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Doncaster Aeromodellers Club (DAC)

Supplementary Submission

New Information

1. At the time DAC lodged its written submission (on or about 7 June 2019) Concept Design Options 3 and 4 did not affect DAC.

2. Shortly before 22 July 2019 NELP informed DAC that it wished to meet with DAC and Yarra Bowmen Archery Club (YBA) to discuss the possibility of DAC and YBA sharing the site currently occupied solely by DAC.

3. The meeting took place on 22 July 2019 and both clubs made it clear that such a sharing arrangement was impractical. Not only are the site requirements for each activity very different, both activities have significant participation on weekends. Unlike football activities, which continue for an hour or two thus permitting sharing of the one facility on a single day, both archery and aeromodelling involve full day/days participation. Additionally, flying activity at the DAC site is weather dependent, particularly wind velocity. Therefore, if certain days are allocated to each club, it is possible that flying may not be possible on allocated days thus significantly curtailing that activity.

4. Despite the opinions expressed by representatives of both clubs, Mr Bruno Aleksic, representing NELP, made it clear that it was in the interests of both clubs to agree to a sharing arrangement otherwise both were at risk of losing their sites in Bulleen Park.

5. On 23 July 2019 Mr Michael Barlow, an expert engaged by NELP, lodged with the Inquiry and Advisory Committee (IAC) a report titled North East Link Project Land Use Planning Assessment (tabled document 24va). The text of that report, while setting out Concept Options 3 and 4 and endorsing both options as being capable of delivering positive land use outcomes (para. 110), refers only to the relocation of YBA to Offset Site Option A. It does not mention relocation to the DAC site on a sharing basis. However, strangely, his Appendix
D which contains Relocation Strategy Plans, shows YBA relocating on an interim and final basis to share the DAC site (Attachment 1). Clearly, Mr Barlow was not aware of this proposed change when writing what he described as a final report. He could not have been the author of Appendix D. Accordingly, we respectfully submit his report, insofar as it deals with Concept Design Option 3, is flawed.

6. It was not until NELP lodged with the IAC Technical Note No.37 on 29 July 2019 that NELP’s formal variation of Concept Options 2 and 3 regarding relocation of YBA was published. The reason given for now discounting the relocation site (site A) was stated as (para 29):

    …further assessment has identified that this site is no longer considered suitable due to safety requirements as specified by Archery Victoria), potential conflicts with shooting towards Templestowe Road and being within proximity to other potential users of this site (such as soccer and/or passive recreation.

7. Without further explanation, NELP concluded that given the lack of a suitable relocation alternative, the preferred option at this stage was for YBA to share an upgraded version of DAC’s current site (para 30).

8. At the meeting held on 22 July 2019, NELP conceded that the principal reason for relocating YBA was to free up its existing site allowing Freeway Golf to recover 2 holes lost as a direct consequence of the Project under Option 3.

9. Accordingly, we address the following in these submissions:

   a. why priority should not be given to Freeway Golf to acquire additional land for its continued operation as an 18 hole course;

   b. lack of assessment of further options regarding the relocation of YBA; and

   c. the value of unrestricted public open space.
Freeway golf course

10. Although the Freeway golf course is described as an 18-hole golf course, on the course shown on its website, it has in fact 19 available holes, the hole between holes 12 and 13 being described as a spare (see the Course Guide at Attachment 2). It is also apparent, we submit, that with relatively minor adjustments to the existing course, it should be possible to add a short par three hole on the front 9 between holes 1 and 5. If that were reasonably possible, there would not be any reason for relocating YBA. We can find no material submitted to the IAC which appears to have considered a re-alignment and addition of an extra short hole on the existing golf course site. We are aware that NELP has engaged the services of TP Golf to provide further advice but that has not, at this time, been disclosed publicly.

11. The expert report obtained by Boroondara, Banyule and Whitehorse City Councils from Mr Richard Simon (Tabled Doc. 28j) refers to an 18-hole course with a par of 69 (page 20). Mr Simon makes no mention of the existence of the spare hole. He also appears to have mis-stated its par rating which, according to its website, is 68. The Course Guide discloses five par 3 holes; twelve par 4 holes; and one par 5 hole.

