



**Desktop Peer Review
VC Mitchell Park Project**

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Acknowledgements

RCH Consulting would like to acknowledge the Shire of Donnybrook-Balingup for its support in the preparation of this Desktop Peer Review. The Commissioner, Chief Executive Officer and staff of the Shire have provided significant support in the provision of the relevant documents and advice in relation to the development of the VC Mitchell Park project.

RCH Consulting would particularly like to thank Ross Marshall, the Shire's Principal Project Manager, for the provision of extensive historical and current project documentation and support in order to conduct this review. Club representatives in the sport and recreation community have also provided valuable input into this project, specifically members of Donnybrook Football Club, Donnybrook Tennis Club and Donnybrook Hockey Club.

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1. Executive Summary

The Shire of Donnybrook-Balingup has completed a VC Mitchell Park Masterplan and is progressing a range of projects to meet the requirements of this Plan. A new synthetic hockey training pitch with floodlighting has been constructed and further asset renewal is planned for the Recreation Centre. The major project is the creation of a new community sporting pavilion and the upgrade of the existing tennis pavilion.

The construction of this new community facility will be an asset for not only the sporting clubs who access the facilities at VC Mitchell Park but it will also create opportunities for the broader community to utilise function facilities and community meeting spaces.

The brief for this project from the Shire has been to conduct a Desktop Peer Review of the VC Mitchell Park Project and to assess the potential to achieve best value for money outcomes for the project, identifying potential cost savings.

RCH Consulting has accessed all the project documentation and has also had the opportunity to have input to the design of the new community facility. As a result, RCH Consulting would make the following recommendations:

1. Further design work be completed to reduce the scale of the new community facility to ensure it aligns with the existing budget.
2. The Detailed Design (Hold Point 2) be further refined to ensure maximum efficiency in relation to the servicing of the Community Function Room and the functional inter-relationship between the bar, kitchen and cool room.
3. A consultant specialising in disability access requirements be engaged prior to the finalisation of design development (Hold Point 2) to ensure the design of the new community facility meets Universal Access requirements.
4. A Stakeholder Engagement Plan be developed which is supported by the establishment of a Project User Group.
5. The Shire, as a priority, completes its Framework for the setting of Leases and Licences, including clarity around the setting of fees and obligations under the lease/licence for both the Shire and a community organisation and the likely financial impact.
6. Review the annual fees and charges as they relate to the use of Shire buildings, sporting facilities and the hire of sporting ovals.
7. The Shire considers a policy (or principle) addressing the level of future financial support that would be available to single use community groups versus two or more groups who wish to develop or share a facility; the intent being to prioritise proposals that support multiple community use of one facility.
8. Projects identified as part of the broader VC Mitchell Masterplan be costed and a funding proposal be prepared for the consideration of the State Government, including Lotterywest and or other funding bodies.

2. Project Description

The brief for this project from the Shire has been to conduct a Desktop Peer Review of the VC Mitchell Park Project and to assess the potential to achieve best value for money outcomes for the project, identifying potential cost savings.

The Shire did not receive any compliant responses to its tender advertisement for the construction of the new community facility (Pavilion 1 and 2). A consultation process in the form of an *Expression of Interest* was advertised and there were two respondents, Smith Constructions and Perkins Builders. Perkins Builders was subsequently appointed as the nominated contractor. At March 2023, a Design and Construct contract to the value of \$8.51 million was awarded to Perkins Builders. Three staged **Hold Points** have been identified as the project evolves to manage risk and cost escalation in the current construction market. The design development phase is due for completion by September 2023 with construction documentation due for completion by August 2023 and construction scheduled to commence in September 2023 with completion due by December 2024.

This Desktop Peer Review includes:

1. opportunities to further refine the design to maximise the multipurpose nature of the facility in line with the Masterplan and the Shire's ability to finance and manage the project in line with the State Government's Financial Assistance Grant obligations and stakeholder aspirations;
2. develop a consultation governance model to support improved stakeholder consultation and engagement;
3. optimise the use of shared facilities; and
4. recommendations in relation to the points above.

