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Golf Club defends development proposal.

Murrumbidgee County Club (MCC), like many small community clubs, under continuing financial pressure, initiated a feasibility study in 2013 with ACT Government support, which identified three small sites, on approximately 10% of the existing golf club lease for potential development. After 5 years of evaluation and consultation, the Club lodged a Planning Report in April, informed by a range of expert studies, concluding that the development of the residential sites will not have any significant adverse impact on surrounding land uses or the local environment.

The application was prepared in close consultation with, and informed by feedback from, the local community and club members. As a result of this consultation, a number of compromises were made to original recommendations in the feasibility study. These included suggestions from members and local residents, to include height restrictions, lower density, parklands, and public walking trails. Whilst these compromises reduce any potential yield to the Club, they were made in the spirit of ensuring that any future development respects and protects the residential and lifestyle amenity of the local precinct.

Recently, a local group known as the Save our Green Space (SOGS) group, announced plans to oppose the project. On 9 September the group convened a public meeting offering attendees the opportunity to “find out the latest about what is happening with the Murrumbidgee Country Club residential development proposal”. A request by the Club to address the meeting was rejected by its organisers.

“We believe that a number of statements made by SOGS are incorrect,” Mr. Dean Hill, Murrumbidgee President said.

“Our lease is not Public property as claimed by SOGS. It is a concessional lease zoned **limited access recreational**. The Club has however allowed visitors and locals to access the land freely within common sense guidelines” he said.

“The claim by SOGS that our club “seeks to profit from a windfall for the good of a select few”, is also incorrect. Murrumbidgee is a not-for-profit community-based club. Our members and visitors have funded the club since 1990 with no government or community funding other than a partial grant for our river pipeline, which was also opposed by a local minority group.

The Club has not sought exemption from Betterment Taxes. The Club anticipates that the determination of appropriate fees, taxes and planning approvals will require separate government and community consultation after the re-zoning application has been considered”

Murrumbidgee has consulted in good faith with the local community and, made significant compromises to this proposal to meet the needs of the majority of golf club members and local residents.

MCC development committee member and local resident Ron Shepherd, who attended the SOGS meeting was dismayed by the lack of open discussion and the incorrect information communicated by the group.

“The Club was informed by the local Save Our Green Space campaign representatives that they oppose the broader ACT wide phenomenon of developing green spaces and are opposed to any deconcessionalisation of leases with **no compromises.**” Mr Shepherd stated.

“However, they have stated they may support the redevelopment of one of the proposed sites which is currently used for golfing. “Surely **this** is a suggestion that will only benefit a select few.... It seems perverse to remove existing facilities and infrastructure for development when the remaining two sites are not currently utilised in any way by the club”

This minority group, who have, enjoyed the value and amenity of the golf course free of restrictions or cost, appear to have little appreciation for the members, volunteers, staff and supporting community who have historically contributed to the club’s survival.

Murrumbidgee has struggled to maintain a proud environmental and recreational asset, and our government and local community should acknowledge this contribution.” Mr Shepherd said.

MCC will continue its community consultation program, to address reasonable concerns of the local residents to provide benefit to the entire Canberra community. We are not a profit seeking developer, just a small member funded club fighting for survival.

A petition in support of the application for re zoning has been launched on the club website at www.murrumbidgeegolf.com.au

A public meeting will be held at Murrumbidgee Country Club on October 11 at 6pm to present a current update of the proposal.

**Dean Hill
President**

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