12. Mr Simon also states in his report that the course had approximately 55,000 rounds of golf played in 2018. It appears that Mr Simon, relying on that figure, concludes there is a strong case for the retention of an 18-hole public course of similar length at that site. We submit that the problem with Mr Simon’s conclusion is that he does not define what constitutes a “round” of golf. A round of golf can be either 18 holes or 9 holes or even less. If he is referring to 18 holes as constituting a “round”, as appears to be the case, a simple calculation discloses the 55,000 figure is almost certainly overstated.

13. Golf at the Freeway course must be played only during daylight hours, there being no artificial lighting available. While available daylight varies with the seasons, it is reasonable to use an annualised figure of 10 hours. The length of time it takes to play a hole varies with its length and often with the number of participants. Given the predominance of par 4 holes, it is reasonable to use this
length of hole in calculating the time it takes a foursome to play one hole. Assuming all players have a reasonable level of competency (which is generous for a public course), and there are no major holdups (for example a lost ball and/or replaying the shot from its original position), an average of 15 minutes per hole is reasonable to play at least 4 strokes and likely a few more. Therefore, a reasonably competent foursome would complete 18 holes in around 270 minutes (4.5 hours).

14. Assuming that no players commence their rounds on the 10th hole, when the first foursome is on the 18th green, all things going smoothly, there will be two groups of four on every hole (ie. 144 players). The next foursome to start their round of 18 holes will be about 4.5 hours after the first foursome hits off. They too will take about 4.5 hours to complete their round of 18 holes. If 10 hours of daylight are available, that will leave subsequent starters with 1 hour in which they can hit off and complete 18 holes in daylight. Using the figure of 15 minutes per hole, it means only 4 more foursomes can play a round of 18 holes.

15. If the assumptions we have relied on are reasonable, the maximum number of 18-hole rounds of golf that can, on average, be played per day is 160 (144+16). Therefore, if every hole were fully utilised (ie. 8 players on each hole) during daylight hours on each day of the year, the maximum number of rounds which could be played is 58,400 (160x365). Therefore, if the figure of 55,000 refers to 18 hole rounds, on 94% of days in one year the golf course would operate at its maximum capacity. With respect to Mr Simon, that is highly unlikely. One only needs to check the Freeway Golf carpark on any weekday to see that the course is not fully occupied or anything like it.

16. Our submission regarding the number of 18-hole rounds played per year finds support in the Freeway Golf Pricing Schedule located on its website (Attachment 3). The cost for an adult to play 18 holes is ordinarily $32 on a weekday and $33.50 on weekends and public holidays. After 1pm on a weekday, the cost drops to $20 and down to $13.50 after 4pm. Plainly, that is because a player commencing after 1pm is unlikely to be able to play 18 holes due to limited daylight hours at this time of year. A player commencing after
4pm is likely to only be able to play a couple of holes. As summer approaches it is likely that the time for a reduced fee will move forward.

17. Therefore, we respectfully submit, the 55,000 figure must include a substantial number of 9-holes or less rounds. That, in turn, raises a question about why Boroondara City Council strenuously resists Concept Option 4 which would re-configure the golf course to, essentially, a 9-hole course with other commercially attractive features.

18. In cross-examination, Mr Watters, put to Mr Simon that the 55,000 figure could not be a reference to only 18 hole rounds. Mr Simon then said it was not but that 60-65% of rounds played at Freeway Golf were 18 hole rounds. With respect to Mr Simon, he did not produce evidence to support that claim. In our submission, the IAC should disregard this evidence as there is no objective material to support what Mr Simon claims regarding use of the course. That is particularly troubling given that his brief comes from the Boroondara City Council which undoubtedly has detailed information about the course’s use. In fact, in his report at para. 5.2.1-2, the inference Mr Simon seeks to make is that there is a connection between the number of rounds played and the fact the course has 18 holes. There is no evidence before the IAC to support that inference.

19. There is one further compelling reason why the IAC should treat the expert opinions regarding Freeway Golf with caution. In his expert report, Mr Simon makes a comparison of eight 18-hole public golf courses north east of Melbourne (Pages 8-9), concluding Freeway Golf is ranked third based on volume (rounds played) and growth performance (presumably based on rounds played) between 2014 and 2018. He does not explain why that time frame was selected. A longer time frame would have been more meaningful. Mr Simon then reproduces a report prepared for Boroondara City Council by a Golf Business Consultancy called WellPlayed (a document tabled by Mr Simon on 21 August 2019) (doc.242) which he says shows the compound annual growth rate of 8 golf courses in North East Melbourne between 2014 and 2018. The bar chart (figure 4) shows Freeway Golf to be third ranked with a growth rate of approximately 2%. Although one would expect Boroondara City Council to
have statistics disclosing precisely where that growth has come from, Mr Simon makes no mention of it. Therefore, it is reasonable to draw the inference that to do so would not assist Boroondara’s claim for maintaining 18 holes.

