

## 14. QUEENSPARK RESERVE – OUTCOME OF COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

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The purpose of this report is to inform Board members of the outcome of public consultation on the proposed skateboard park in Queenspark Reserve and to make recommendations for further progress.

### SKATE OUT

An estimated 500-600 people attended the Skate Out held on 27 August. Many young people from a wide age range took the opportunity to use the skate ramps and take part in the various other activities provided on the day. Participation in the Skate Out demonstrated the popularity of skating and showed the diverse range of people who skate. It also provided an opportunity for local residents to see a skate facility in action, and encouraged community dialogue on the proposal.

Council staff took the time to talk with people at the event, the majority of whom expressed their support for the proposal. This was confirmed by 27 comment forms filled in on the day, almost all of which supported the proposal for a skate facility. Nine adjacent residents contacted on the day, however, were not supportive of the proposal, two of whom recommended an alternative site between the playground and tennis courts. This site lacks visibility.

### COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

Prior to the Skate Out, 604 letters with comment forms were distributed to local residents outlining the proposed skate facility in Queenspark Reserve. Returned comment forms illustrated strong support for the proposal but also a concern about other negative activities that some think will be associated with the skate facility.

Results from the 169 returned comment forms show support to be roughly equal to opposition for the proposed skate facility. These figures, though, are not accurate as some submitters have been influenced by negative publicity about the proposal and there are cases of submitters sending in more than one comment form. While some of these cases are obvious, the majority of forms are anonymous and it is impossible to tell how many forms have been doubled up.

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
Do you or any members of your family use a skateboard ramp?	27	139
Do you think there is a need for a skating facility in Parklands?	89	75
Are you in favour of a permanent skating facility at Queenspark?	85	84

*Table 1 - Results of submissions received on proposed skate facility.*

Additional 180 comment forms were generated in response to a notice circulated to Queenspark residents by a local resident, which painted a very negative and unbalanced picture of skateboard facilities. The notice implied that the police are opposed to skate facilities when, in fact, they have no prevailing view. Some police do not support skate facilities while others are very supportive. The key concern for police is that the facilities are well designed and highly visible. The notice generated a great deal of anxiety in the neighbourhood and people responded with alarm. 175 respondents opposed the proposal and only four supported it. Some of the comment forms were a repeat of earlier submissions, a small number of people indicated a change of mind from what they had previously submitted, and some were new submissions. Once again, some forms were obviously doubled up but the anonymity of the forms makes it impossible to tell how many.

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
Do you or any members of your family use a skateboard ramp?	9	170
Do you think there is a need for a skating facility in Parklands?	5	172
Are you in favour of a permanent skating facility at Queenspark?	4	175

*Table 2 - Results of submissions received on the notice circulated by a local resident.*

A very active and vocal lobby group are opposing the proposed skate facility and a petition is being presented to the Community Board.

The positive outcome of the public consultation processes both for the earlier Adcock Reserve proposal and now for Queenspark Reserve is that it has initiated dialogue within the community and has highlighted a number of issues in the Parklands area that clearly need to be addressed. A feeling was expressed by some people that the area is becoming a dumping ground with the landfill, a proposed cell site, existing problems of graffiti, crime, vandalism, and rubbish. A skateboard facility was therefore viewed by many in a very negative context.

Positive aspects of the area were also highlighted including the four reserves in the area (Queenspark, Parklands, Adcock, Broadhaven), and the many opportunities afforded by Bottle Lake Forest Park, the coast, and QEII.

The diverse range of people living in the community have varied needs and expectations and there is evidently misunderstanding and inconsistent perceptions between the different factions. Improved communication can only help the situation.

Identified issues that need to be resolved include:

- Existing graffiti, crime, vandalism, and anti social behaviour.
- Recreation for youth.
- A suitable local venue for skateboarding.
- Rubbish in Queenspark Reserve.
- Car parking for sports at Queenspark Reserve and parking issues near the corner of Radiata Avenue.
- Need for toilets in Queenspark Reserve.
- Drag racing.

## **EXISTING PROBLEMS**

Many of the submissions refer to existing problems of graffiti, vandalism, and crime in the community with reports of smashed letterboxes, damage to gardens and property, and graffiti on fences. Many people fear that these problems will be exacerbated by the presence of a skate facility. This is a common initial response to proposed skate facilities. Though there were suggestions that provision of an alternative activity may alleviate some of the tagging and vandalism, it is not expected that a skate facility will put a sudden end to the existing problems, nor is it expected to make it worse.

There is no denying that graffiti does exist at other skate facilities and while there is some connection, skating activity is not considered to be the key cause, eg private fences and walls also attract graffiti. Queenspark itself exemplifies this as it already has a major tagging and vandalism problem despite not having a skate facility. The Council has a programme in place to deal with graffiti and this should be promoted to the community.

The current problems have been linked to a group of youth in the area who have been moved on from Parklands School, Parklands Mall and the Baptist Church car park. Continually moving the group on is not solving the issue and problems will continue to occur until something more constructive is done. It is important to show support for youth, provide suitable activities for them to participate in and to channel their energies in an appropriate direction. Recently, the group has been broken up, although there were reports of youth hanging around in the park, but there is a concern that they will regroup if a skateboard facility is built.

## **SKATEBOARDING**

Unfortunately the reputation of individuals causing damage seems to have been blanketed across all youth and there is a gross generalisation by some members of the community that youth are troublemakers, especially those who skate. It must be mentioned that the majority of submissions came from people who do not use skate facilities. Many assume that the presence of a skateboard facility will attract large groups of undesirable louts and hoons from outside of the area that cause nothing but trouble. Examples of comments received include;

*“...it (the proposed facility) will attract a pack of unsavoury teenagers with resultant tagging near our houses, drink, drugs and bullying that goes on at other skateboard ramps.”*

*“The vandalism, graffiti and hooliganism these facilities attract speaks for itself.”*

This is not the situation at other local facilities and Inspector Graeme Cairns of the Papanui Police reports that problems at Jellie Park, Bishopdale Park and St Albans Park appear to be no worse or different to that at other public facilities which cater for children and youth.

