

7.4 OAKLEIGH RECREATION CENTRE INDOOR STADIUM AND WAVERLEY GYMNASTICS FACILITY REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT

Submitting Councillor: Cr Geoff Lake

MOTION

That Council:

1. *Welcomes the announcement by the Victorian Minister for Sport, the Hon John Eren, on 1 December 2016 to provide \$3 million of funding for Council's and Waverley Gymnastics' proposed combined project to redevelop the Oakleigh Recreation Centre;*
2. *Reiterates its strong support for this combined project over the previously planned separate projects because of the following benefits:*
 - a. *an increase of more than 50% of the available floor space for Waverley Gymnastics Club making it the largest premier gymnastics facility in this state;*
 - b. *an increase of 25% of the available basketball courts at Oakleigh Recreation Centre including the capacity to host netball at the facility;*
 - c. *relief for the Mount Waverley residents living around the existing Waverley Gymnastics facility who currently face car parking and other amenity impacts and who have been concerned about the prospect of further amenity impacts arising from a further development of this site;*
 - d. *a revamped Oakleigh Recreation Centre delivered years ahead of schedule; and*
 - e. *approximately \$2.5 million in savings for Council and the local community compared to pursuing the two projects separately.*
3. *Reiterates its concerns expressed at the 29 November 2016 Council meeting that the Federal Government appears to have changed its position on this project;*
4. *Notes the Waverley Leader report on 1 December 2016 that the Member for Chisholm, Julia Banks, did not indicate whether or not she supports the new project;*
5. *Resolves to write again to Julia Banks reiterating the significant benefits of the combined project over the previously conceived Dorrington Drive project and to urge her to get behind the project and to help obtain the required sign off by mid-January 2017 or to more fully and transparently explain to Council and the community why the Federal Government's position has changed in relation to this project since the written advice provided to Council on 4 November 2016 by the Department of Infrastructure;*
6. *Resolves to begin a petition urging Ms Banks to support the project and resolves to:*
 - a. *write to all residents surrounding the Waverley Gymnastics' Dorrington Drive site in Mount Waverley to invite them to sign the petition and to explain the benefits of the combined project including how it will minimise amenity and car parking impacts on local residents;*

- b. write to Waverley Gymnastics and urge it to encourage its members, supporters and community to support the petition;*
- c. write to Gymnastics Victoria and urge it to support the petition;*
- d. write to all user groups and stakeholders of the Oakleigh Recreation Centre and to Basketball Victoria to let them know about the current status of this project and urge them to encourage their members to sign the petition;*
- e. display the petition prominently at the Oakleigh Recreation Centre and Oakleigh Pool along with background information in line with this report and Council's resolution at the November meeting and actively invite all visitors at these facilities to sign the petition; and*
- f. promotes the petition and the benefits of the combined project on Council's website, in the Monash Bulletin and through any other appropriate avenues.*

BACKGROUND

The proposed \$18 - \$20 million Oakleigh Recreation Centre Indoor Stadium and Waverley Gymnastics Facility Redevelopment Project (**the Project**) has the potential to deliver a truly integrated sporting precinct in the heart of Monash and importantly, as the context of this Notice of Motion makes clear, within the Chisholm electorate. As endorsed at the 29 November 2016 meeting, Council has committed up to \$13.9 million towards the Project dependent upon confirmation of state and federal funding. Council welcomes the State Government commitment of \$3 million announced on 1 December 2016. With Waverley Gymnastics contributing \$1 million, the Project's future now rests solely in the hands of the Federal Government to honour its election funding commitment.

If all three levels of government work together, we can build a modern sporting facility that meets the needs of gymnasts, as well as people wanting to play basketball, netball and a host of other indoor team sports. It's a huge win for everyone.

DISCUSSION

As detailed in the report to Council at the 29 November meeting, the integration of indoor courts and the gymnastics facility provides a wide range of benefits to the community and is estimated to reach over 500,000 visitations per annum and create direct and indirect employment.

Furthermore, the Project will provide relief for the Mount Waverley residents living around the Waverley Gymnastics facility who have expressed serious concerns in respect of the prospect of increased traffic and amenity impacts which would be associated with a Dorrington Drive redevelopment. It is clear that there would be significant relief among the majority, if not all, of these surrounding residents if Waverley Gymnastics was to move to Oakleigh. Notably, there are no residential impacts associated with the proposed redevelopment at Oakleigh.

