



Issue No. 89

22 August 2021

Dear Community Member

Our 15 August broadcast to the community warned that Council might use the postponement of the Greenwich Village Games as an excuse to start the work at BCO this year, rather than the original start date of January 2022.

Our fears were realised.

Council intends to start work once it has issued its mandatory Part 5 environmental approval.

In the 16 August Council meeting the General Manager indicated that Council's environmental assessment is likely to be completed later in September.

Work cannot start until this approval has been signed off by Council itself as the authorising body.

And the General Manager advised Councillors "I'm happy to give the undertaking. Nothing will happen down there (at BCO) before September".

Whilst the exact start date is unclear, what is clear is that Council intends to start work at BCO as soon as it can.

And once work starts, public access to the reserve will be limited to the small grassed area between the viaduct and the mudflats and to a path from the car park to the bushland at the northern end of the reserve.

In the middle of a COVID lockdown that shows all the signs of lasting for some time, the tranquil, unstructured grassed open space at Gore Creek Reserve will be lost to the community.

Our Councillors **must** be aware of the extensive amount of commentary by health experts

Three psychologists and a GP emphasised this in the public forum on 16 August, as did many other speakers from the community.

The Monday 16 August meeting provided Councillors with the perfect opportunity to demonstrate to the community that they recognised the vital role played by Gore Creek Reserve as a recreational space during COVID.

During debate, Councillor Morris asked if the work at BCO could be delayed until, perhaps, the end of the summer to allow use of the ground by the community.

The Mayor responded that “But we’re supposed to be coming out of lockdown in a couple of weeks” followed by words to the effect of “we’ll ask the Premier”.

That was the end of any discussion about the possibility of delaying the start of work.

Council then resolved 4-4 (with the Mayor using her casting vote) to give the General Manager unlimited authority to sign a contract for the synthetic sportsfield.

There was no motion moved to delay the start of the BCO work in recognition of the importance of BCO to community mental and physical health.

Given the failure of Council to even consider a motion to delay the start of BCO due to COVID, you can imagine how disbelieving community members were to receive a Message from the Mayor on Wednesday, just two days after the Council meeting.

Whilst the Mayor’s message of support to the community was welcome, the following sentence stood out:-

*A reminder about the **importance of daily exercise**. Lights are on at Blackman Park, **Bob Campbell Oval**, Pottery Green Oval and Tantallon Oval until 8:00pm each evening.*

Very soon, not only will the lights go out at BCO, but BCO will be barricaded off as a works site.

And this at a time when the community needs this haven more than ever before.

In response to the Mayor’s request for community members to “*please reach out if we can be of assistance to you*”, the GCA wrote to the Mayor on 20 August as follows -

meetings - 2 August and again on last Monday night.

We request you to convene an extraordinary meeting to vote on a motion to delay the commencement of works at BCO until the restrictions of COVID have been lifted."

The Mayor replied as follows:-

"At the moment, I don't have a timeline for the BCO project.

However, please be assured that Council will take all the matters you have raised into consideration at the appropriate time."

The GCA hopes for more assurance than this that community mental and physical health will be prioritised over project timelines.

BCO is a lifeline for the community at present - just go there any day and you will see how much this space means to the community.

We plead with our Councillors to put their community first and to vote urgently to defer any BCO works until COVID restrictions are lifted.

For some of you, this may be the first time you have received a broadcast from the GCA.

You were one of 1600+ community members who signed a petition last year to halt a synthetic BCO and gave us your email addresses.

If you wish to unsubscribe from our future broadcasts, please refer to the unsubscribe option below.

Kind regards

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