



Live, Work, Play

As the geographical, commercial, and cultural capital of Western Sydney, Parramatta is on the right track to becoming Australia's next great city.

Images courtesy of Parramatta City Council

Parramatta City Council is emerging as a national leader in local government, focusing on its role in managing a major CBD environment and providing a high level of service to residents, workers, and ratepayers. Its current focus is on urban renewal, namely its \$1.6-billion development of Parramatta Square.

The project will be completed in six stages and includes 5 Green Star-rated office towers; a 90-storey apartment block with a hotel, sky deck, and experience centre; improved community facilities; and an integrated public transport system. It will ultimately provide the City of Parramatta with a foundation for growth that is environmentally sustainable, vibrant, and aesthetically pleasing.

Greg Dyer has been serving the local government as CEO since February 2014 and says it is an incredibly opportune time for the

area to progress. His role is to help the 15 elected councillors realise a vision and strategic direction for the betterment of the community. He believes that Parramatta has huge potential as it grows and strengthens its position as a city hub. "We have a really pivotal role to play in economic growth from a national perspective, not just from a local government perspective," he notes.

Greg studied a double degree in economics and law, majoring in accounting, before he started his professional career with KPMG. There he gained a wide range of experience in a variety of industries, which prepared him well for his later work in the media, computer equipment, and property sectors. Furthermore, he represented Australia as a professional cricketer in the late 1980s.

"I needed to be able to have a number of different balls in the air

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at the one time on many different levels in most of my past roles," Greg says. "That really set me up very nicely, particularly for a role here at Parramatta, which has about 42 different operations and activities within the very broad base of activity that goes on within the day-to-day of a large city council. I am executing a strategy on behalf of our councillors who represent our ratepayers and have a view of the direction that the council and the city needs to take."

The population of Parramatta routinely swells and contracts. The area has just under 200,000 residents, but hundreds of thousands more flock there to work each day. "The task we have is to build a great city with plentiful work, lifestyle, and cultural opportunities for a rapidly growing population," Greg explains, "some of whom are transient, some of whom are coming to and from Parramatta on a daily basis via the third-busiest >



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rail station on the Sydney network, and then obviously we have a very traditional suburban environment.”

Furthermore, Parramatta has a very broad demographic in terms of age, educational background, and ethnicity. “We have a huge diversity here. We have quite a highly educated group, which is probably not expected in Parramatta, but we actually have a higher proportion of tertiary-educated people here

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than across Sydney more broadly. So that’s of note.”

To address the needs of such a diverse municipality, the local government ensures it adopts a range of strategies to communicate effectively. Greg recognises the opportunities that exist within the realm of technology, but doesn’t want to exclude other methodologies. “We want to be a smart city in that respect,” he says. “I think ‘smart’ in our case means that we adopt a diversity of communication strategies which suit the diverse demographics that we have here in Parramatta.

“I think, to be fair, we probably have a way to go in terms of the engagement that we have with our ratepayers. I think the communication needs to be strengthened and broadened. However, I also think it’s true to say that our councillors have very high levels of communication with their local communities and with ratepayers. They are effectively our

eyes and ears out there in the community. If they are hearing issues, then we get to learn about them pretty quickly.

“So the old-fashioned way to communicate sometimes still works pretty well. Councillors are very connected to the community, so we at an organisational level are probably the ones who need to improve our communication to some extent. The 15 councillors who are out there on a day-to-day basis certainly provide us with regular feedback.”

When Greg assumed his role with Parramatta, he went through a process of looking at the 10 core values paramount in the organisation. He discovered that it was all too much for staff to remember, let alone adopt and utilise, so he set about refining them to the most important.

“The first one is integrity as the base. We are a local government organisation and we are seen to

have a very high level of integrity; that’s, of course, the foundation of what we do.

“Then there’s teamwork. When I played cricket for Australia, teamwork was hugely important. I have often applied the same principles of what makes a really good team in a sporting sense to what makes a really good team in a corporate and organisational sense. I think there are a lot of parallels. I’m big on making sure that everybody is pulling their weight; that everybody knows what their role is in the organisation; and that everybody knows that they can depend on each other while still pulling their weight.

“Then innovation is another of those four principles that I am very keen to see. That’s probably an unusual one in a local government setting, but it is very important because we are creating something pretty significant here in Parramatta. It needs to have the characteristics

of a smart city—an innovative, interesting place with strong use of technology to drive future activity and economic benefit.”

Greg also has the view that Parramatta needs to develop solid and long-term relationships with its supply chain. “I think that’s key,” he notes. “We are in a local government environment and we are a public entity, so we have very strong requirements that we need to meet in relation to every transaction that we do. Within that framework, though, we want to ensure value for money for ratepayers.”

In recent times, Parramatta has been fortunate to be the focus of several infrastructure announcements in and around the lead-up to the New South Wales election earlier this year. There has been a commitment to a billion dollars worth of light rail, as well as to projects set to improve the ferry wharfs, the Camellia precinct, and the hospital environment at



Westmead—which is the largest hospital precinct in the Southern Hemisphere, with three hospitals and two research facilities.

Greg says this signifies the massive opportunities Parramatta has for growth, not just within its CBD but also in its fringes. “Over the next 10 to 15 years, it will grow at an exponential rate. We need to provide the settings for how all that can happen systematically and with the appropriate structure in place.”

“We have been managing car parks on behalf of Parramatta City Council since 2006. Thanks to their outstanding communication this has resulted in a successful working partnership that ensures the services provided to the market meet the expectations of all car park users.” - Peter Seales, General Manager New South Wales, Secure Parking

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