

The draft Showground Station Precinct proposal contains a grab bag of proposals for “improvements” to the Castle Hill Showground. The implication is that all space immediately adjacent to the new station must be utilised regardless of the needs of current users who can be usurped based upon the results of vaguely worded surveys as to what people might like to see in the district. We are disappointed that no value has been placed - despite initial descriptions of the need for open space - on the need for maintaining the existing low key, uncrowded zone where residents are able to visit at will and take advantage of the quiet open space facility provided by the iconic Castle Hill Showground.

> In the eyes of the community this area is far from underutilised. The Showground contains relatively uncrowded, invaluable, open space which is essential for district residents to be able to use for passive recreation. Residents of all ages, including older people, are able to avail themselves of level ground for passive exercise, quiet space for contemplation and open area to enjoy a sense of space, at a location central to the hustle and bustle of the surrounding district.

Regular markets are held which are well supported by the local community, horse and canine events occur on a regular basis, a wide variety of special interest groups hold events on the showground arena. People walk, jog, conduct yoga, exercise dogs, fly kites, and children ride bikes. The arena provides an excellent site for such events as concerts, gymkhanas and other equine activities, and major fundraising events such as The Relay For Life.

Outside of major event times parking is adjacent to your activity.

> The Showground has iconic status within the history of the Hills District and continues to be part of the lifestyle identity for which the district is renowned.

> Plans to create new sporting fields, a suggestion in the artist’s impression of the redeveloped showground including numerous indoor sports buildings and a skate park are ludicrous suggestions for our Showground. These all belong in the designated sports area across Showground Road, viz. Fred Caterson Reserve.

Compared to the Showground the land area here is huge and quite capable of being expanded to cater for more indoor sports buildings, skate parks etc. More buildings inside the Showground with more diverse groups competing for parking will destroy the attractiveness of this “quiet zone”. There is no discussion of competition for parking between commuters using the station and Showground facility users.

> Mention is made of the current regular users of the Showground, but nothing of how they fit into these future plans. How does the Castle Hill Show fit into these plans? And the Hills District Canine Association and their various buildings, who both at this stage seem to be relegated to a tiny portion of their current area.

> One would hope that with the growing population anticipated, the new residents would embrace the lifestyle of the Hills District by supporting and attending the Castle Hill Show; they may enjoy ownership of a dog and seek the support and social aspects of having a local canine society.

> Most importantly we have a full time Community Theatre, in constant use since 1966, The Pavilion Theatre. Home to the Castle Hill Players, considered one of the finest non professional theatre groups in New South Wales, it has been ignored in the Grand Plan as if existing users have no place in the future. The final proposal must include specific reference to the maintaining of the existing theatre building or its replacement with a dedicated, sole use building, including adjacent parking. In the case of the Castle Hill Players it is in no way appropriate for a multi purpose performance space, with shared facilities, to be considered a suitable relocation in the event of the existing Pavilion Theatre being demolished to make way for redevelopment.

> The Pavilion Theatre is a great asset to the Hills District and it would be a tragedy for “improvements” to the Showground be made at the expense of a local cultural organisation such as the Castle Hill Players.

> Minimising or destroying these traditional lifestyle facilities by the overdevelopment of the Showground precinct will severely damage the appeal, the motivation, the reason why families move to the Hills District.

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> Summary

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*The Showground should be improved in keeping with its traditional uses.

*The Showground has been and should remain devoted to cultural, community and passive use. Sports facilities should be developed in the Fred Caterson reserve and elsewhere.

*The Pavilion Theatre, its access and parking for the Castle Hill Players and patrons of their productions need to be properly catered for in any future version of this proposal. i.e. unrestricted parking and access 365 days of the year in a

quiet environment.

> *Parking for commuters will need to be large enough not to affect Showground users.

> Improve our Showground by all means. Create multi function buildings and facilities with modern amenities and make the Showground accessible for all. But do not change it from a relaxed quiet environment.

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> Stephen Snars

> President Castle Hill Players Inc

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