3. Design Opportunities (Hold Point 1)

The consultant has reviewed the latest Schematic Design Report for Pavilion 1, both Ground and First Floor plans as produced by Cameron Chisholm Nicol and the Pavilion 2 schematic design (March 2023).

In relation to the Schematic Design Report the following commentary is offered:

3.1 Pavilion 1 - Ground Floor

There are no significant design issues with the current schematic design of the Ground Floor.

The Ground Floor is a well-designed, spacious area catering for four sporting team changing rooms with ancillary showering facilities as well as two umpire changing rooms. The changing rooms can operate independently or expand with the provision of the connecting door. The wet area makes provision for suitable showering and toileting facilities for both male and female participants. There are two rooms allocated for first aid/pre-game strapping facilities. The Home Team facilities also include an extensive indoor Warm Up area/Multi-purpose Room.

Public toilets are accessible and there is inclusion for a Universal Access toilet including baby change facilities. There is the inclusion of a canteen for reserve users with provision for a dumb waiter. A cleaners' storage space has been created and stairs and a lift provide suitable access to the First Floor facilities.

There is provision for tiered seating platforms in front of the Ground Floor changing facilities which improves the amenity for spectators and it is proposed that the existing shade would be removed and the roof line extended on Level 1 to provide protection from the elements to spectators.

Given the gradient change from the Changing Rooms to the oval playing surface, consideration will be required in the provision of a non-slip surface for the Players' Race to allow safe access and egress to and from the playing surface.

3.2 Pavilion 1 - First Floor

The First Floor entry to Pavilion 1 is either via stairs or lift from the Ground Floor or via a ramp from the Tennis Club facility with adjacent car park. The design of the community social facilities includes an entry foyer, extensive Community/Function space, Bar/Cool room with adjacent social facilities, kitchen facilities, a multipurpose community room, a smaller multipurpose room, viewing deck, toilet facilities including Universal Access and baby changing facilities, Centre Manager's office, storage facilities and service deck.

3.3 Pavilion 2 - Donnybrook Tennis Club

The Donnybrook Tennis Club is an existing facility with Function Room, pantry, kitchen, store-room and office space. The Donnybrook Tennis Club will have a new roof over the existing building and there is provision for two changing rooms with toilet and shower facilities as well as a Universal Access toilet. The design also includes provision for a new viewing terrace and future viewing deck.

4. Design Summary

4.1 Pavilion 1

It is obvious to the consultant that considerable thought and design has been invested in both the current and future use of this community facility. The Ground Floor changing facilities are spacious for both the Home and Visiting Away Team and are suitable for both male and female sport and recreation activities. The facility can accommodate multiple teams changing at any one time which promotes maximum usage.

The Home Team indoor warmup space allowance is an inclusion that this consultant believes is not common in many community sporting facilities and should there be budget pressures the inclusion of this facility would require further investigation. Should this be pursued it is likely this would have the effect of reducing the size of the Community Function Room directly above on the First Floor.

The provision of the canteen on the Ground Floor is a standard provision for community sporting facilities and an essential revenue raiser. The design will need careful consideration to ensure there is sufficient space and capacity to service patrons on the Ground Floor without duplicating the catering opportunities on Level 1. The inclusion of the dumb waiter helps support the servicing of the canteen. Given future potential multiuse of the sports' oval it is likely other sports will want to utilise the canteen and the security of each club's equipment and stock should be considered.

The main area of design concern relates to the servicing of the Community Room and access to bar facilities when there is a function in the space. The current schematic design indicates patrons attending a function will have to access the bar via the entry foyer. This could have a detrimental effect on bar sales. The disconnect between the bar and the kitchen facilities is also not ideal as it does not provide the best service to the customer, particularly in relation to efficient customer service, and may lead to increased staff costs due to duplication of service (assuming not staffed by volunteers).

Further design work should be undertaken to ensure a co-existence between the bar/kitchen and cool room facilities. It would also be advantageous to revisit the relationship of the bar servery to the Community Function Room when the area is used for a community meeting or function and the dividing wall is closed to the public bar facilities.

