

**NORTH EAST LINK PROJECT**  
**INQUIRY AND ADVISORY COMMITTEE**  
**CLOSING SUBMISSIONS**  
**BOROONDARA CITY COUNCIL**  
**BULLEEN PARK AND TENNIS CENTRE**

**Introduction**

1. Boroondara owns two assets which are located north of the Eastern Freeway:
  - (a) The Boroondara Tennis Centre; and
  - (b) The Freeway Public Golf Course.
2. The Project has profound impacts upon both assets, which need to be properly managed.
3. Contrary to a lot of what has been said about the issue, this is not a “turf” war between the Councils – but rather a puzzle that needs to be solved, according to sound principle, and favouring the most sensible allocation of land according to competing demands for it.

**Tennis Centre**

4. If the Project proceeds, it is clear that there will be significant effects upon both the Tennis Centre and the Golf Course.

5. Whether under the O'Brien alternative design, or under the Reference Design, the existing location of the Tennis Centre will not be viable. The location of the Tennis Centre is either right in the path of critical lanes, on land required during construction or after construction or all of the above.
6. The Tennis Centre either has to close or be relocated.
7. It is common ground that relocation prior to construction is necessary and desirable.
8. The Boroondara Tennis Centre is a sporting venue of national and state significance. It comprises 23 tennis courts (with room for the construction of three further courts), carparking for 97 vehicles, a club house with cafeteria and administration area and other incidental infrastructure.
9. More than 100,000 people per annum use the Tennis Centre. This includes approximately 42 tournaments and 6-8 School State Finals Events each year. It is the only tennis venue in the region that has sufficient facilities to accommodate tennis events of this type.
10. Given its location it serves residents of both Boroondara and Manningham very well, in addition to the visitors from further afield.
11. It is acknowledged that the continuity of operation for this centre throughout and after the construction period is critically important.
12. To date the discussion has focussed upon relocation and this is appropriate. The question is - to where?
13. NELP has grasped at straws.
14. Appendix 2 to Appendix F of Technical Report I (Social) explores options for the relocation of facilities generally within the Bulleen Park areas to address the displacement of long existing sporting facilities to

accommodate the Project. The Bulleen Park Area Sports and Recreation Option Assessments contains seven options. NELP has expressed its preference for “option 3” which involves relocating the Tennis Centre to the north on land partly within Boroondara, partly within Manningham, over Koonung Creek, utilising the existing Bulleen Swim Centre site and requiring the acquisition of land from the Manningham Club.

15. A detail of this design has been provided.<sup>1</sup> Boroondara has sought further details of this option including detail of the proposed piping of Koonung Creek, details of exactly what land is owned by the Manningham Club and the like. This information has not been provided.
16. It is not known whether option 3 can be delivered by NELP particularly as:
  - (a) the environmental impacts of the piping of Koonung Creek have not been assessed;
  - (b) the impacts of acquiring land from the Manningham Club have not been assessed;
  - (c) access arrangements have not been assessed;
  - (d) potential impacts on Marcellin College have not been assessed;
  - (e) there is the potential need for a northern access road to the proposed Bulleen Park and Ride through the proposed option 3 Tennis Centre site;
  - (f) Ms Stoettrupp gave evidence that she expected that the relocated Boroondara Tennis Centre would be reconstructed in a new location prior to the existing facility being closed down; and

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<sup>1</sup> See Tabled Document 196A.

- (g) the potential changes caused by the “Bulleen Switch”<sup>2</sup> have not been accurately mapped and if the Bulleen Switch is not adopted, then the temporary Bulleen Road runs through the centre of the option 3 site.
17. Even if option 3 was a viable option, it is not supported by Boroondara because:
- (a) the land is constrained in size and does not allow for future expansion;
  - (b) the land is subject to significant flooding, noting that the 1% AEP flood level is 18.22 metres, whereas the lowest court level proposed in option 3 is RL14.0. No detailed flooding analysis has been undertaken in respect of option 3;
  - (c) the option would require further barrelling of Koonung Creek which Boroondara does not support;
  - (d) there is limited overflow carparking available for major events;
  - (e) access will be constrained, particularly for coaches;
  - (f) the amenity of the centre will be impacted by the eastern most ramps of the NEL; and
  - (g) the flood lighting design may be compromised by its proximity to the NEL ramps.
18. Mr Simon gave evidence that what is proposed by NELP in option 3 is equivalent to a 1980’s style regional tennis facility, rather than what is

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<sup>2</sup> Tabled Document 102 TN34.

there now or the modern state of the art facility such as the Hume Tennis and Community Centre.<sup>3</sup>

