

6.06. NOTICE OF MOTION - RELOCATION OF SHOWGROUNDS FOOTBALL FIELD

COUNCILLOR: Cr Terry Melchert

NOTICE OF MOTION:

I hereby give Notice of my intention to move the following Motion at the Council meeting scheduled for Tuesday 23rd February 2016:-

“That Council (including all Councillors if they so desire) move immediately (within not more than 3 days of the date of this ordinary Council meeting) to convene a meeting on-site at the Mossman Showgrounds with all relevant stakeholders, including in particular The Junior and Senior Rugby League Clubs and the Show Society to assess the feasibility of relocating the Senior Rugby League field closer to the grandstand and Clubhouse by April 2016, and note that the Rugby League Clubs have agreed to fully fund the project.”

BACKGROUND:

The Rugby League Clubs have presented a proposal to Council with general documentation for discussion. They are concerned that they should not have to expend further funds on the project until they have some indication from other stakeholders and Council as to their likely position on the proposal.

They advise in part as follows:-

1. *"At our home games, due to legally not being able to search cars, alcohol is snuck into the grounds and consumed in nonlicensed areas. Due to some parts of the field being closer to the eastern side of the oval that is where the problem area occurs.*
2. *We receive numerous complaints regarding older people not attending games any more due to the distance from the playing field. They simply cannot see this distance. This badly affects our revenue.*
3. *Moving the field closer to the grand stand and club house will enhance the whole experience of a rugby league game.*
4. *Moving the field will take a lot of extra work away from our small number of volunteers. It currently takes about 4 hours for 2 people to set up for the home games. With the field being closer to the clubhouse we estimate the setup times will be halved.*
5. *As mentioned above we strongly believe this will increase our revenue base by having more people around our club house. With the canteen takings being half of our estimated revenue and the cost of running a club always increasing (our insurance last year was over \$10000.00 dollars) we really need this extra revenue to keep our club a float."*

I have raised the urgency of this matter with the Mayor on two separate occasions in recent times and at the time of writing have received no response.

OFFICER'S COMMENT:

The request from the Mossman Port Douglas Senior Rugby League Football Club (Club) to relocate the playing field has been a subject of consideration by Council staff for some time. However, as the Club has not furnished all required information to inform objective decision making, staff have been unable to finalise consultation with other users and present a report to Council for consideration of this matter.

The following information provides a summary of actions to date.

- Initial request received from the Club 13 August 2014 including a rough map of proposed changes to the field.
- Verbal contact was made with Club to ascertain reasons for relocation as these reasons were not contained in initial request.
- Feedback from officers on proposal received and this is detailed in full under "internal consultation" below.
- 26 February 2015 letters were issued to all known users of Coronation Park seeking feedback on the Club's proposal to relocate playing field.
- After continuous follow up by Council staff, the Mossman District Show Society (MDSS) responded on 16 April 2015. Feedback from the MDSS was:
 - map not to scale
 - does not give full picture of proposal
 - before works commence MDSS to be provided with scaled map on how grounds will look after changes
 - one particular concern was movement of Announcer's Box which has a water connection
- Again after continuous follow up by Council staff, the Mossman Junior Rugby League Club (MJRLC) finally responded 11 May 2015. Their feedback was:
 - concerns with the move in respect to player safety
 - drainage and moving of seating
 - considered proposal to be a major task and not much benefit to anyone
 - did not support relocation of the field
- 12 May 2015 letter issued to Club requesting confirmation of reasons for relocation of field and a scaled map of proposed works identifying where field, buildings, seats and gates would be located after works.
- 15 May 2015 telephone call from Mr Jason Fasano who had not received letter and voiced his disappointment that Council had not progressed matter.
- No further contact was received from the Club and no response to correspondence of 15 May 2015 until 8 January 2016 (8 months).
- 8 January 2016 correspondence received from Club with drawings however these drawings did not provide information requested in Council's correspondence of 12 May 2015 (i.e. scale map identifying where field, buildings, seats and gates would be located).
- 15 January 2016 further request sent to Club requesting information supplied in letter 12 May 2015.

- As at 17 February 2016, this information has not been supplied.

Following the initial request received staff contacted the Club to obtain their reasons for requesting the relocation and these reasons have been confirmed in correspondence of 8 January 2016:

- On game days, the Club is experiencing issues with illegal drinking on the eastern side of the oval.
- Older people not attending games due to distance from playing fields.
- Moving the field closer to club house will enhance the whole experience of a rugby league game.
- With field being closer to club house set up times on game day will be halved.
- By having more people around the club house will increase revenue.

Another reason provided verbally but not confirmed in the Club's correspondence was the "in goal" playing area does not meet rugby league guidelines as it is only 5.7 metres and not the preferred 6 to 11 metres. The "in goal" playing area cannot be extended at either end because of fall in land levels in the eastern corners. Council Officers have advised that this issue could be addressed and rectified though the annual maintenance schedule/budget.

Through internal consultation of Council officers the following points are of concern with the Club's relocation proposal:

- Coronation Park is a multi-purpose complex and is not available for the sole purpose of rugby league.
- Moving the field closer to the grandstand/club house will reduce the non-playing area available for show events to operate. Current layout keeps the majority of show events off the playing field.
- Council is responsible for cost of repairs to damages caused by show events and current layout minimises damage to playing field.
- The Club has still not provided information as to where the Announcer's Box would be relocated which is of concern to the Show Society.
- Staff do not believe the relocation of the field will address or reduce the illegal drinking issue. Spectators will still be able to drive vehicles into venue to watch games and Club has already advised that they do not have power to inspect vehicles.
- The Club's desire to increase alcohol sales at the canteen is not a valid reason to move the field.
- In the absence of a Masterplan for Coronation Park, Council is unable to determine how the field relocation may impact or hinder potential future users.
- Concerns that if the Club funded the relocation then it may appear to other users that the Club has exclusive use of the field etc.

As shown by the above actions, officers have made all attempts to progress this matter, however until such time that the Club provides the required information (requested 12 May 2015 and 15 January 2016) so the other users of Coronation Park can consider the proposal, any "consultation" would be incomplete and ineffective. As soon as the Club provides the necessary information, and the views of the other users are received, a report will then be presented to Council for a formal decision.