

**Draft Plan of Management for Boronia Park
Submission from the Hunters Hill Trust**

Recategorisation of land at Boronia Park associated with review of the Plan of Management

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Introduction

Several members of the Hunters Hill Trust attended the public hearing (27 February 2020) regarding recategorisation of land within Boronia Park, which also heard many comments on other aspects of the proposals described in the current Draft Plan.

The *Background Information* circulated before and at the public hearing (*'Public hearing for proposed recategorisation of Boronia Park, Hunters Hill, February 2020'*) is curiously deficient in that it doesn't link the proposed changes in categorisation to the proposals of the Draft Plan. Surely recategorisation should follow decisions about function and location of facilities within Park rather than precede them.

Indeed, this is implied by the wording of Page 1 (last para), which states that *'Depending on the final location of those facilities, recategorisation of parts of Boronia Park will be necessary and so a public hearing is required.'* This states clearly that the recategorisation (and associated public hearing) must follow the decisions as to location of facilities. Hence there will need to be a second public hearing after the draft plan is finalised; this view was shared by many present, and agreed by the hearing's facilitator.

The inappropriate timing of this public hearing is also illustrated by the statement in Section 2.5.1, para 1, that *'A public hearing is required ... (for) public land covered by the Plan of Management'*. This public hearing should have been deferred until after the (new) Plan of Management had been adopted.

Comments on recategorisation

The *Background Information* document suggests only a few changes of categorisation, which cover only a small proportion of the Park. It doesn't give reasons for recategorisation, but then reasons would be obvious if the Plan had already been adopted.

The proposed changes:

- recategorise the waterfront from *Natural Area* to *Natural Area Foreshore*; this seems uncontroversial,
- recategorise the area including the junior playground (cnr Ryde Rd and Boronia Ave) from *General Community Use* to *Park*. This would preclude *Sport/Community Facility* from being built here, which is the identified location (Option 1) of the Draft Plan!
- recategorise the grandstand from *General Community Use* to *Sportsground*; this seems uncontroversial,
- recategorise the carpark from *Park* to *General Community Use*, which also seems uncontroversial if it is to continue to be used as a carpark, or as the site of the *Sport/Community Facility*,

- fail to clearly define the categorisation of the site identified as Sport/Community Facility Option 2; the location of this facility seems to overlap areas categorised as *Park*, *General Community Use*, and *Sportsground*. The problem here is that the Draft Plan suggests the facility could be leased yet, as explained on p7 of the *Background Information*, only land categorised as General Community Use can be leased,
- delete the four *Areas of Cultural Significance*, which seems unfortunate, but was explained to the meeting as being an unavoidable consequence of a change in the definition of the category of Area of Cultural Significance,
- leave all three options for the Inclusive Playground as on area categorised as *Park*, which is uncontroversial.

Other matters

Since the meeting considered other aspects of the Draft Plan than just recategorisation, below we comment on some of proposals included in the Draft Plan that were discussed at the public hearing.

- **Nature of the Sport/Community Facility** A spokesperson for the Rugby Club reiterated the view previously expressed by club representatives at meetings of the Community Advisory Group (CAG), and at on-site meetings, that the Sport/Community Facility should be a modest structure, providing storage spaces for regular users of the sporting fields, plus a general purpose hall for meetings and informal gatherings, with facilities to prepare and serve simple food and drinks. He rejected the suggestion that the premises include a licensed bar, and made no mention of a requirement for a long lease. The proposal outlined is much less intrusive than that which would be permitted by the Draft Plan, and would be considerably more acceptable to the general community. Such a major discrepancy raises the question of why the proposal of the Draft Plan permits the aggressive structure described in it.
- **Leasing the Sport/Community Facility:** Since no body has argued for the need for a lease for this facility (let alone for 20 years with a 10 year option), there is no need to include this option in the Plan of Management. Being on public land, this facility should be managed by Council and made available to all community groups who have a need for it.
- **Lack of transparency in the preparation of the Draft Plan**, including the failure to properly engage with the CAG. Meetings were few, held at short notice, and too brief to allow proper discussion. Worse, some contentious proposals were not brought to the CAG's notice at all. We are additionally concerned that no final meeting of the CAG has been scheduled.
- **Location of the Inclusive Playground:** It seems generally agreed that the Inclusive Playground should be built not at Boronia Park (which already has two playgrounds), but in Riverglade Reserve, as specified in the original application for its funding.
- **Location of the BMX/pump track.** This proposal was added very late in the development of the Draft Plan, without opportunity for discussion by the community, which is perhaps why it doesn't seem to have community support.
- **Concern at installing artificial lighting on Oval 3:** it seems unlikely that all three ovals would be used simultaneously at night, and lighting Oval 3 would disturb the many types of nocturnal wildlife that inhabit the adjacent area (categorised as *Natural Area*).
- **Categorisation of Finlays Paddock as *Park*** prohibits the use of this area for the BMX proposal as it would conflict with the concept, supported by Council's consultant, Alan Ginns, that the area north of Princes St should be reserved for 'passive recreation'.
- **General support for off-leash dog exercise on Oval 3.**
- **A request for a comprehensive report by Council of the justification for all decisions to be embodied in the final Plan of Management.**