



Anoulack Chanthivong MP

MEMBER FOR MACQUARIE FIELDS

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17 June 2021

Submission on Planning Proposal – Reclassification of land at Apex Park and Bradbury Park from
Community Land to Operational Land to facilitate the Campbelltown Billabong Project

Dear Lindy,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on Campbelltown City Council's plan to reclassify land at Apex Park and Bradbury Park to facilitate the Campbelltown Billabong project.

Since plans for the Billabong were first announced in 2018, there has been significant changes to the design and scope of the project, causing a significant cost blowout from \$18.75 million to \$31 million.

Unfortunately, there has been very little detail available to the community to justify such a significant funding increase. So far, Council has been unable to provide further information on detailed designs, parking requirements or the operating model for the Billabong.

I am concerned that Council has repeated the same pattern of omitting crucial details in relation to the Planning Proposal to reclassify land at Apex Park and Bradbury Park.

The Planning Proposal is devoid of substantive details, meaning local residents are not being given a clear picture of what the reclassification of land will actually mean.

The Planning Proposal provides no detail on the commercial activities Council is planning or envisions for the site.

I note a media release issued by Council on 4 June 2021 states: "The planning proposal will allow for commercial opportunities to be explored on the land such as a kiosk or café when the under-construction billabong is completed next year".

However, there is no reference to such commercial opportunities in the Planning Proposal nor on Council's consultation website overtoyou.campbelltown.nsw.gov.au.

It is disappointing residents have not been given a clearer picture of what is planned for the Billabong so that they may make informed comment on this Planning Proposal.

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Furthermore, jargon-laden sentences such as the ones listed below are unhelpful and raise more questions than provide answers.

“In order to facilitate the project and ensure that the site successfully operates as a Billabong, a planning proposal is required to make the land operational” (p4).

- What constitutes the “successful” operation of the Billabong?
- Will the Billabong be unsuccessful without this reclassification of land? Why?

Comment: I am concerned the above wording gives the impression the Billabong will only be viable if there are commercial activities on site.

Surely before recommending and voting to spend an extra \$12.25 million on the Billabong (as per the 8 December 2020 Council meeting), Council and Councillors did their due diligence to ensure such a large public investment is fiscally responsible?

To be blunt, I am concerned the reclassification of land is a retrospective attempt to salvage a white elephant.

“The proposed reclassification would assist Council in the process of turning the proposed Billabong into a functioning project once it is completed in 2022” (p5).

- What is meant by functioning project?
- Can the Billabong not function without the reclassification of land? Why?

“The reclassification would also allow Council to unlock land that may be considered under utilised and promote other uses that would work in cohesion with the Billabong” (p5).

- What part of the site is underutilised?
- How did Council come to this conclusion?
- What “other uses” is Council referring to that would work in “cohesion” with the Billabong?
- Does the allocated \$31 million budget for the Billabong include money for the construction of “other uses” or will more money be needed to include commercial activities on the site?

“In order for the land to be functioning and used for business purposes it will be required to reclassify the land...” (p5).

- What is meant by “for the land to be functioning”? As above, can the Billabong not function without the reclassification of land?
- What business purposes are proposed for the site?

"The planning proposal will facilitate flexibility in the future management and operation of the precinct..." (p16)

- Why does Council need "flexibility" for the future management and operation of the site?
- Will the Billabong be owned and operated by Council or be privatised?

"As part of the process, the reclassification of the subject site would assist Council in achieving a timely opening of the site and unlocking potential management options and future complementary co-located uses" (p18).

- Why would the "timely opening" of the Billabong be delayed without the reclassification?
- What "potential management options" would be unlocked by this reclassification?
- Will any commercial activities on the site be owned and operated by Council?
- Will any commercial activities on the site be privatised or put out to tender?

"The regional level parklands to accompany the Billabong will encompass the whole land including the current playing fields at the northern end of the site so that the facilities are able to cater for large groups and provide recreational opportunities for the whole year, including periods when it is too cold to swim" (p18).

- What role will the current playing fields have in providing "recreational opportunities for the whole year"?
- Will the playing fields continue to operate as playing fields?
- If not, what is the proposed use?
- Has Council consulted with sporting groups currently using the playing fields about proposed uses for the site? If so, what concerns were raised by the sporting groups?
- What role will current users of the playing fields have in determining the future uses for the site?
- Will access to the playing fields only be available via the Billabong or will existing access arrangements remain?
- What will happen to the Festival of Fisher's Ghost activities that have traditionally taken place on the site?
- What activities does Council envision at the site when it is too cold to swim?

I note that Council has been awarded up to \$4.75 million under the Public Places Legacy Program for "embellishment of Apex Park to provide an important regional open space, including welcome to Council public artwork, event space and water features"¹.

- As this Planning Proposal specifically relates to Apex Park, what is the status of the Public Places Legacy Program funding?

¹ <https://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/-/media/Files/DPE/Plans-and-policies/PSLP-Council-Funding-Project-Details.pdf?la=en>

- Will any money from the Public Places Legacy Program be allocated to the Campbelltown Billabong project?

I also note considerable earthworks have been commenced on the Billabong site.

- When was a development application (DA) lodged and approved for the earthworks and removal of trees from the site?
- Who was the consent authority for the DA/s?
- How much has been spent on physical works on the Billabong site to date?

The operation of the Billabong, and potential inclusion of commercial activities on the site, has the potential to disrupt existing Council facilities.

- Has Council completed studies on the future impact of the Billabong on the viability of:
 - i. Campbelltown Arts Centre café
 - ii. Gordon Fetterplace Aquatic Centre
 - iii. Eagle Vale Central
 - iv. Macquarie Fields Leisure Centre?
- If not, does Council intend to complete such studies?

The Campbelltown Billabong is one of the largest recreational projects attempted by Council to date. The purpose of my submission on this Planning Proposal is to ensure Council has undertaken its due diligence to ensure the responsible expenditure of ratepayers' money.

I look forward to advice on the matters raised in my submission.

Yours sincerely,



Anoulack Chanthivong MP
Member for Macquarie Fields

CC: Campbelltown City Councillors