20. Although Mr Simon points to relatively small growth based on rounds played (no doubt 9 holes or less rounds as well as 18 hole rounds), he makes no comment about the fact that 5 out of the 8 courses he selected experienced a decline in growth (Bundoora Park, Glen Waverly, Ivanhoe, Morack and Yarra Bend). Bundoora Park, Ivanhoe and Yarra Bend each declined by almost 5%. The resultant average was a negative growth rate of 1%.

21. In addition, the WellPlayed report reproduces a chart from Golf Australia comparing sports participation trends between 2001 and 2017 (page 8). It discloses that in 2001 about 8.2% of the Australian population participated in golf. By 2017, that figure had fallen to about 4.7%, a reduction of around 3.5 percentage points. The report refers to that as a small decline. With respect to the author of the report, the decline is not small. The percentage of the Australian population participating in golf over that 16-year period almost halved. What it discloses is that despite increasing population, the absolute number has also declined. The objective evidence consistently discloses a significant participation reduction in this form of sport/recreation.

22. In our submission, these figures should sound a warning bell to operators of public golf courses in and around Melbourne.

23. With respect to Mr Simon, his predictions regarding future growth of participation in golf, while not based on his research but rather that of WellPlayed, looks only at predicted population growth, assuming the percentage of the population attracted to golf will remain constant. The objective evidence suggests otherwise.

24. A recent article titled Why some Australian golf courses may soon become public parks by Mr Jordan Fuller, a golf expert, coach and mentor, published on the Independent Australia website on 6 July 2019 (Attachment 4) further supports our submission. Mr Fuller said:
Golf is under siege in Australia for several reasons. Not only is overcrowding becoming an issue in Australia, but due to a shrinking pool of high volume players, clubs are struggling to attract attention. With a membership at golf clubs shrinking by 20 per cent over the past two decades, golf clubs across Australia are failing to stay afloat as the costly overhead decimates their bottom line.

25. Mr Fuller referred to Sydney Lord Mayor Clover Moore’s statements about the reduction of Sydney golf courses. She was critical of the space used for the popular Moore Park Golf Course in Sydney and said:

Across the world, golf courses are slimming down to a modern nine-hole format. I’m open to working with the state to investigate options for reducing the size of the golf course at Moore Park and returning some of that land to the community.

26. The WellPlayed report also refers to the Moore Park Golf course when dealing with golf industry trends (para 2.5). It refers to the instalment of a giant screen on its driving range to enhance the range experience; the introduction of “gaming” elements and provision of innovative tuition options.

27. Furthermore, in dealing with future opportunities (para 2.6), the report sets out six challenges and opportunities for the contemporary golf facility. It states that golf facilities must be market-focused and adapt to stay relevant to succeed in a changing sport, recreation and leisure market. It also states:

Golf facilities should focus less on competition golf and introduce social, short-format and other golf-entertainment participation options.

28. Since drafting these submissions, we note that NELP tabled a document (number 256) on 26 August 2019 titled Planning for golf in Victoria a Discussion Paper prepared in June 2017 by Mr Ben Bainbridge, a Project Manager for the Department of Environment, Water and Planning. It strongly supports our submissions regarding the dwindling number of people participating in the traditional form of the game (ie. 18 holes), and the need, particularly for public
golf courses, to cater for casual players by innovative variations to facilities, particularly a shorter game.

29. In our submission, the evidence regarding a reduction in golf patronage cannot be ignored. Concept Option 4, which envisages a downsizing of the golf course to 9 or 12 holes is the better solution to the displacement and relocation issues arising from the North East Link development. To expand Freeway Golf into Bulleen Park for the sake of two further holes is, in addition to other important considerations, economically unsound.

Yarra Bowmen Archery

30. If NELP decides to go forward with Concept Option 3, which would require the relocation of YBA, we ask that the submissions which follow be considered.

