



# Night Time Economy

## Initial Focus Groups Report

City of Parramatta / 27 February 2017

## Research Objectives

The objectives of this research were to determine key areas to cover in an upcoming research project on the Night Time Economy in Parramatta. The research aimed to optimise coverage for the upcoming research study including inputs to the quantitative survey questions. As well as identifying what would engage participants in spending more time in the area, barriers to this were identified.

Three hotspots in the Parramatta LGA were to be explored in this research:

- Parramatta CBD
- Harris Park
- Epping

## Research Methodology

Four focus groups were run on the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> of February. The focus groups on the Night Time Economy in Parramatta were combined with asking questions regarding the Cultural Plan for Parramatta. The sessions were split into the following age groups:

- 16-24
- 25-39
- 40-59
- 60+

## Executive Summary and Key Points

### Future of Parramatta

- Younger participants are looking for more entertainment, activations and trendy cafes and bars in Parramatta in the future. In comparison, older participants were more likely to suggest practical improvements to the area such as parking and green space.

### Vision and Priorities

- The identified vision and priority for Parramatta that the majority of participants connected with the most was that Parramatta needs to be a 'liveable' city in the future. The main reason given for this was that Parramatta should fulfil the needs of people in the local area and surrounds without them needing to go elsewhere. There were many opportunities suggested for the City of Parramatta to fill these gaps given the central Sydney location.

### Heart of the City of Parramatta

- Participants identified that the heart of the city of Parramatta should be: accessibility (more public transport options to certain areas e.g. the hills and more parking options), green space, active nightlife, heritage and events.
- Participants suggested that linking major sites or attractions in the city will help pedestrian flow and minimise quiet spots around the city that can in term help improve perceptions of lack of safety in the area.

### Night Time Economy

#### Current night time habits

- The majority of participants spend at least some time in the Parramatta area in the evenings due to proximity.
- Younger participants are more likely to go to the Sydney CBD or Newtown for drinking or going out with friends on the weekend (as they feel that these are the places with the most happening) but would go to Parramatta on weeknights for something closer to home. Older participants were likely to go to restaurants in the evenings or come along with grand children to events.

#### Parramatta CBD

- A number of suggestions were made about how the Parramatta CBD could be improved in the evenings to encourage people to spend more time in the area. The most common responses were accessibility, live music, increasing the feeling of safety, trendy food and drink options (particularly among younger generations), more to do in the evenings apart from restaurants or specific events and late night shopping.

#### Harris Park

- The majority of participants suggested that Harris Park could be marketed better as 'Little India' or 'New Delhi' and have this promoted by running cultural events in the suburb.
- The safety of Harris Park was a concern, particularly around the train station as well as a lack of lighting. Accessibility was mentioned as an issue with not many parking spots available.

#### Epping

- The vast majority of participants across all sessions recommended that Epping was not an area that should be pursued for night life in the LGA. Many did not view it as an area that could be changed from being mainly residential with a few shops and restaurants.
- Most participants stated that the accessibility in Epping is an issue that even if it was built up they would rather go to the Parramatta CBD in the evenings.

### **Barriers and overcoming barriers**

- Some of the key barriers to spending more time in the Parramatta CBD in the evening were safety concerns, accessibility to some areas, lack of family entertainment, shops closing too early, lack of a niche offering and amenities (e.g. public toilets).
- Suggested ways to overcome these barriers include; late night free shuttle buses, more lighting, police presence, late night shopping every night and ongoing and regular activations in the evenings.
- Overall, participants recognise the importance of having several big draw cards to put Parramatta in the minds of people and this can be done through the presence of a brand that is already established (e.g. MAAS) and also through building on what we already have (e.g. Harris Park as Little India- to similar level of Chinatown), the dining scene at Eat Street, longer business hours and running various activations to bring the more people onto the streets during the day and evening.

## Heart of Parramatta

### Future of Parramatta

The following are a brainstorm of what participants would like Parramatta to be in the future. The younger generations were more likely to suggest entertainment, activities and activations, while these were still important to the older generations they were more likely to suggest practical improvements such as parking and green space.



