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**Subject:** Children's skatepark original council submission fatally flawed

## **Children's skatepark original council submission fatally flawed**

Woollahra Council was lobbied by local skateboarders in 2013 requesting a skating facility for Paddington children aged 5-12 years old.

The group call themselves, collectively, SKATECRAFT – see their submission attached recently provided under council FOI.

Their submission was initiated by an architect, Sarah Scott and Michelle Aroney, Manager of the Glenmore Road Public School after School Care Cottage.  
The cottage caters to children aged 8-14 years old.

They claimed “Currently there is no local place in Paddington where the children of this age group are encouraged to play outdoors.”

However, this website lists nine places: <http://postcardsydney.com/playgrounds-in-paddington/>

They claim the children are “marginalised and disengaged”. I disagree.

In fact, there are activities such as cricket, sailing, swimming, tennis, bike riding, basketball, football, etc. they can pursue.

And Woollahra Council lists its own children's services and activities.

See [https://www.woollahra.nsw.gov.au/library/childrens\\_services](https://www.woollahra.nsw.gov.au/library/childrens_services) and [https://www.woollahra.nsw.gov.au/community/services/childrens\\_and\\_families](https://www.woollahra.nsw.gov.au/community/services/childrens_and_families)

SKATECRAFT is misleading councillors.

They request council “reconsider the design of our streets and our parks”, a very broad design brief which I suggest is too wide: they are trying to redesign a whole suburb.

They have consulted a skatepark designer, Brad Shaw at Sk8scape: <https://sk8scapes.com.au/>

They conducted an engagement project with a small number of neighbourhood youth, although there appears, in its photos, to be a pro-male gender bias in the engagement group.

The small number, only 23, is too small to be representative of the general municipality. It is not made clear where the engagement group of youth's lives, casting doubt on the validity of the submission.

They also claim skaters have been attacked with boiling water, although no police report is produced to corroborate this claim or any evidence of any injury.

This claim may therefore be exaggerated, but any event, is irrelevant to the merits of the proposal: an alleged assault is a police matter not within Council's jurisdiction.

Their submission notes that “Rushcutters Bay ... is too far away and ... kids are not allowed to cross the freeway by themselves”.

This is a case for *not* using R/Bay Park I submit. Their submission supports our case.

They favour other parks such as Trumper Park or use of streets and footpaths, which is illegal and dangerous.

We note that an initial suggestion to use Rushcutters Bay Park near the outdoor gym has been rejected by council.

They also say "one particular group [of skaters] utilises Sutherland Street ...residents tend to be old and don't like the noise"

This is an ageist remark and shows an anti-social streak.

They admit some within their group use the Bondi Beach facility. So why not continue to do so?

They also propose "double kickers" which are double-sided ramps on footpaths and recommend the Royal Women's Hospital Park. These "kickers" would be bolted to the pavement and are described as an "urban art installation".

These would be a public safety hazard I suggest and have no intrinsic artistic merit. The idea is unrealistic.

They claim such a park would only cost \$30-50K. I suggest this is an under-estimate. Council estimates the costs are \$1.1 million, also an underestimate I suggest.

## **Summary**

Their SKATECRAFT plan is fundamentally flawed I submit.

Council is right to reject the Rushcutters Bay Park site/s.

The SKATECRAFT report suggests alternate sites: they don't say that a skateboard facility should be *only* in R/Bay Park.

Their submission is factually incorrect and misleading.

Their submission appears to be based on a premise that they have an inalienable right to their own preferred use of public spaces. They forget public spaces belong to everyone.

Their report, now seven years old, is out of date.

Their report should be rejected.

Council's continuing blind support for the project based on the SKATECRAFT submission is misconceived.

## **Further action**

I have contacted the SKATECRAFT authors on 15.3.20 asking if they would reconsider a skate site elsewhere or one of the nine other sites, we suggested in our Site Survey 2018. They have not replied to date.

Thank you

**Andrew Woodhouse**

President, Potts Point & Kings Cross Heritage & Residents' Society

*Saving our Past for our Future*

**SAVE OPEN SPACES (SOS): RUSHCUTTERS BAY PARK**

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