

Legislative Council Committee (Email: env@parliament.wa.gov.au)
Parliament House
4 Harvest Tce
West Perth WA 6005

27 June 2020

Dear Hon Matthew Swinbourn MLC

This letter is in response to the Petition in relation to the retention of Mt Pleasant Bowling Club (**Petition No. 153 – Mount Pleasant Bowling Club**).

The history of this unfortunate situation goes back to 2016 when the Council adopted the Bowls Strategy which controversially concluded that the City of Melville only needed one Bowls Facility north of Leach Hwy. The Bowls Strategy was based solely on a decline in pennants bowlers, but took no account of the trend of increasing social membership and the social benefits which bowling clubs provide to the wider community. According to the Bowls Strategy, the Mt Pleasant Bowling Club was no longer needed.

The Council at that time approved an application for a Wave Park on the Alfred Cove foreshore. This required the Melville Bowling Club, situated on the Wave Park site, to be relocated with the Mt Pleasant Bowling Club to Tompkins Park Recreation hub with Rugby and Cricket. This meant that the Crown Land from which Mt Pleasant Bowling Club operated would have to be repurposed.

So the Council requested that the State Government either lease or sell them Crown "C" Class Reserve R27046 vested in the Council to manage for the purpose of Recreation (Bowling). The Council then proceeded to place signs on the fences of the Mt Pleasant Bowling Club. These signs advertised the Bowling Club as a potential development site with a pocket park of 30%. After the advertising process was completed, medium density housing was decided upon. However, the State Government only wanted high density on that site so there was in impasse and no action was taken.

However, the effect of the signs being placed on the fence of the Mt Pleasant Bowling Club was devastating for the morale and membership of the Club. Pennant players and Members left for various other more secure clubs. The Club was unable to take function bookings in advance or plan future events as it had no security of tenure, leaving the Bowling Club with a reduced income. The Council used this as an excuse to push for redevelopment of the site.

The Wave Park development was terminated by the State Government's decision not to lease or sell the Crown land at Alfred Cove to the City of Melville. Consequently, the Melville Bowling Club determined that it would not relocate, and so the decision to build a new Tompkins Park Bowls facility was rescinded by Council. Mt Pleasant Bowling Club's future was now in question. So the Club took action by reactivating membership and voting in a new enthusiastic committee.

Because of the increasing urban infill, the community wanted to keep the Mount Pleasant Bowling Club and recreational space for current and future generations. So we started a petition. This was interrupted by COVID-19, but we finally presented it to the Hon Simon O'Brien MLA.

Now there seems to be quite a bit of interest by various sports clubs to use this site. The Mt Pleasant Bowling Club was approached by Tingara Netball Club, which has approximately 500 members, to put four practise courts on the site. Other sporting clubs are also keen to have extra locations for their members, such as Pickleball, Futsal, Volley Ball to name a few.

Melville Cares approached the Club also with a proposal to move some of its friendship group lunches and disabled sports activities on site, a church has hired the hall for Sunday services, Australia Post is interested in locating several electric bikes on site, and other community organisations are looking at using the facility for functions or as their home base. So the viability of the Club for low impact recreational and community use as well as sporting use, is growing on a daily basis.

The Council administration is still intent on medium density development on the land, so the community is pushing hard to retain the whole site for public use. The reason is that these types of multi-purpose community spaces will become scarce in the future. The wellbeing of the community must be considered also. One thing that COVID-19 taught us was the value of open space for mental wellbeing. This has been vastly underplayed in the quest for more rate dollars. In light of this, governments must start putting a dollar value on the environment and low-cost, social gathering places for all ages. Not only does it contribute to our community's mental and physical wellbeing but also reduces the burden on the public health system.

There is also uncertainty as to whether the State Government has withdrawn its offer to lease or sell this Crown Land to the Council. This needs to be clarified. If it has withdrawn its offer, this would mean that the Council can no longer proceed with developing the Crown Land, and the Mt Pleasant Bowling Club site would be retained for community and recreational uses.

So we ask you to support our community in retaining the Mt Pleasant Bowling Club site in its entirety for recreational and community uses. The Bowling Club is working hard towards achieving financial independence so it will not be a burden on the community. Their efforts should be rewarded with your support. Most importantly, in supporting the Bowling Club, you will be supporting us, the community.

Yours sincerely

Joy Pollard