The Waverley Gymnastics Club members and families are very excited about being part of the Oakleigh Recreation Centre upgrade project. They have personally advised me that there are clear benefits for the club including that:

- a) The Oakleigh Recreation Centre does not have the same space restrictions as the current Dorrington Drive facility meaning the actual gymnasium space will be significantly larger. At least a further 400 children can be given the opportunity to attend weekly gymnastics

- classes. This is in addition to the 750 positions in gymnastics classes created by the Dorrington Drive redevelopment funding;
- b) The adjoining basketball stadium and seating for 800 spectators means significant state championships and even national gymnastics events could be held at a redeveloped Oakleigh Recreation Centre utilising both this space and the new gymnastics space;
 - c) This allows Waverley Gymnastics to be a part of a sporting hub, with wonderful opportunities for cross usage of facilities for gymnasts as well as a potential for cross promotion and support between sports at the precinct such as swimming, gymnastics, netball and basketball;
 - d) The combined project means that Waverley Gymnastics can offer many more opportunities for new members to join the club – the vast majority being girls – while also offering greater training options for existing members; and
 - e) The Project also benefits the local economy translating to additional jobs for coaches.

In this context, I find it perplexing why the Federal Government and specifically, Julia Banks, the Member for Chisholm, is not getting behind this project and confirming their support. More concerning is the apparent intervention which appears to have changed the Federal Government's position on this matter between 4 and 29 November.

On 4 November 2016, the Department of Infrastructure advised in writing that the proposed new Oakleigh 'combined' project meets the intention of the Federal Government's election commitment and the Department 'will proceed with [its] usual administrative procedures on that basis'. This was a critical step for Council to then seek the \$3 million funding (now secured) from the State Government to support the project through Sport and Recreation Victoria's 2016/17 Better Indoor Stadiums Fund.

However just hours before the 29 November Council meeting, the Department advised that it was withdrawing this 'all clear' for the project and would now require further information and a new application from Council in order to consider committing any funding for the Project. This about-face puts the Project in disarray because the State Government \$3 million grant is contingent on Council being able to demonstrate a fully funded project.

At a pre-meeting briefing of councillors by Council officers immediately prior to the 29 November Council meeting, councillors were advised by Council officers that they had been informed that day by Departmental officers that the reason for the Department's change of approach was because of 'political reasons' beyond the control of the Department.

This is concerning because the Project is compelling and offers substantial benefits compared to the previous two separately-planned projects.

The Waverley Gymnastics community, the users of the Oakleigh Recreation Centre and the residents living around the Waverley Gymnastics Dorrington Avenue site in Mount Waverley deserve answers and a speedy resolution. There is no basis for anyone to prefer the two separate projects over the combined project now proposed by Council and which is strongly and enthusiastically backed by the Waverley Gymnastics community.

Council has worked hard to maximise the best community outcome for these projects and has placed this Project in an excellent position to be otherwise fully funded. Ms Banks and the Federal Government need to quickly clarify their positions and get unequivocally behind this project to demonstrate their support for Waverley Gymnastics, the users of the Oakleigh

Recreation Centre, the residents living around Dorrington Avenue and Monash ratepayers more generally.

In her original letter to Waverley Gymnastics dated 23 August 2016 and co-signed by the Minister for Regional Development, the Hon Fiona Nash, Ms Banks confirms the Federal Government's commitment to Waverley Gymnastics and makes no reference whatsoever as to the specific location of the project. Similarly, at the time of the original public announcement of the funding during the election campaign there was also no mention of a specific site or a particular project to which the funding was tied. The funding was clearly intended for the club to support it so as to expand to cater to more participants. There is no reason for Ms Banks or the Federal Government to now suggest that there has been a fundamental change to the scope or nature of this project which requires a significant review. Any such suggestion appears spurious – as the initial advice from the Department on 4 November makes clear by clearly stating the new project meets the intent of the Federal Government's election commitment to the Dorrington Avenue site. It is also important to note that there was no application and virtually no supporting documentation submitted in relation to the originally conceived Dorrington Avenue project. To now suggest the need for onerous new documentation or process requirements appears disingenuous.

The new Project will deliver on the Federal Government's election promise in a more effective way than the originally supported project at Dorrington Avenue. The new Project ensures significantly improved benefits and outcomes for Waverley Gymnastics, for Monash residents and the Chisholm electorate far exceeding what is possible at the Mount Waverley site. The combined project just makes more sense on every level.

Given the lack of commitment by the Federal Government to the new Project and the potential for this lack of support to force everyone reluctantly into an inferior outcome at Dorrington Avenue, I urge councillors to support this Notice of Motion to help demonstrate to Ms Banks and the Federal Government the compelling benefits associated with the new Project.

CONCLUSION

Officers continue to work with the Federal Government to secure the federal grant which had been promised to Waverley Gymnastics. As far as I am aware, no one prefers the originally conceived project at Dorrington Drive except possibly Ms Banks. This Notice of Motion aims to urge Ms Banks to reconsider her current equivocal position and to get behind this combined project and assist with securing this important regional sporting centre for the Monash community and her electorate. The petition will clearly demonstrate the strong support users and residents have for the Project, a project that has the potential to deliver a true whole of Government outcome that will see updated larger modern sporting facilities in Monash and, importantly, within the Chisholm electorate.