number of tourists visiting the locality. Available parking is usually exceeded by demand, causing frustration for both local residents and park users.

Tourist coaches, which are able to deliver many visitors to the area without increasing parking pressures, offer a partial solution to this problem.

To ensure that residents are not affected by parking shortages, certain zones are designated exclusively to resident parking.

5.6 Drainage

Christison Park is the site of the main ocean outfall of the Vacluse Sewer and contains both underground and above ground drainage.

Council should establish an ongoing consultative process with Sydney Water, to ensure that future works do not impede on the recreational aspect of Christison Park.

5.7 Heritage Significance

Woollahra Council formalises its commitment to heritage conservation in the *Woollahra Local Environmental Plan* (1995). Heritage conservation, as outlined in the plan, involves the identification of heritage items and conservation areas and the provision of measures for their conservation, protection and enhancement.

Woollahra Council as the statutory authority responsible for Christison Park, is obliged to define and preserve its heritage character in accordance with this plan.

Christison Park is located in an area with strong historical associations of a nautical and military character.

It borders the famous Macquarie Lighthouse and Signal Hill Reserve, both significant navigational landmarks and a valuable part of Australia's maritime heritage.

Christison Park filled an important defence function during World War II. Naval and military installations on Inner South Head, together with other artillery garrison posts on Middle Head and North Head, contributed to Australia's coastal defence.

Artefacts demonstrating this heritage value in the park include:

- ▶ Three World War II gun emplacements;
- ▶ Command post and ammunition bunker located in the southern section of the park (now covered over.)

All items of heritage significance are to be conserved and emphasised within plan guidelines. Every effort will be made to alleviate threats to the survival and condition of these objects.

5.8 Permissible Uses

The Council may from time to time grant permission for the use of the park (or a specified part of the park) for organised games or sports, or for organised activities of a short-term nature such as concerts, weddings, photographic sessions, filming and commercial promotions.

The use of the park for organised games, sports or activities without the prior approval of the Council is not permitted. Application for approval for organised games or sports or for organised activities is to be made in the approved form. Approval (if granted) may be subject to conditions.

If the activity involves a commercial element an appropriate fee may be charged.

5.8 Sun Protection

Physical protection from the sun has become increasingly important. Open space areas may vary in the amount of shade provided for sun protection. It is requisite to provide shade trees or structures where necessary in parks to provide sun protection.

Council should consider increasing available shade sources at Christison Park.

5.9 Residential Amenity

The privacy of residences adjoining Christison Park should be maintained and residents should be consulted of any significant changes to the parks.

5.10 Plantings

Woollahra Council is currently regenerating native plant communities along the Coastal Cliff Walk. Part of this initiative involves regenerating coastal scrub in Christison Park along the cliff line.

Future plantings should provide park users with some protection against prevailing winds.

6 ACTION PLAN

MANAGEMENT ISSUE	TARGET	ACTION	DEPARTMENT RESPONSIBLE	PRIORITY	MANNER OF ASSESSMENT
Recreational Use	Strengthen and enhance recreational use at Christison Park.	<p>Create linkages between Christison Park and adjoining coastal recreation spaces by establishing continuity in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • landscaping; • planting; • signage. 	Technical Services (Parks & Landscape)	Ongoing	Monitor consistency of planning approaches in Christison Park, Lighthouse Reserve, Signal Hill Reserve and Gap Park.
Views and Vistas	<p>Preserve and improve harbour views.</p> <p>Protect the skyline nature of Christison Park.</p>	<p>Prune trees which may obstruct views.</p> <p>Prohibit any developments which threaten to interfere with the skyline of Christison Park.</p>	Technical Services (Parks & Landscape)	Ongoing	Undertake regular inspections to ascertain whether views are impeded.