4.2 Pavilion 2

The upgrades to the existing Donnybrook Tennis Club facility will increase the life of an ageing asset with the provision of a new insulated roof, new terrace which will improve access to tennis courts, some building façade improvements and a new feature entry. The additional changing rooms will also provide improved changing and toilet facilities for club members with the potential for shared use with the arrival of the hockey club to the precinct.

It is disappointing that the Donnybrook Tennis Club facilities were unable to be integrated into Pavilion 1, however a review of the documentation has revealed that this was not supported by sections of the community for various reasons. The walkway bridge to Pavilion 1 will promote future access to the Community Multipurpose room, Function and bar facilities, particularly when the Donnybrook Tennis Club may wish to host presentation/award nights and fund-raising activities which would exceed the capacity of their existing facility.

4.3 Cost Savings

At the time of writing, the cost of Pavilion 1 exceeds budget by approximately \$108,000 which equates to approximately 37 m². Given the aforementioned comments regarding the relationship between the bar/cool room and kitchen, there is potential for better integration and a reduction in the footprint of both Level 1, and a resulting reduction in the Away Team facilities on the Ground Floor. This will require further examination by the project architects with input from the catering consultant.

Further cost saving measures have been identified as follows:

- ❖ the removal of a steel beam for a future operable wall which would serve little benefit to the community function space;
- ❖ the removal of back-of-house ceilings which are not visible to the public; and
- ❖ the removal of function space ceiling to create industrial feel which this Consultant does not support.

Further work is required to identify cost savings as the project progresses to the next design stage.

The footprint for the new community facility has significant gradients throughout the reserve and between buildings. It is important that new community facilities are designed to comply with the principles of Universal Access and inclusive design by facilitating access to, and use of, the facility and its spaces by all individuals and groups of all abilities. This will support broader community use and access to this facility. The engagement of a consultant with expertise in this field would be a worthwhile investment. If there is a local community group with expertise it would also be worthwhile including this group during the design development process to ensure it meets local needs.

With all local community development building projects there are significant benefits involving local companies and trades in the construction of new facilities. This has the added benefit of generating local good will, promoting community ownership, and the possibility of providing trades at competitive prices.

There is also the potential to source local building materials either at cost price or through sponsorship support. The project documentation has identified the use of locally supplied products, for example Donnybrook stone and timber, to reflect the Donnybrook-Balingup region and to create further pride in the development, completion and utilisation of this new community facility.

In an effort to secure future sponsorship for the building it would be advantageous to have clarity between the Shire and the sporting groups on the sponsorship priorities for the project to alleviate unnecessary duplication of approaches from both the Shire and a multitude of sporting clubs.

RCH Consulting has not had the opportunity to review the financial position of either Donnybrook Football Club or the Tennis Club in order to identify their capacity to pay for infrastructure and equipment which is specific to their needs only and have little further community benefit. This should be examined.

Many projects throughout the State have been exposed to cost escalation which has limited their potential to complete projects as originally planned. RCH Consulting believes that there is an opportunity to approach the State Government for top-up funding to complete the Masterplan for VC Mitchell Park for projects that are not included in the existing budget. Given the multitude of requests received by the State Government this request should be well documented and costed with an emphasis on achieving the scope of the project as identified in the original Masterplan. The areas of opportunity are identified in Section 5 below.

Recommendations:

- ❖ *Further design work be completed to reduce the scale of the new community facility to ensure it aligns with the existing budget.*
- ❖ *The Schematic Design (Hold Point 1) be further refined to ensure maximum efficiency in relation to the servicing of the Community Function Room and the functional inter-relationship between the bar, kitchen and cool room.*
- ❖ *A consultant specialising in disability access requirements be engaged prior to the finalisation of design development to ensure the design of the new community facility meets Universal Access requirements.*

5. VC Mitchell Masterplan Future Opportunities

RCH Consulting has reviewed the VC Mitchell Masterplan prepared by ABV Leisure Consultants (May 2020) and many of the projects that were identified are being progressed. In particular:

- ❖ The lighting of the sports oval has been completed;
- ❖ The new synthetic hockey pitch with lighting has been completed;
- ❖ The design for the new pavilion and upgrades to the tennis pavilion are in hand; and
- ❖ The provision for netball and basketball to utilise the indoor courts at the recreation centre is progressing.