31. YBA did not make any written submissions nor does it seek to make oral submissions to IAC. We are therefore not privy to the details of its concerns regarding relocation. Archery Victoria Inc. lodged a brief statement with the IAC which, as we understand it, was taken to be a submission made on behalf of YBA (No. 648). Despite having available to it the EES Technical Report I setting out Concept Options 1 to 7 and a detailed analysis of proposed relocation sites, including those earmarked as possibly suitable for archery, the statement by Archery Victoria made no complaint with the relocation site suggested under Concept Options 2 or 3.

32. NELP Technical Note 37, while stating that the potential relocation site at the Bulleen Golf Driving Range (site A) was no longer suitable, did not go into detail or examine any alternatives. The belated concern was briefly stated as potential conflicts with shooting towards Templestowe Road and proximity to other potential users of that site. No mention was made of the fact that the proposed relocation site sets out three possible orientations, two of which would not result in shooting towards Templestowe Road. As for safety separation from other activities, Appendix B of Appendix F states that a spatial assessment was undertaken at relocation site A (page 29) (Attachment 5). As is evident from figure B5.12 on page 102 (Attachment 6), NELP was aware of the public safety requirements and used those in its assessment of the Ex-tip site as a
potential relocation site for YBA. It discounted this site due to special constraints (Attachment 7). Also, no consideration was given to why the number of shooting lanes could not be reduced to accommodate an otherwise suitable site. No reasons have been put forward by YBA for insisting in having a field which meets the current international standard. As best we can determine, the field is only used for practice and only by very few.

33. The report assessing the Ex-tip site also sets out several other restrictions in the use of that site such as walking path conflict, the requirement for safety fencing and reduced usability and function of passive open space. With respect, YBA’s current site operates unfenced in close proximity to walking paths. When in use, shooting takes place within 10 metres of the carpark area, well inside the 20-metre safety zone. There is a walking path directly behind the safety mound at the end of the range. There is no fencing there. No mention is made of the possible use of safety netting at any otherwise suitable relocation site where safety is in issue. It seems to have been forgotten that YBA’s current site is shared with passive users without safety issues.

34. There appears to be another possible relocation site at the old Bulleen Drive-In site. This has not been explored.

35. Finally, no mention is made in the documents regarding a possible merger with Box Hill City Archery. Its website states it is looking to increase its membership and it is 10.5km from Bulleen Park. Given the relatively small number of active members of YBA, this must be seriously considered as a suitable relocation option.

The value of public open space

36. In the EES Technical Report I, public open space is said to be, for the purposes of NELP’s assessment, publicly owned land set aside for recreation, nature conservation and passive outdoor enjoyment (Appendix 2 page 27). There is a further division in that public open space may be restricted or unrestricted.
Restricted public open space occurs where public access is limited by fencing and requirement for membership and/or fees.

37. Freeway Golf course is plainly restricted public open space. Its value to the public is seriously diminished by the restrictions placed on its use, which are considerable. While it is open to the public, it is fenced and its use is restricted to one activity only, playing golf. Unrestricted open public space is clearly a more valuable community asset, facilitating a variety of active and passive forms of recreation. Both Archery and Aeromodellers sites are unrestricted open space. They are not fenced and when not in use for activities, are available to the public for passive recreation. It is shared space.

38. The expert reports obtained by NELP and Boroondara City Council disclose a clear propensity to ignore the restricted/unrestricted open space distinction. Rather, they appear to gloss over the distinction by referring to active or passive recreation as if these are the distinguishing features of public open space. Passive recreation seems to be equated with unrestricted public open space while active recreation is not. For example, Mr Barlow in his report states the following (para. 99):

*The Bulleen Park area is a significant regional parkland, which is home to a variety of sporting clubs and is heavily utilised. The majority of land is allocated to active recreation (aeromodelling, archery, Australian Rules football, cricket, golf, soccer and tennis), but passive recreation is also catered for through the presence of walking trails, a playground and barbeque facilities.*

39. With respect to Mr Barlow, he seems to overlook the fact that the archery, aeromodellers, soccer, cricket and football sites are all shared facilities. When not in use for active recreation they become unrestricted open space available for other passive or active activities. That is why they are highly valued by the community which they serve. Placing a fence around any part of those sites would have significant detrimental effect on the amenity of the park as a whole. It should be strenuously resisted.
# Attachment 1: Annexure D to Barlow Report