### Vision and Priorities

Focus group participants were shown the vision and priorities that were decided on by residents in the area of the City of Parramatta. The following table shows the vision and priority that the participants engaged with most in each group.

Age Group	Number one vision and priority
16-24	<b>Liveable</b> <i>Parramatta has a lot of potential, more areas to live, cheaper living, bringing more people into community and business.</i>
25-39	<b>Sustainable</b> <i>Energy efficient lighting for parks, streets, people don't need to move all the way to the city, in Parramatta you are closer to everything.</i>
40-59	<b>Liveable</b> <i>If you can keep as much as possible within the local area shopping and everything you need is in the local area you don't have to waste time for travel.</i>
60+	<b>Liveable</b> <i>Liveable, the city needs to cater to the community.</i>

## What should the heart of the City of Parramatta be?

Participants were asked to create their ideal collage of what the heart of City of Parramatta should be. There are some examples below and the table outlines the most commonly occurring themes from the images that were created.



Heart of CoP Ranking in order of mentions	16-24	25-39	40-59	60+
1	Active nightlife of bars and clubs	Accessibility	Heritage	Accessibility
2	Events	Green space	Green space	Shops
3	Community feeling	International food	Events	Multicultural food
4	Accessibility	Events	Sport	Theatre/ culture
5	Family friendly	Bike riding	Shopping	Parks
6	Green space			
7	Food			

## Night Time Economy

### Current Night Time habits in Parramatta LGA

#### 16-24

Those aged 16-24 were less likely to use the Parramatta CBD as a place to go out drinking on the weekend but would access the area for food and eating out. They indicated they were more likely to go out locally (for many the Parramatta LGA) on week nights rather than the weekend where they would go out to the Sydney CBD.

*Doesn't have same culture as city, Parramatta could use no lock out laws as an advantage.*

*Church Street restaurants is the main reason I go there at night.*

#### 25-39

While many in this age group do spend time in Parramatta in the evenings, they would like to spend more time in the area at night but are held back by factors including parks closing early, not enough parking in the Parramatta CBD and transport to get home. They stated that the area is very busy on weekends but there isn't the accessibility to facilitate this (mainly suggested by those living in areas of low transport). They suggested that areas like Sydney Olympic Park could be activated as spots for night life if there are more people there.

*There is not enough transport to get home.*

*The weekends attract a lot of people.*

#### 40-59

The 40-59 age group suggested that a larger range of night time activities (not just bars/ clubs) would attract them to the area in the evening. Participants recommended night time concerts and utilising the park for events. Safety was a major concern as some participants do not feel comfortable walking from Riverside theatre to the train station in the evening.

*Could be more well thought out with concert and parks.*

#### 60+

The 60+ group spend time going out in the Parramatta area for eating out, outings with grandchildren or visiting friends and family.

*All sorts of restaurants.*

*Laneways are good, it depends on activities and work as to where in the area I go out during the week.*

### Future spots for Night Time Economy

Those aged 60+ particularly recommended some future hotspots for night life in the LGA. They suggested that areas near the station, Westmead and around the universities would be good locations for this.

*There should be more stuff (going on) around the university areas.*

*[They should utilise] areas where there are lots of people like Harris Park.*

## How could these areas change and improve in the future?

The below table outlines the ways that participants suggested that the three night time hotspots of Parramatta CBD, Harris Park and Epping could be changed and improved into the future.