19. The only feasible option that will ensure the continuous availability of this valuable regional tennis centre is for it to be reconstructed on an alternative site prior to demolition of the existing centre.
20. NELP's most recent effort, well intentioned as it is, is to insert this highly intensive sporting activity into an established passive open space area, on the low ground, within earshot of the backyards of established residents, accessed by a circuitous route, to be constructed to navigate challenging grades from Burke Road through established parkland. The potentially adjoining residents can be assumed to know nothing of the proposal – how could they? The first idea for the current proposal was cooked up after NELP had completed its case in evidence in these hearings, having previously discounted this option very early in the process.
21. In truth, a spot close to the current location of the existing Tennis Centre but not constrained by the impracticalities of options is the most appropriate outcome:
  - (a) Given the regional nature of the facility, a location at the vertices of major transport corridors is ideal;
  - (b) Given the nature of the traffic generation, a location with easy access to and from the principal road network is essential; and
  - (c) Given the noise and activity emanating from operations, including carnivals and other competitions, a location removed from sensitive residential interfaces is sensible.
22. All of those considerations rule out Musca Street Reserve as an option.

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<sup>3</sup> See evidence presentation of Mr Richard Simon, slide 13.

23. The best location with the minimum impact or disruption to the operation of the Tennis Centre is a location in the vicinity of the front five holes of the Golf Course on the west side of Bulleen Road.

### **Freeway Golf Course**

24. The Freeway Golf course is also a regional facility, which draws players from a wide area, again in part because of its relationship to the road network.
25. The Freeway Golf Course comprises an 18-hole, 5,078 metres par 69 public golf course. It is one of only four 18-hole public golf courses within a 10 kilometre radius.<sup>4</sup> It hosts approximately 55,000 to 60,000 rounds per annum which makes it one of, if not the, most popular golf courses in the catchment.
26. It provides home facilities for two community based golf clubs. Of those golf clubs, 80% of the members reside in either Manningham or Boroondara. Of Club members, 45% reside in Manningham and 35% reside in Boroondara. Of the players who are not club members, the majority residing in Manningham (40%).<sup>5</sup>
27. Ideally, the golf course should be maintained at its current level, being:
- (a) 18 holes;
  - (b) at least 5,000 metres; and
  - (c) at least par 68.

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<sup>4</sup> See Boroondara Freeway Public Golf Course Market Insights and Future Viability Project Report, Well Played Golf Business Consultancy, November 2018, page 20 ff.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, page 24.

28. Accordingly, whilst the facility is on land owned by Boroondara, in order of participation, it serves: Manningham, then Boroondara and finally Whitehorse.
29. Golfers show a distinct preference for full length golf courses as is demonstrated by the table at page 21 of the Well-Played report, noting that 18-hole golf courses generally attract some 50,000+ rounds per annum, whereas 9-hole golf courses attract approximately half that number.
30. The Reference Design causes part of the Golf Course to be taken with road infrastructure.
31. The evidence establishes that a lot less of the Golf Course would be required if something approaching the Andrew O'Brien assumptions were adopted. This outcome should be expressly embraced by the IAC.
32. If the Tennis Centre is necessarily relocated into the golf course area, then there are really two alternatives for the golf course:
  - (a) Reduce in size to a 9 hole golf course; or
  - (b) Expand into other areas surrounding the golf course to maintain the current 18 hole opportunity.
33. The reduction in size of the golf course should be rejected out of hand.
34. It may be true that golf is declining in popularity. It may also be true that there has emerged a trend over the last two decades of golf courses being closed and converted to other land uses.<sup>6</sup> But even if both propositions are correct, the strategic importance of this golf course is heightened:

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<sup>6</sup> The acknowledgment of this trend is supported by the establishment of the *Golf Course Redevelopment Standing Advisory Committee* - <https://engage.vic.gov.au/golf-course-redevelopment-standing-advisory-committee>

- (a) If other golf courses in the region are progressively converted, the demand for golfing facilities upon those that remain will only become stronger;
  - (b) The Freeway Golf Course is in a flood plain – it is never going to be a candidate some alternative higher and better use;
  - (c) The Freeway Course is naturally positioned to serve regional demand for golf on an 18 hole course, even if other courses close;
  - (d) The demand for golf, even if diminished, will still remain strong enough to place pressure on the available supply of course in the regional catchment.
35. For all of those reasons, the reduction of the golf course to 9 holes doesn't make sense and shouldn't be countenanced. It would not make best use of the opportunities presented by this land for golfing. In truth, those opportunities that make this site good for golf otherwise operate as constraints for any higher or better land use.
36. One of the things about the Bulleen Park precinct is that all of the uses on public land there enjoy a regional catchment. But the point of difference between them is that not all of those uses are as easily relocated.
37. The golf course is the hardest to relocate.