## NORTHEAST LINK PROJECT
Sports and Recreation - Bulleen Park area
DRAFT Relocation Plan Options

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Existing Oval</th>
<th>Users to Be Relocated</th>
<th>Tentative Venue</th>
<th>Final Venue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Existing Oval 1</td>
<td>Yarra Junior Football League</td>
<td>Real Park (not Montmorency Park)</td>
<td>Fed Park - OR BP Oval 1 - NBM (Existing Oval 1) OR Henderson Seed Farm (subject to further investigation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Existing Oval 2</td>
<td>Bulleen Lions</td>
<td>Veneto Club</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Existing Oval 3</td>
<td>Bulleen Templestowe District Junior Football Club</td>
<td>BP Oval 2 resigned</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Existing Oval 4</td>
<td>Bulleen Templestowe Football Club and Yarraville Cricket Club</td>
<td>BP Oval 3 - NBM (Existing Field 4)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Existing Field 45</td>
<td>Templestowe United Football Club</td>
<td>Driving Range &amp; Parks Vacate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archery Field</td>
<td>Yarra Boomerang Archers</td>
<td>Shared Amenities</td>
<td>Shared Amenities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baskeyfield Tennis Centre</td>
<td></td>
<td>Keonig Oval &amp; Trinity</td>
<td>Keonig Oval Site</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ferntree Gulf Course</td>
<td></td>
<td>Expansion into existing Archery Field</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**LEGEND**
- Orange: Impact site
- Yellow: Relocated site
- Pink: Boundary
- Light blue: Local road
# Attachment 3: Freeway Golf

## Pricing Schedule

**Pricing Schedule as of 1st of July 2019**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pricing Category</th>
<th>Weekday</th>
<th>Weekend / Public Holiday</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Course Fees:</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 Holes – Adult</td>
<td>$32.00</td>
<td>$33.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Holes – Adult</td>
<td>$21.00</td>
<td>$23.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 Holes – Youth (under 23)</td>
<td>$22.00</td>
<td>$22.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>9 Holes – Youth (under 23)</td>
<td>$18.50</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 Holes – Seniors card</td>
<td>$29.00</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Holes – Seniors card</td>
<td>$20.00</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 Holes – Pensioners card</td>
<td>$22.00</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Holes – Pensioners card</td>
<td>$18.50</td>
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<td>Mad Monday Special (Monday only, <strong>excluding public holidays</strong>)</td>
<td>$20.00</td>
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<td>Unlimited Golf After 1 pm (Mon-Fri <strong>excluding public holidays</strong>)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unlimited Golf After 4 pm (Mon-Fri <strong>excluding public holidays</strong>)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Extra 9 Holes after first 9 Holes</td>
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<td>$12.00</td>
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**Hire Equipment:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Weekday</th>
<th>Weekend</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18 Holes – Motorised Cart</td>
<td>$40.00</td>
<td>$40.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Holes – Motorised Cart</td>
<td>$25.00</td>
<td>$25.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 Holes – Golf Clubs pp(Including push buggy)</td>
<td>$25.00</td>
<td>$25.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Holes – Golf Clubs pp(Including push buggy)</td>
<td>$20.00</td>
<td>$20.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 or 18 Holes – Push Buggy</td>
<td>$5.00</td>
<td>$5.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Attachment 4: Relocation Site A
(Source: EES Technical Report I)

A spatial assessment was undertaken to test different options for relocating sport and recreation facilities at Offset Site Option A. Offset Site options are shown in Figure 4.4, Figure 4.5, and Figure 4.6. Offset Site Option B options are shown in Figure 4.7.

There is the opportunity to relocate the Templestowe United Football Club (soccer) and/or archery to Offset Site Option A.

Figure 4.4 shows a potential concept layout for the archery including safety zones. This layout is indicative only and due to the topography of the site and safety requirements, different configurations could also be considered, as shown in Figure 4.5 and Figure 4.6.

