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## Cover story

SUE WILLIAMS

# Wonderland: last piece of the puzzle

Central Park has turned the old rundown brewery site in Chippendale into one of the liveliest urban precincts on the city's fringe.

**W**ith the last residential stage of the \$2 billion Central Park complex about to go on sale, the end is finally in sight to the 10 years of development that has

transformed the old 5.8-hectare brewery site at Chippendale into one of the most awarded masterplanned developments in Sydney.

It's also turned the rundown inner west district into one of the liveliest urban precincts on the city fringes. "Central Park has been a great success," says close neighbour Judith Neilsen, one of Australia's leading style barons, philanthropists and art collectors who owns the acclaimed White Rabbit Gallery nearby.

"They have created a friendly space with a village atmosphere, where there is a tangible sense of ownership and belonging. Living in it, I've been able to see the pleasure and enjoyment the green spaces have given the community. You see all sorts in the park: dog walkers, students, locals, fitness groups, barbecues, parties, joggers, families. Everyone uses the shopping centre, comes in to see the VIVID installations, and Spice Alley and the restaurants are flourishing. It's very special."

The joint venture development, between Frasers Property Australia and Sekisui House, of about 2200 homes over nine buildings, is now due to be completed by early 2019, with the final residential release of a new 294-apartment parkside building, Wonderland, to take place over the next few weeks (see box, right).

Frasers Property Australia development director Mick Cadday says it's been astonishing seeing the project gradually take shape. "We've achieved something that just isn't monolithic," he says. "There have been so many different things and different architects involved, and modern buildings as well as restored heritage buildings, and little laneways and food areas. They're all so diverse, the only aspects they have in common are the consistency in presentation and the quality. It's been a really fabulous journey seeing it all come together, and for the city to get these developments up."

Onlookers, such as Chris Johnson, chief executive of the Urban Taskforce Australia, also sees it as a huge plus for Sydney. "I think it's the leading project in setting the agenda for how well high-density living can actually work," he says. "It's a pretty dense place, with 1000 people per hectare, but there are still parks, open space, gyms, a childcare centre, lots of amenity."



"It's a great mix of residential and student accommodation, retail and commercial and it's one of the best examples we have in Sydney of a bustling, commercially successful living environment. And it's won so many awards!"

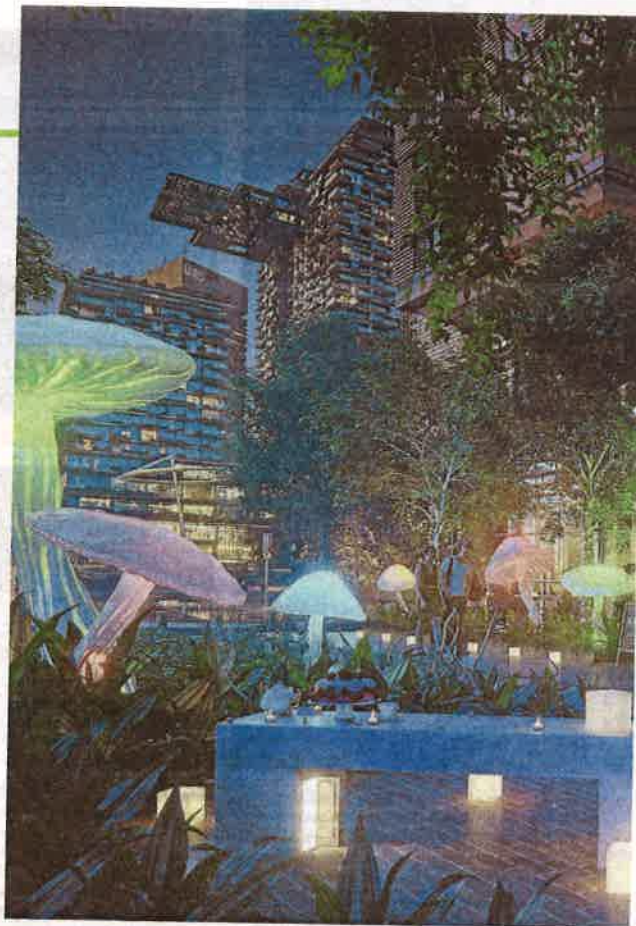
Since 2009 the development has been presented with no fewer than 28 international, national and state awards for architecture, green credentials, building standards, and interior design for residential, retail and commercial. Chief among them was the title of Best Tall Building Worldwide, for One Central Park, from the Council for Tall Buildings and Urban Habitat; and the winner of the World Green Infrastructure Congress's International Green Infrastructure Award.

Professor Sue Holliday of urban policy and strategy at the University of NSW, says Central Park should be applauded for trying hard to introduce sustainability into its design. "They made a lot of positive moves in that direction, which is where inner-city regeneration needs to go," she says.

"It's also brilliantly connected with shopping and laneways, and all that is funky and engaging for people like Gen-Xers and millennials. Others might say it's too high and overshadows and isn't consistent with Chippendale. But I sometimes compare it to Green Square and Victoria Park, which doesn't have anything like its diversity of uses and energy."

With each building at Central Park designed by a different architect, it's attracted enormous attention for those designs. Architectural judge and lecturer Michael Zambito, of Studio Zambito, says there are a lot of innovative things about the buildings and their environmental initiatives.

"There are lots of things to hold up about it being a good news story, but I would hold back from saying you'd want to replicate it completely everywhere," he says.



## ALICE IN WONDERLAND FEATURES

Central Park's *Alice in Wonderland* features include:

- **THE MAD HATTER:** The cantilevered heliostat, designed to channel more natural sunlight into the complex.
- **THE CHESHIRE CAT:** The heliostat also creates a huge LED artwork, the constantly changing Sea Mirror that keeps everyone smiling.
- **THE CATERPILLAR:** The 116-metre world-first vertical green walls designed by French botanist Patrick Blanc that provides a facade of greenery over Central Park One has won awards of its own.
- **DOWN THE RABBIT HOLE:** The masterplanned community is full of interesting laneways to become lost in, with heritage terraces, warehouses and new buildings with bars, galleries and retailers.
- **THE TEA PARTY:** Spice Alley, a complex of great eateries and mostly Asian food stalls, provides a fascinating dining experience, while the Abercrombie Hotel has just been signed up for a refit and new operators.
- **TWEEDLEDUM AND TWEEDLEDEE:** There are innovative, large-scale artworks dotted throughout the precincts, with a new one by a well-known Japanese artist about to be commissioned, as well as regular art exhibitions.
- **THE KING OF HEARTS:** Residents seem to have taken quickly to their new homes, participating in the free outdoor fitness camps, attending the fortnightly Brewery Yard Markets and using Australia's largest pod of GoGet share cars.