

THE FUTURE OF HIGGINS PARK

A big hello to all assembled on this special occasion - and thank you for allowing me this opportunity to present. An exciting opportunity has been provided with the master-planning process to improve utilisation of Higgins Park - in ways that benefit the general community. This presentation will clearly demonstrate why developing two ovals and new facilities for the Vic Park Raiders is the most favourable option to consider.

THE STAKES

Before outlining my proposal however, it is essential for all of you to understand the context of what lies in the balance. For, make no mistake, if the hockey club were to take over all - or even half - of the current available space at Higgins Park, it would mean the demise of the Raiders. No more junior AFL in the Town of Vic Park. Consequently, there are ethical considerations for usurping the incumbent Raiders. There are also additional environmental considerations for replacing grass with astro-turf and 3-metre high fences.

OUR FANTASTIC EXISTING PARTNERSHIP

But rather than focus on dire consequences, I offer a way forward that will provide a favorable win/ win solution for both parties. The Raiders are just like the ToVP, in the sense of being composed of diverse, multicultural elements - where differences are respected and successes are celebrated. Just like the town where we live, the Raiders have a strong association of caring for its families - and a long history of supporting the underdogs of our community. To many families in the area, the Raiders represent a beacon that assists young kids to have a real purpose in life - and to give them the confidence to transfer what they learn on the footy field to their own personal lives.

THE FAMILY CLUB FOR EVERYONE

The Vic Park Raiders junior football club is the same as any other junior sporting association. Run by dedicated volunteers whose activities are coordinated by an elected committee, we have begun to seek new ways in which our club can become operationally sustainable, as well as financially secure. Liaising with our friendly tennis club neighbour was one of a series of undertakings conducted in the last 12 months - and well before master planning commenced..

Other undertakings include MoUs with Carlisle Cougars and Curtin-Wesley senior amateur AFL clubs - as well as developing strong affiliations with the WA Football Commission, the Perth Demons, the Demons District Football Umpiring Association - not to mention the new kids in town, the Eagles. The continuation of the Raiders is vital to all these various AFL sporting bodies. All are invested in the future direction that the club is taking - in becoming **"The Family Club for Everyone"**.

2020: UNITING THE RAIDERS WITH THEIR NEIGHBOURS

We already have a large number of teams comprising boys and girls from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. What we are lacking though is, firstly, facilities that we can use all year round - for both summer and winter AFL activities. Secondly, we are lacking the expertise and resources to consolidate what we have achieved already in our community outreach programmes (such as academic pathways for young indigenous women at Curtin University and hosting the first muslim AFL girl's team - who look resplendent in their own specially-designed uniforms approved by the AFL).

With regards to the latter issue, we would like to engage with the excellent community workers in the ToVP to increase our community outreach - and to develop a community engagement plan that would benefit both parties. We want to showcase our long-standing partnership with the ToVP with a revitalised purpose, in keeping with the times. Yes - and these are extraordinary times that we are living in. Like you, the Raiders are experiencing the same delays. Our playing season has not commenced yet - and looks unlikely until July or August, at this stage.

So, in fairness, please provide us sufficient time to respond in the most appropriate way - and allow us an extension of time to hand over a professional business plan to the ToVP. Please, do not make any decisions to determine which option you will pursue in 2020. In order to become viable, we need to study other business models in the Perth region and adopt the best elements from each. We want to identify the most suitable business model for combining all the current sports activities at Higgins Park (tennis, AFL and croquet) into a single, unified enterprise.

WHAT'S AT STAKE

There is a considerable amount at stake. Strengthen the Raiders' presence in the town - and we will become your biggest success story. Together, we can provide a template for how other town councils and affiliated sports clubs can cooperate together - and prosper.

Conversely, as mentioned previously, the end of the Raiders will mean no more junior footy in the town. Families will be left without all the social benefits that belonging to the Raiders provides. And the ToVP will lose an iconic component of their community. Please consider carefully.....