In testing the various options for the Bulleen Golf Driving Range site it became evident that while soccer fields could be accommodated, this site was not suitable to relocate the impacted Oval 1 from Bulleen Park, because:

- The steep topography and the undulating land would require extensive excavation to construct an AFL oval of similar size to Oval 1, whereas soccer fields could be terraced to minimise the extent of excavation.
- Two soccer fields could be located on the site so they are not beneath transmission lines. An AFL Oval 1 would be directly under transmission lines which is not a suitable outcome for junior sport.
- The Yarra Junior Football League (YJFL) currently relies on Oval 1 and 2. North East Link would impact Oval 1. It is preferred to retain the existing usage together rather than split usage across two sites.

These sites are also not an appropriate for aeromodelling due to the close proximity of housing and roads, and safety issues associated with the overhead transmission lines.
Figure 4.7 shows a potential concept layout for soccer at Offset Site Option B.

These layouts are indicative only and further investigation and detailed design would be required to determine the optimal layout of facilities (in consultation with Manningham City Council) taking into consideration the site topography, orientation of fields, Yarra River buffer requirements, sporting standards, safety and other site constraints. The northern section of the site also falls within an area of Aboriginal cultural sensitivity, which would require further investigation as part of any future detailed design.

The access point into the Bulleen Golf Driving Range from Templestowe Road would need to be considered as part of any future planning and design with VicRoads.
Attachment 5: Archery Field Safety

Requiring closure of path outside archery field

Topography: 8 metres between archery field boundary to steep slope edge of river

Fencing: new safety fence may be required

Impacts to access: seven car parks removed, plus road requires realignment

Public safety: three metres between archery field boundary to existing footpath (approx.).

Vegetation removal: particularly in the Baby Bollin Billabong

Figure B5.12 Concepts exploring feasibility of relocating the archery facility to the ‘ex-tip’ site in Bulleen Park

Legend
- Potential new safety fence (exact location tbc)
- Potential impacted footpath
- Archery field (to current international standard)
- Proposed archery field
- Contours
Attachment 6: Possible Archery Relocation Sites

Archery on Bulleen Park former-tip site

Following discussions with a number of stakeholders and sporting clubs, the option of locating archery at the open space in Bulleen Park, known locally as the 'as-tip site' was considered. This archery field site assessment plan is shown in Figure B5.13.

This was determined not to be feasible due to spatial constraints and potential impacts on vegetation, cultural heritage, as well as impacts to visual and park amenity:

- Walking path conflict: riverside path would require closure due to safety zone of fencing requirements.
- Safety fencing may be required in this location (see Figure B5.11), which may have a range of issues including:
  - Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) issues with reduced passive surveillance
  - Reduced usability and function of this passive open space
  - Visually ‘out of character’ in this riverside parkland setting
  - Potential to impact the existing flood conditions (subject to detailed assessment).
- Vegetation removal: existing vegetation along Yarra River corridor and at Baby Colin Billabong may need to be removed.
- Cultural heritage: there may be cultural heritage impacts due to the site being 60 metres from the Yarra River (subject to detailed assessment).
Why some Australian golf courses may soon become public parks
By Jordan Fuller | 6 July 2019, 4:30pm | 8 comments

Due to economic and environmental reasons, golf courses in Australia are being reduced, writes Jordan Fuller.

IN AUSTRALIA'S MAJOR CITIES, a fight is underway over the necessity of golf courses. With a surging population in some of the country’s most densely urban areas, many leaders are wondering if golf courses,
taking up prime real estate in most of these metropolitan areas, are even worth the trouble.

Golf is under siege in Australia for several reasons. Not only is overcrowding becoming an issue in Australia, but due to a shrinking pool of high volume players, clubs are struggling to attract attention. With a membership at golf clubs shrinking by 20 per cent over the past two decades, golf clubs across Australia are failing to stay afloat as the costly overhead decimates their bottom line.

Public courses that are funded by cities are the most vulnerable to these potential rollbacks. With the smaller participation in golf, city-run courses that generate weaker revenue figures and lower equipment sales (such as push carts that represent easy upsells for clubs) make it harder to cover the salaries of staff and the costly upkeep of the grounds. For city leaders, these sagging numbers are opening a debate for the viability of golf throughout the country.

Sydney golf courses: how many is too many? Clover Moore proposes slimming Moore Park @jakesaulwick http://ow.ly/Z97e302IBhf
Sydney golf courses: how many is too many? Clover Moore proposes slimming Moore Park

Clover Moore says she would consider subsidising the cost of reducing the size of Moore Park Golf Course.

smh.com.au

3:32 PM - Jul 29, 2016
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For golf writers like Darius Oliver, the writing is on the wall for a massive reduction in golf courses across Australia.

