

Labor

MEDIA RELEASE

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SHADOW MINISTER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE

FUNDING FOR BUSINESS HUB NOT A WIN FOR NSW HERITAGE

NSW Labor says the Government must explain a surprise \$100 million announcement for its proposed business hub at the historic Female Factory in Parramatta.

The Shadow Minister for Sport and Recreation, Lynda Voltz, said she was taken aback to hear Minister for Open Spaces Rob Stokes announce the investment yesterday on ABC Radio in response to a question on funding for the historic Cumberland Precinct.

“This is the first time we have heard any figure for this site,” Ms Voltz said.

“The reality is that the Minister for Western Sydney, Stuart Ayres, announced

on the 7th of December that the Female Factory would be turned into a business hub *'to provide 1500 square metres of affordable co-working space and programs to support Western Sydney start-ups, scale-ups and businesses.'*

“It is extraordinary that the Minister for Open Spaces thinks a \$100m subsidised business hub in a sensitive heritage precinct, particularly for a building as important as the Female Factory, is a win for our heritage.”

The Shadow Minister for Environment and Heritage Kate Washington said Rob Stokes needs to explain if all this funding is from the NSW Government, why it did not appear in the NSW Budget, and why it was not announced when the business hub was announced.

“This is an extraordinary and unbelievable revelation from the Minister. If it’s true, it should be referred to the Auditor General. I’m sure the people of Parramatta could think of much better ways of spending \$100 million dollars to showcase and improve Parramatta rather than destroying its heritage,” Ms Washington said.

Labor is also calling for better funding for parklands, with funding slashed every year and only \$14 million announced for the upgrade of Callan Park.

“The costs of land remediation and upgrade of the historic properties that have been allowed to fall into disrepair by this Government at Callan Park are significant and \$14m will barely scratch the surface,” Ms Voltz said.

“Funding for important parkland trusts such as the Parramatta Park Trust no

longer appear in Budget papers, and despite questions the Government has failed to reveal what funding if any Parramatta Park receives.”

Ms Voltz also said it seems the Government has a plan to overturn the current legislation that protects current parks including Centennial and Moore Park, Parramatta Park, Callan Park and Western Sydney Parklands.

“Despite what the Minister for Open Spaces said on radio, Parramatta Park has had a trust since 1858 and is considered one of the world’s oldest public parks,” she said.

“The legislation that protects the park trusts is also the legislation that protects the lands within the parks from raids by successive Governments. Any changes to our parklands legislation will also change the use of the land.

“This does not bode well for Callan Park whose Act specifically prohibits commercialisation or businesses operating on its site. The fate of the Female Factory is a bad omen for our historic parklands and the heritage buildings they contain.”

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