*The below are quotes from the focus group participants.*

Location	Age 16-24	Age 25-39	Age 40-59	Age 60+
<b>Parramatta CBD</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Karaoke</li> <li>- Something like the Star Bar</li> <li>- Trendy bars with creative cocktails</li> <li>- Hipster places, like Newtown</li> <li>- Somewhere to go to get dressed up</li> <li>- Pop up food trucks and cafes</li> <li>- Cheap and affordable places to eat</li> <li>- Utilise the river more</li> <li>- Paddle boats, boat rentals or river cruises</li> <li>- Clean Centenary Square</li> <li>- An accessible youth centre</li> <li>- Create the Newtown vibe of graffiti on alleyways</li> <li>- Rooftop bars</li> <li>- Lit up festivals like the noodle markets in Hyde Park</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Live music</li> <li>- Micro breweries</li> <li>- Improve feeling of safety (police should be less tolerant of certain behaviours, it is a problem with young people particularly and women can feel particularly unsafe)</li> <li>- Better public transport</li> <li>- Free buses should continue in the evening</li> <li>- Shops open late</li> <li>- Street entertainment for kids</li> <li>- Library open until midnight for those in high rises or busy home who needs somewhere to work</li> <li>- Public spaces lit up</li> <li>- Activate Parramatta Park</li> <li>- Outdoor cinemas</li> <li>- More lighting across Parramatta in the evening</li> <li>- Do more with the Parramatta river</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Better street lighting</li> <li>- Better public transport</li> <li>- More public toilets</li> <li>- Reduce traffic noise on Church street</li> <li>- Potentially closing off Church Street to cars</li> <li>- Improve disability access</li> <li>- Big venue for concerts</li> <li>- More live music</li> <li>- More organic investment in entertainment not through council</li> <li>- Family friendly locations</li> <li>- More to do apart from movies</li> <li>- Wet and Wild in Parramatta park</li> <li>- Live concerts and bands in Parramatta Park</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Improve library</li> <li>- More buses in the evening</li> <li>- Visible policing</li> <li>- Hub of venues in similar locations</li> <li>- Parking at Ferry wharf</li> <li>- Art deco cinema</li> <li>- More venues</li> <li>- More entertainment</li> <li>- Smaller, more intimate music venues</li> </ul>
<b>Harris Park</b>	<p><i>*Several in this group (around one third) had not been to Harris Park or had not spent much time in the area</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Currently nothing to do there except for live or eat</li> <li>- Modernise</li> <li>- Embrace Indian culture</li> <li>- Hold more cultural events in the area</li> <li>- More visually inviting</li> <li>- Mini shopping centre for young people to hang out</li> <li>- Make well lit areas that are more safe especially around the train station</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Railway station upgrade, a lot of trains skip it</li> <li>- More lighting and street lights</li> <li>- Have a satellite library there</li> <li>- Create more of a 'Little India' with meeting spots and public spaces which reflect the culture</li> <li>- More retail strips in the area that reflect the culture</li> <li>- Public building commissioned by prominent Indian architect</li> <li>- Indian cinema</li> <li>- More cameras to make it feel safer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Give it a name like 'Little India'</li> <li>- Make it less congested</li> <li>- It is unsafe for kids-cars are just zooming through</li> <li>- More events there</li> <li>- There are already a lot of people there</li> <li>- Harris Park is more vibrant at night than Parramatta CBD</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Safety improved (not as safe as Parramatta CBD)</li> <li>- Parking needs to be improved</li> <li>- Make 'India Town' instead of China Town</li> <li>- More footpaths and accessibility</li> <li>- Could be developed more</li> </ul>
<b>Epping</b>	<p><i>*The majority of participants suggested that even if the Epping area was activated they would rather go to Parramatta CBD and don't see Epping as a location that could be a night life spot.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Not currently a strong offering, need to get the word out there</li> <li>- Need a McDonalds there</li> <li>- Epping club could be improved</li> <li>- Could capitalise on the tutoring centres, it is an education focused area.</li> </ul>	<p><i>*Little interest in Epping being activated as a hot spot for night life.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Area is exempt from lock out, could capitalise on this</li> <li>- Better building designs with double glazing</li> <li>- Less high density</li> <li>- Council would need to buy out private lands to create night life</li> <li>- With giant apartment blocks, make developers keep 30% for public use</li> <li>- Hard to access</li> </ul>	<p><i>*Many hadn't spent much time in Epping in the evening and were not interested in going there. Overall considered a safe place</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The M2 is too expensive</li> <li>- The transportation is difficult</li> <li>- It is horrendous traffic</li> <li>- Local musical society</li> </ul>	<p><i>*Little interest in going to Epping in the evenings. Find it difficult to see as a potential place for NTE compared to Parramatta CBD.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Epping pub used to be a good attraction</li> <li>- Traffic is an issue</li> <li>- It is completely residential and units going up</li> <li>- Safety is not a concern there</li> </ul>

## Barriers to spending more time in Parramatta CBD

Participants were asked to share the barriers that stop them from spending more time in the Parramatta CBD in the night time. They also recommended ways that these barriers could be overcome.