### **The Solution**

38. For the reasons already stated, the nature and intensity of the Tennis Centre, in terms of catchment, regional importance, visitation and traffic demand, makes its natural home within a regional open space like Bulleen Park.

39. A natural corollary of any expansion of the course to ensure that it remains an 18 hole golf course, and at the same facilitates the relocation of the Tennis Centre, would mean requiring more land, some of which is presently the home of Archers and Aero modellers on land in the Bulleen Park precinct owned by Manningham.
40. The most desirable outcome is that all of the uses remain, to the extent practicable, on land that is best suited to their needs, within reasonably close proximity to their existing catchment.
41. The Yarra Valley Junior Football League (YVJFL) is also one of the land uses in this area.
42. It seems that all of the land uses here could be appropriately re-organised if NELP showed commitment to actual outcomes, rather than flirtatiously suggest possible future outcomes that create nothing but uncertainty.
43. Throughout the hearing it has become clear that different parties have been told different things about the same issues on a number of occasions.
44. The Seed Farm has been identified, including by Mr Barlow (acting on his instructions no doubt) as a good candidate for the relocation of some open space. The YVJFL has indicated a preparedness to go there, apparently in discussions with NELP. Yet the Seed Farm has recently been offered a further lease?
45. There are so many ways in which all parties could be made relatively happy here, but they all depend upon being given some level of certainty about outcomes.
46. If the YVJFL moves permanently to the Seed Farm, then the public open space strategic objectives could be achieved, and more importantly, a good deal of social disruption for the community could be avoided,

because more land would be available in the Bulleen Park Precinct to accommodate all the remaining land uses.

47. If the existing YVJFL land is not available to absorb a reallocation of space to fit all the existing uses, then a decision will need to be made. Any decision should be based upon sound principle.
48. The proper application of sound principle leads inexorably to the conclusion that the Tennis Centre should be relocated and reconstructed in accordance with Option 6 or 7 of the Bulleen Park Area Sports and Recreation Options Assessment, and a new home found for uses that are more easily transportable than either the golf course or the Tennis Centre.
49. Boroondara acknowledges that this option
  - (a) Involves extending the golf course to the north onto land within the City of Manningham; and
  - (b) Displaces the Yarra Bowman Archery Club and the Doncaster Aeromodellers Club.
50. That said, options 6 and 7 in the Bulleen Park Area Sports and Recreation Options Assessment represent the most rational deployment of open space land available after the construction of the Project, based on environmental considerations, assessment of the suitability of land for specific purposes and locational (including catchment and transport) considerations. Either of options 6 or 7 will:
  - (a) Enable the Boroondara Tennis Centre to be reconstructed prior to demolition of the existing centre;
  - (b) Retain an 18-hole par 68 golf course;
  - (c) Avoid the need to pipe additional sections of Koonung Creek;

- (d) Ensure that the facility will not have an unacceptable impact on the amenity of nearby residences;
  - (e) Enables appropriate access to be obtained via the existing freeway bridge and from Bulleen Road in the vicinity of the Veneto Club;
  - (f) Whilst accommodating an appropriate replacement regional tennis centre, constructed in accordance with current standards.
51. In short, Bulleen Park is best suited to an 18 hole golf course and the relocation of a regional tennis facility like the Tennis Centre, whereas the other land uses are more mobile.
52. Ideally, it would be better that a choice did not have to be made here, and that all uses could be accommodated. This issue has not been closed out because the Project itself is still shrouded in uncertainty, which continues to cause unnecessary anxiety for the members of the local and regional community who depend upon these local facilities as part of the fabric of their daily lives.
53. Nothing in the EPRs provides any comfort that the decision making here will be fair, open or transparent. In substance, the EPRs leave the ultimate decision to NELP. There is nothing to prevent NELP from taking the view that it has “consulted”, it has heard different views, but it is going to do what it wants anyway – which would be either Option 3 or Musca Street reserve, or alternatively butcher the golf course.
54. A better process for making these decisions would be for the Ministers and the Councils concerned to be directly involved in the decision making – given the importance of these public assets, decisions about their future should not be made by “administrative offices” of the Department, but instead by elected representatives who are accountable to Parliament, and who are forced, by the decision making process, to hear the voices of

stakeholders such as municipal councils, rather than have those voices filtered through departmental officers.

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