The Shire is currently planning and designing changes to the Recreation Centre to accommodate indoor netball and basketball.

Some other relatively minor projects could be costed and included in a future State funding application to ensure that the VC Mitchell Project Masterplan is progressed to maximise the benefit to the community.

Projects identified include:

- ❖ External and internal repair and decoration is required to the Donnybrook Tennis Club pavilion;
- ❖ Future floodlighting of tennis courts for Donnybrook Tennis Club;
- ❖ Additional storage and shelter for the hockey club could be included adjacent to the new tennis club changing rooms;
- ❖ The existing playground at Vin Farley Park could be relocated in closer proximity to the new community facility given it is currently outside the boundary fence of the reserve. However, given the likely cost of relocating an ageing playground, a new facility maybe more appropriate.
- ❖ The provision of a synthetic or grassed cricket wicket on the oval could provide overflow facilities for the cricket club as well as maximising the use of the oval during the summer months;
- ❖ Improved drainage around the precinct which currently affects various areas of the reserve;
- ❖ Improvement in the path network and interconnection between the various buildings and sporting facilities on the reserve;
- ❖ Beautification of the retaining wall as a community development arts activity; and
- ❖ Increased landscaping to help 'soften' the existing VC Mitchell Park.

Whilst still subject to detailed costing, the improvements outlined above could be the subject of a further funding request to the State Government under the COVID Recovery Program. Lotterywest could also be approached to support a new *All Abilities* playground in close proximity to the new community facility.

Should the aforementioned funding submission to increase the original \$6 million capital grant to complete the VC Mitchell Project Masterplan be unsuccessful, there is the opportunity for the Shire and/or individual sporting clubs to apply for future funding from the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries under the Community Sport and Recreation Facility Fund (CSRFF). The maximum grant offered for standard grant applications is one third of the total estimated project cost (excluding GST) up to a maximum of \$2 million with a priority given to facility sharing and rationalisation of facilities. Additionally, a recent Tennis West press release (2 March 2023) indicated that five tennis clubs across the State were successful in securing \$1.5 million towards infrastructure upgrades. Sports floodlighting applications are encouraged to apply through the Club Night Lights Program (a subset of CSRFF).

6. Project Governance

RCH Consulting has reviewed the Options Analysis Report completed by Anna Dixon Consulting (March 2022). It is appropriate that the Shire assumes total responsibility for the delivery of this project and has the personnel and experience in a range of professions to deliver the project successfully. The Shire has recently appointed a Principal Project Manager with the skills and experience, particularly in the building industry, to deliver this project successfully.

7. Stakeholder Engagement

7.1 Overview

This Desktop Peer Review has indicated that this project has created considerable community interest as well as uncertainty in some sections of the community. Where there is a vacuum of accurate information this can create community confusion and the potential for misinformation in the community. With the securing of funding and progression of the design of the new community facility, the Shire should consider the development of a Stakeholder and Community Engagement Management Plan. The aim of the Plan is to facilitate the successful delivery of the project. This would be achieved via open, transparent and inclusive engagement practices and methodologies that enable key stakeholder involvement in the planning, design and delivery of the project and transparency to the broader community.

The goals of the Plan would be to:

- ❖ Build and maintain relationships with key stakeholders upon whose support the project depends; and,
- ❖ Ensure that other stakeholders and the wider community are kept informed, particularly during the construction phase.

7.2 Project User Group

Whilst the Shire retains control of the project, Anna Dixon Consulting (Options Analysis – VC Mitchell Park, March 2022) recommended an Advisory Committee be established, with membership drawn from user groups and the broader community, to guide any operational decision-making and to align operations with community needs and preferences. The pros and cons of this approach were identified in that Report.