*'It is a culture issue to fix safety, more than just having police on the street.'*  
 -16-24 year old participant

Barriers	Suggested ways to improve this
<p><b>Safety</b> is a concern amongst participants in all age groups, although it has improved over time there are concerns about the type of people hanging around in some quiet areas  <i>'I've had some hairy situations waiting for the bus, creepy people hanging around.'</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Late night buses including another free bus to cover the areas the current one does not hit</li> <li>- More lighting in the streets</li> <li>- More police in the city</li> <li>- More people coming and going will change this feeling</li> <li>- Emergency stations throughout the city</li> </ul>
<p><b>Accessibility</b> in getting in and out of the area</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Late night free shuttle buses to get people from locations like Riverside or Church Street back to the train station</li> <li>- More parking stations</li> </ul>
<p><b>No entertainment</b> for family</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Ongoing activations apart from specific events that begin straight after work</li> <li>- Family friendly activations like outdoor cinemas in the park</li> </ul>
<p><b>Shops close too early</b> in the area</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Later shopping every night</li> <li><i>'If you have 3 or 4 nights of late night things shopping and events... it is something to do.'</i></li> <li>-Pop up food in the events</li> </ul>
<p><b>Amenities</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-More public toilets</li> </ul>
<p>Lack of <b>niche offering</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Parramatta should find a niche offering to attract (particularly) younger people to the area to spend time</li> <li><i>'There is nothing special about Parramatta.'</i></li> <li><i>'Parramatta's night life needs to be branded.'</i></li> </ul>

## Spending more time in the Parramatta CBD

The top suggestions for what could be done to encourage participants to spend more time in the Parramatta area in the evening are listed below.



### **Artistic hub**

*A large artistic centre like The Powerhouse.*



### **More evening activities**

*Activities other than restaurants to see/ do after having a meal.*



### **Cleanliness and safety**

*Key things: cleanliness (in the streets, park etc). Increased safety in the area.*



### **Branding and marketing the nightlife**

*More advertising, more events, activities, night life.*



### **Increased accessibility (public transport and parking)**

*Faster transport, more parking.*



### **Family friendly**

*Maintain a family community.*



### **Late night shopping**

*More shopping time.*



### **Cultural events**

*Have a lot of events from all different backgrounds.*



### **Live music**

*Restaurants, live music, shops open until late.*



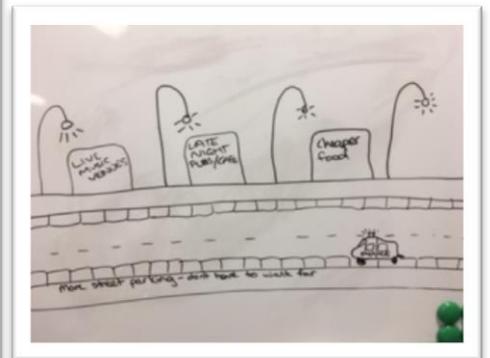
### **Trendy food and drink**

*Street food, street entertainment, open retailers and food outlets till late every night of the week!*

*Industrial areas could be utilised for live music and SOPA area.*

## Ideal Night Time Street

Participants were asked to create their ideal street at night time. There are some examples below and the table outlines the most commonly occurring themes from the images that were created.



Night Time Street (Ranked in order of most to least commonly shown )	Night Time Street			
	16-24	25-39	40-59	60+
1	Night life	Accessibility	Markets	Accessibility
2	Restaurants	Shops open later	Events	Events
3	Lighting	Restaurants	Fine food	Good food
4	Trendy food	Nightlife	Police	Café/ Al fresco dining
5	Accessibility	Lighting, CCTV camera	Live music	Lighting
6	Police			
7	Live music venues			