Thursday 5 September 2019

Mr. Duncan Elliott
Chief Executive Officer
North East Link Project
Level 12
121 Exhibition Street
Melbourne VIC 3000

Dear Mr. Elliot:

I write to outline Golf Australia’s position on the impact of the North East Link Project on the Freeway Golf Course.

The Freeway Golf Course is an 18-hole Par 69 public golf course located at 47-49 Columbia Street, Balwyn North, and is one of North East Melbourne’s public golf facility market leaders. Hosting over 50,000 rounds a year, the Freeway Golf Course is an asset to a golf region experiencing a 1.4% growth in membership.

It is well documented that golf in Victoria is in transition. Golf participation is changing, and the golf industry accepts the fact that it must adapt to meet the demands of future participants.

Social golf is on the rise – In 2018 there was a 6% increase social golf club membership, with these clubs now boasting over 22,000 members across 328 clubs. Access to public golf courses is a key ingredient to supporting this rise.

In recognising changes to participation trends, Golf Australia recently developed a National Facilities Plan, to provide a structure for the future planning and development of golf facilities across the country. The plan is designed to assist in the delivery of a consistent approach to the sustainability and viability of our facilities.

Guided by this plan, Golf Australia believes that for the Freeway Golf Course to continue their success, the facility must evolve to create a community hub and multi-sport precinct.

There is a belief from some elements of the community, that because the course is successful as an 18-hole facility, that this format should not be changed.
However, because the land is being significantly impacted and reduced, an 18-hole facility, whilst achievable, would not provide the amount of growth opportunity for the game as a 9 or 12-hole facility would.

It is for this reason that Golf Australia supports Option 4 of the New Golf Facility Concept Design, providing a new family friendly multi-sport facility attractive to both the traditional golf market and new participants.

Such a facility will not only benefit the game, but may produce twice the number of visits, generate higher revenue, and attract new golfers to a more family friendly facility.

It will also firmly align with Golf Australia's overall objective to support and guide projects that deliver well located, welcoming and accessible golf facilities that support the growth and sustainability of the game.

On behalf of Golf Australia, I thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this process and hope that our position assists in moving forward towards a viable future for Freeway Golf Course that can benefit the whole community for many years to come.

I wish you all the best and should you have any further questions please don’t hesitate to contact me on the details below.

Kind Regards

Simon Brookhouse
General Manager – Golf Operations