RCH Consulting recommends the establishment of a Project User Group to support the Shire during the design development, construction and operation of the new community facility. The Project User Group would be made up the following representatives;

- Shire Principal Project Manager
- Shire Communications Officer
- Two representatives from Donnybrook Football Club
- Two representatives from Donnybrook Tennis Club; and
- One/two representative(s) from Donnybrook Hockey Club
- Invited stakeholders as required and appropriate.

The Project User Group would not have direct responsibility for the delivery of the project. Rather, the group should be comprised of end users of the facility who provide input and feedback into the development of the Project Brief and are part of the Design Development process.

The purpose of the Shire Communications Officer attending the meeting is to be informed of key project milestones and to ensure that there are regular community postings on the multitude of social media channels utilised by the Shire. The principle of this approach is that there are 'no surprises' to either the end users or the general community as the project develops. If required, community briefings could be hosted to update the community and to allow questions on the project. To commence the project the community could be invited to name the new project (with no guarantee that any name would be endorsed by the Council).

Without wishing to be too prescriptive, the User Group could meet monthly (or as required if urgent input required). Meetings would be minuted and the key role of the group would be to:

- Discuss and resolve project issues as they affect the clubs;
- Provide input to the broader VC Masterplan;
- Monitor progress of project delivery;
- Provide input to transition planning whilst construction in progress;
- Refer to Shire as appropriate for unresolved, conflicting matters; and
- Provide operational/end user input, ie how the facilities will be used.

Recommendation:

A Stakeholder Engagement Plan be developed which is supported by the establishment of a Project User Group.

7.3 Facility Management Model

The preferred management model for a new facility development, particularly for those projects seeking significant funding, is to form an umbrella Sporting Association which is incorporated. That opportunity was not supported at a local level, however this approach should not be dismissed for future reference.

In conducting this Desktop Peer Review, RCH Consulting concurs with the recommendation from Anna Dixon Consulting which was endorsed by the Shire that a *Blended Management Model* should be adopted for the new community facility. For clarity the model proposes that:

“ ... the Shire would manage bookings of the Sports Ovals and all leases, licences, seasonal bookings and casual hire using the existing processes and systems. Each of the sporting clubs would continue to operate out of their existing facilities as they currently do. The Key User Club (suggest Donnybrook Football Club) would take responsibility for operational management of Multi-Function Room 1. The Club would utilise the space for its own purposes, as well as taking responsibility for managing hiring out to third-parties. The Club would be responsible for providing access to venue hirers, cleaning after use by the club and hirers and any other outgoings. The Club would collect the fee for hiring the space, as well as potentially offering catering and event services, offering them the ability to generate additional income to cover any costs associated with managing the space and potentially employ staff to assist in delivering some aspects of service (for example, cleaning or bar staff) to reduce the demand on volunteers.”

Given that Donnybrook Football Club is the key user of the existing and new facility, RCH Consulting would recommend that its future lease includes the new community building (including the Ground Floor pavilion) if the Shire does not want to retain operational control of the changing facilities. In addition, the Club’s future lease should reflect its responsibility to maximise community use of the facility, with any hire fees and charges endorsed by the Council annually.

7.4 Lease Terms and Conditions

In conducting this Desktop Peer Review there is a lack of clarity on the current status of the existing Leases and Licences that exist throughout the Shire, how lease/licence fees are calculated, and the cost of using public ovals appears ill-defined. The Shire is currently developing a Framework for the setting of leases/licences, which has been the subject of stakeholder engagement, and will be released for public comment prior to being finalised.

RCH Consulting recommends that the Framework for the setting of leases/licences be progressed as a matter of urgency to ensure consistency in facility responsibility and the setting of fees. There should also be a review of the fees and charges published which provides consistency for the hiring of Shire buildings and sporting facilities.

In reviewing the Framework for the setting of leases/licences, the Shire may also wish to consider a policy (or principle) addressing the level of future financial support that would be possible to single use community groups versus two or more groups who wish to develop or share a facility; the intent being to prioritise proposals that support multiple community use of one facility.