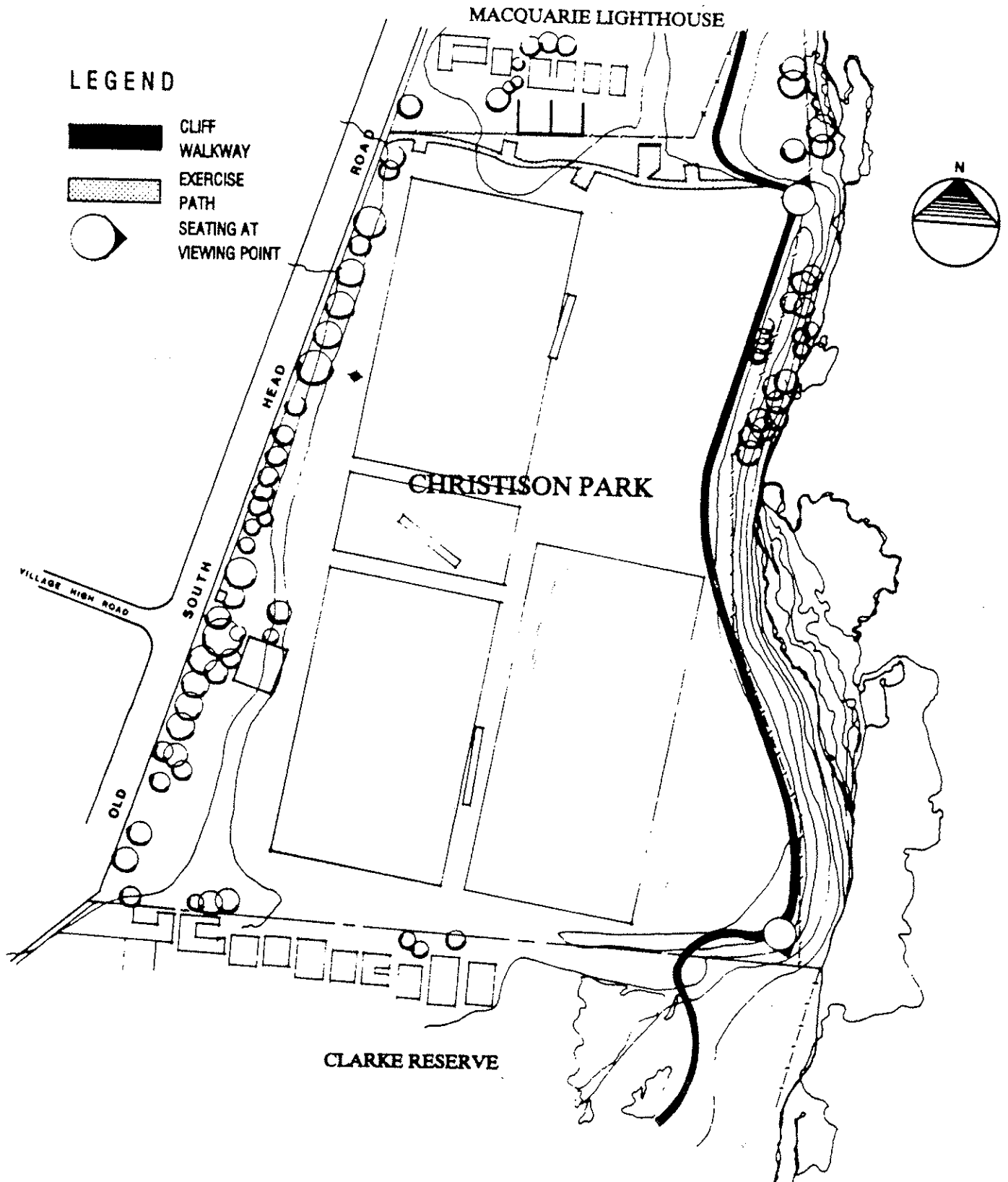
MANAGEMENT ISSUE	TARGET	ACTION	DEPARTMENT RESPONSIBLE	PRIORITY	MANNER OF ASSESSMENT
Maintenance	Maintain and improve facilities where necessary.	Plan long-term maintenance projects for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • built structures; • fencing; • playing fields; • pathways. Consistent implementation of routine maintenance procedures, which include planting, pruning, mowing, rubbish collection and cleaning.	Technical Services (Parks & Landscape)	Ongoing	Review maintenance procedures on a regular basis to ensure that they meet maintenance schedule priorities and standards.

MANAGEMENT ISSUE	TARGET	ACTION	DEPARTMENT RESPONSIBLE	PRIORITY	MANNER OF ASSESSMENT
Cleanliness, Safety and Accessibility	Maintain a clean, safe and accessible open space area.	Clean litter and refuse quickly and effectively. Maintain safety features of facilities and structures. Improve disabled access.	Technical Services (Parks & Landscape)	Ongoing	Regular checks, particularly during peak periods, to ensure that rubbish bins are emptied and litter collected. Ensure that current and future facilities comply with Australian Standards. Assessment of options for improving disabled access.
Parking & Traffic Generation	Maintain parking facilities for park users without restricting resident parking.	Consider the implementation of a residential parking scheme.	Technical Services (Design & Investigation)	Ongoing	Periodically assess the effectiveness of current parking strategies.

MANAGEMENT ISSUE	TARGET	ACTION	DEPARTMENT RESPONSIBLE	PRIORITY	MANNER OF ASSESSMENT
Drainage	Ensure that Drainage works do not impede on the recreational nature of the park.	Commit to an ongoing consultative process with Sydney Water.	Technical Services (Design & Investigation)	Ongoing	Annual report assessing the effectiveness of current Drainage Works. Regular inspections to ensure that additional drainage works do not unduly affect the recreational aspect of the park.
Heritage Significance	Maintain the heritage character of Christison Park.	Conserve, protect and enhance identified heritage objects and sites in accordance with the <i>Woollahra Local Environmental Plan</i> (1995).	Technical Services (Parks & Landscape)	Ongoing	Regular inspections to ascertain condition of heritage items and sites.
Permissible Uses	Facilitate organised functions or activities of a short-term nature.	Approval of such uses subject to conditions, and if of a commercial nature, the imposition of a fee.	Technical Services (Parks & Landscape)	Ongoing	Monitor and evaluate these activities.

MANAGEMENT ISSUE	TARGET	ACTION	DEPARTMENT RESPONSIBLE	PRIORITY	MANNER OF ASSESSMENT
Sun Protection	Provide adequate shade protection for park users.	Consider options for improving shade provision.	Technical Services	Short-term	Community consultation to assess sun protection needs of park users.
Residential Amenity	Maintain the amenity of local residences.	Assess the impact of proposed open space facility improvements on local residents.	Technical Services (Parks & Landscape)	Ongoing	Obtain feedback from local residents regarding future park developments.
Plantings	Maintain and enhance existing plantings to achieve an attractive park setting, while maximising wind protection and shade provision.	Replace existing plantings as required.	Technical Services (Parks & Landscape)	Ongoing	Monitor and evaluate overall suitability of plant selection and effectiveness of planting procedures.

CHRISTISON PARK MANAGEMENT PLAN



DRAWING: Existing Land Features



DATE: January '95 DWG NO 14597

WOOLLAHRA MUNICIPAL COUNCIL