



# NORTHBRIDGE

PROGRESS ASSOCIATION



APRIL 12, 2021

**Willoughby City Council**

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Dear Mr Davies,

## **Northbridge Progress Association (NPA) submission to Willoughby City Council on the Willoughby Leisure Centre (WLC) 2021-22 Development Application**

Willoughby Leisure Centre (WLC) is a valuable community asset. We appreciate Council's efforts to invest in upgrading this facility for the benefit of the many Northbridge residents who use this facility as well as our broader community on the North Shore.

The Northbridge Progress Association supports the plans to upgrade the WLC pool area. We would like to raise the following issues for your consideration.

### **1. Need for long-term vision for WLC**

The proposed Development Application provides a practical and sensible approach for the near term, given budgets and priorities. However, there may be some missed opportunities if we do not consider more widely the potential uses of this facility over the long-term that could maximise its impact in the community. As an example, it has previously been suggested that small clubs representing Australia in Olympic sports, that currently do not have a home ground, could be offered training space in low usage periods (university students predominantly) ie various martial arts. We would like to see our area culturally inclusive with opportunity for federal funding. Another option that would be relatively low impact but provides significant benefit would be to enclose some of the netball courts, providing allweather, extended use periods in the aim of diluting the concentration of games at any one time and reducing traffic/parking impacts on local residents. We would encourage the Council to view the current plans as part of a phased longer-term strategy, and to proceed with this flexibility in mind.

## **2. Inclusiveness and diversity**

Our priority is to have an inclusive athletic facility that supports active lifestyles for all members of our community. We would encourage Council to ensure it has considered the needs of varied groups ranging from children and learn-to-swim facilities, through to older members of the community and those with disabilities. For example, it was not evident from the DA how Council has looked to improve access and encourage usage by people with disabilities (particularly entry ways, pools used for hydrotherapy, seating and access to change facilities).

## **3. Parking and transport strategy**

Residents have had significant concerns about parking at WLC and overflow onto local streets for some time. In normal usage periods, parking is more than adequate, however at peak periods during netball season parking overflows onto local streets. In our view the DA does not satisfactorily address these issues; however our understanding is that movement of some netball activity to the planned Gore Hill facility may eventually mitigate some of these pressures.

The DA includes a Green Transport Plan, but we do not believe this plan is adequate. Public transport options to WLC needed to be expanded, even before the Route 257 bus was cancelled. We would like to see consideration of special school buses, scheduled shuttles or other new bus routes running directly between WLC and local schools and neighbourhood centres at peak periods (e.g. after school and weekend mornings). This would greatly reduce the need for on-site parking.

## **4. Environmental impacts**

It is unavoidable that a project of this scale will have some negative impacts on the surrounding residents and environment. We are keen to see community engagement and consultation as the project progresses, on issues such as noise and construction traffic management. As there are known contaminants under the netball courts and other areas in or around the construction site, including potential asbestos, comprehensive risk management plans, including communication with the community should issues arise, will be crucial.

A key concern for a number of adjacent residents is the potential loss of bushland and tree cover in the area, which includes the habitat of Powerful Owls. We are particularly disappointed to see the planned removal of a number of large, healthy native trees on Small Street. While we recognise that it may be difficult to save all of these trees given the construction footprint, we request that Council consider whether some of them can be protected during construction and retained and Council honour the 3:1 replacement ratio.

We support the use of the current carparking spaces on the east side of Flat Rock Gully for overflow parking however do not support any increase in parking in this area as there is concern for project creep into the valued and utilised bushland.

## 5. Concurrent projects

The proposed start of works at the WLC is the second half of 2022. The proposed start date for construction of the immediately adjacent dive site at Flat Rock Gully for the Beaches Link Tunnel is early 2023. These two projects will be undertaken concurrently. The Artarmon Channel 9 site construction may also overlap and affect traffic patterns. The cumulative effect of multiple concurrent construction projects on traffic, noise, and air quality as well as community access has not been mentioned in the DA.

These concurrent projects will impact access to a number of well-used community facilities including the WLC, the Northbridge Sailing Club, 1st Sea Scouts, Northbridge Baths at the same time. We would urge Council to examine timings of these projects to better stage them to minimise concurrent impacts.

I am happy to meet to discuss any of the issues in this submission.

Yours sincerely

*Rachel*

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