Recommendations:

The Shire, as a priority, completes its Framework for the setting of Leases and Licences, including clarity around the setting of fees and obligations under the lease/licence for both the Shire and a community organisation and the likely financial impact.

Review the annual fees and charges schedule as they relate to the use of Shire buildings, sporting facilities and the hire of sporting ovals.

The Shire considers a policy (or principle) addressing the level of future financial support that would be available to single use community groups versus two or more groups who wish to develop or share a facility; the intent being to prioritise proposals that support multiple community use of one facility.

8. Project Financial Feasibility

The Project was successful in securing a \$6 million grant from the State Government. Of this amount, \$250,000 of the funding was approved by the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries to be released for project management and tender preparation. The Council funded the construction of the synthetic hockey surface and lighting with that value being deducted from the Shire's project contribution of \$3.5 million. The Shire has also recently had a loan application for \$2.9 million (loan period being twenty years) approved by WA Treasury Corporation. The Shire has access to additional revenue as a result of the sale of Shire property in Bridge Street, Donnybrook. The total project cost is anticipated to be \$9,870,000.

Recurrent costs for the new community facility will relate to building asset maintenance, with the sporting clubs responsible for minor and day-to-day maintenance. This will need to be clearly articulated in any new lease agreement.

RCH Consulting has reviewed the projected expenditure to date and this appears in line with industry norms.

The above budget implications have been included in the Shire's financial statements and have been endorsed by the Council.

It should also be noted that when the design development has been completed, a final copy of the community facility plans should be forwarded to the respective State Government Department for compliance with the terms of the Financial Assistance Agreement.

There are two project funding sources that remain unsecured and these should be investigated and progressed as a matter of urgency. RCH Consulting recommends that:

- ❖ A funding application is lodged with the WAFC/AFL as discussions to date indicate that up to \$120,000 may be available for the south-west region. This is a competitive process and there is currently no guarantee of funding; and
- ❖ Discussions and negotiations are commenced with the Donnybrook Football Club regarding its capacity to service a \$250,000 contribution and how that will be reflected in its future lease terms and conditions of the new community facilities.

As previously mentioned, project escalation is a significant issue across many facility projects in the State. Careful consideration is required to ensure there is no project scope creep that has a negative impact on the budget. The recommended Project User Group will assist in staying focussed on project priorities and curtailing unnecessary project creep.

The capacity exists for a well-documented and costed Business Case to be submitted to the State Government to ensure that outstanding projects in the VC Mitchell Masterplan can be completed successfully.

Recommendation:

Projects identified as part of the broader VC Mitchell Masterplan be costed and a funding proposal be prepared for the consideration of the State Government, including Lotterywest and other funding bodies.

9. Recommendations

The following recommendations are made to support the successful construction of the new community facilities and enhancements that were identified in the Masterplan for VC Mitchell Park:

- 9.1 Further design work be completed to reduce the scale of the new community facility to ensure it aligns with the existing budget.
- 9.2 The Schematic Design (Hold Point 1) be further refined to ensure maximum efficiency in relation to the servicing of the Community Function Room and the functional inter-relationship between the bar, kitchen and cool room.
- 9.3 A consultant specialising in disability access requirements be engaged prior to the finalisation of design development to ensure the design of the new community facility meets Universal Access requirements.
- 9.4 A Stakeholder Engagement Plan be developed which is supported by the establishment of a Project User Group.
- 9.5 The Shire, as a priority, completes its Framework for the setting of Leases and Licences, including clarity around the setting of fees and obligations under the lease/ licence for both the Shire and a community organisation and the likely financial impact.
- 9.6 Review the annual fees and charges as they relate to the use of Shire buildings, sporting facilities and the hire of sporting ovals.
- 9.7 The Shire considers a policy (or principle) addressing the level of future financial support that would be available to single use community groups versus two or more groups who wish to develop or share a facility; the intent being to prioritise proposals that support multiple community use of one facility.
- 9.8 Projects identified as part of the broader VC Mitchell Masterplan be costed and a funding proposal be prepared for the consideration of the State Government, including Lotterywest and other funding bodies.