Oliver wrote:

‘A big Australia means more people living in metropolitan areas and those areas likely carry fewer and fewer golf courses. Maintaining the percentage of participation in golf seems forlorn now and no doubt the governing body will soon start focusing on maintaining approximate participation numbers.’

The argument for removing iconic golf courses from around Australia’s largest cities has seen support surge as more and more leaders offer alternatives for the land now taken by these clubs.

In Sydney, over 30 golf courses within the city’s boundaries are under scrutiny. Leading the debate of the viability of the city’s courses is Lord Mayor Clover Moore. Moore has been vocal about her distaste of golf and how the game reduces space for housing in the city.

One of Mayor Moore’s targets for reduction is the Moore Park Golf Course. The iconic course provides a stunning view of downtown and offers golfers a wide-open layout that has become one of the city’s favorite places to play.

Moore contends that the space used for Moore Park’s course could repurpose into land for residences or alternative recreation and said:

“Across the world, golf courses are slimming down to a modern nine-hole format. I’m open to working with the state to investigate options
for reducing the size of the golf course at Moore Park and returning some of that land to the community.”

Golf courses in the crosshairs as Sydney councils seek space for sporting fields and parks

http://ow.ly/y3Wp30cfno3

Another Sydney council is eyeing fairways as fair game in a bid to sate a growing demand for more sporting fields.

smh.com.au
Despite Moore’s plans to reduce the course to just nine holes, the Moore Park location has remained at 18 holes for the time being. One of the reasons that the course has stayed alive is that Moore Park still generates close to one-quarter of the $24 million that the city needs to run parklands around the area.

For other courses, the revenue stream is nothing like Moore Park and the drain on the local funds has cities searching for alternate uses for their lagging golf courses.

In Brisbane, the city-owned Victoria Park Golf Course will be closed and remade into a 45-hectare park. Brisbane Lord Mayor Adrian Schrinner said that the allure of creating a world-class park was too tempting when considering Victoria Park’s falling revenue numbers.

In an interview, Schrinner said:

When you think of some of [the] great parklands across the globe, Central Park in New York City, Lumpini Park in Bangkok and Hyde Park in London come to mind for their hundreds of trees, free attractions and for offering people a green sanctuary within a busy capital city.

About 26 hectares of this council land is currently used as a pay and play public golf course, which over recent years has seen a decline in patronage and a reduction in revenue.

Another factor that is cutting into support for keeping these golf courses is the climate change factor. Golf courses need thousands of liters of water each day during the hottest months to stay healthy. With increasing populations demanding more resources, cities are looking to cut consumption in various areas and golf courses are primary targets.

Government officials are under pressure to maximise these fertile areas for other environmental projects such as the Victoria Park
project in Brisbane. Industry expert Jeff Blunden argues that city officials are less inclined to care about golf and its community of players when looking at the considerable growth most of these cities are experiencing.

Blunden said:

“A lot of them will have no emotional attachment to golf whatsoever. They like the green element. They like the tree element. They like the environmental element. But from time to time, hard decisions are going to be made. And if you don’t own your land, well then you’re really vulnerable.”

As the population grows and resources become more limited, we can expect a curtailing of support for public golf courses by these cities, raising the question of how will golf survive in Australia in the coming years?

Jordan Fuller is a golf expert, coach and mentor. He is the creator of the website golfinfluence.com and you can follow him @jofullergolf.

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Within 10km of my home in SW Sydney there are 10 golf courses with dwindling membership & some having to rely on poker tournaments to stay solvent. They should be turned into public parks, sporting fields & green space that can benefit the entire community https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/why-aren-t-they-parks-golf-s-huge-footprint-on-sydney-s-open-space-20190403-p51aad.html?fbclid=IwAR0VWhM13gAqr3RvSmR7cb_tbKzp1bm2CKWjsvc37_9M9hNvclvMcommunity ...
Why aren't they parks?: golf’s huge footprint on Sydney’s open space

Golf courses and facilities account for almost 10 per cent of Crown land parcels in Sydney despite declining participation in the sport.

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12:15 PM - Apr 8, 2019