Not all submitters took such a negative view of skaters, eg

*"I take exception to people saying children like my grandsons who also live in the area are vandals."*

*"...I skate and so do my children, I think the graffiti you talk about is done by other youths, eg Homies and skateboarders are innocent and copping the blame for it!"*

*"We use the Thomson Park Skate area and I find the kids very well behaved."*

It must be kept in mind that the proposed facility is a small, local facility aimed at beginners and junior skaters. It is unlikely to be of high appeal to skaters from outside of the area and is certainly not expected to attract large crowds from other areas. Submitters seem to have the wrong impression of what is being proposed and are comparing it, inaccurately, to facilities like the one at Washington Reserve which is relatively large, central, and has city wide appeal.

Reservations have been expressed that older teenagers will intimidate others, especially children and elderly, and dominate the facility, eg

*"Unfortunately, these younger children who really need the facility and cause no problems will be the ones pushed out by the dangers of being at such a facility with older youths."*

This is inconsistent with other views, eg

*"Great for kids to learn, motivation, great for teambuilding..."*

*"A great idea as children need safe areas for playing, a step in the right direction."*

The design of a skate facility should be such that it encourages other members of the community to become involved and therefore reduces chances of intimidation. This can be done by incorporating features such as seating, picnic tables, and other recreational facilities to encourage more family and community involvement.

## **YOUTH ACTIVITIES**

Parklands has a high proportion of youth (25.5% of population is 0-14 years, 1996 census). There is currently a lack of recreational facilities as children outgrow the traditional play equipment and there was general support for increased youth recreation opportunities. Basketball courts and skate facilities aim to meet some of the demand. Comments included:

*"...a skateboard facility will allow my grandchildren to try this sport and encourage other youngsters to give it a go."*

*"We need to cater for the teenagers in this area"*

*"...doing outside activities (like skateboarding) are better than like Time Out money wasting places."*

*"Young ones need this outlet for their energies."*

Other options suggested were a supervised youth centre, encourage youth to do something useful and educational, spend money on employment training for youths, encourage young people in to team sports, need a programme scheme for everyone, support other sports instead of skating, invest in people who use the reserve.

Youth themselves did not appear to be well represented by submissions but the Burwood/Pegasus Youth Recreation Needs Study identified a need for skate facilities, hang out areas, recreation opportunities in Malls, cafes, music events, adventure/thrill seeker activities, open access to sporting facilities. Clearly there is a difference in views as to what youth want and what others want for them.

#### **A SKATEBOARDING VENUE**

Young people have continuously requested a skateboarding facility and the popularity of the sport was illustrated at the Skate Out and more recently at the Thomson Park opening. Lack of a more suitable venue has forced skaters to use car parks, footpaths, and tennis courts throughout Parklands causing conflict with other users and concerns for safety. A more appropriate venue is highly desirable and has been recommended in four Council reports; 1999 – What’s the Big Idea?, CCC Draft Skateboarding, Inline Skating, and Freestyle BMX Cycling Strategy, Burwood/Pegasus Youth Recreation Needs Study, and the Parklands Recreation Needs Analysis.

There were requests for a larger facility in Parklands with jumps and ramps, to cater for more levels. Recently upgraded Thomson Park is the nearest skate facility and caters for a range of abilities. While many Parklands skaters make use of this facility there is demand for a more local facility for those who are unable to travel. This is especially so for the younger, dependent children throughout the Parklands neighbourhood.

Various sites in Parklands have been investigated for their suitability. Parklands Reserve is crowded and does not have suitable space available. Adcock Reserve has issues with access, visibility, and the nature of the reserve. Broadhaven Reserve is too far for many of the young skaters. Queenspark Reserve provides the most suitable site because it is more than 80m from the nearest house but is still visible and on a main road, complementary activities exist in the park, the facility can be landscaped in to the existing mounds, and a full time youth worker based across the road has indicated he will be using the facility for supervised youth activities.

Other sites were suggested but are either too far away, or unsafe, or totally unsuitable. These include:

- New Brighton.
- Thomson Park.
- Behind the supermarket in the wasteland.
- Different location.
- Away from residential housing.
- QEII Park.
- Other end of Bottle Lake Forest.
- Use existing footpaths, driveways, school etc.
- Use facilities in city.
- Northshore.

## **ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS**

Toilets were requested in the Park, with or without a skate facility. There were also several requests for lighting and supervision if a facility was constructed. Parking near the end of Radiata Avenue closest to Queenspark Drive was a safety concern for several submitters and it was thought that this may become more of an issue with the presence of a skateboarding facility.

## **CONCLUSION**

There is strong opposition to the proposed skate facility, and at this stage it can not be recommended that the proposal proceed. However, simply dropping the proposal will not address the needs of the community.

A number of issues in Parklands have been highlighted by the public consultation process for the proposed skate facility and it is timely to undertake a youth recreation planning exercise for the whole area. There are diverging views within the community and the various groups need to be brought together to reach a consensus on solutions to the existing issues. It is proposed that this be done through a series of small workshops involving different groups in the community and then bringing the groups together in a well facilitated community forum to hear each other's views and to negotiate an outcome that best meets the needs of the community.

Groups that need to be involved include:

- Youth.
- Various organisations working in the community.
- Residents.

Major items that need to be addressed include:

- Existing graffiti, crime, vandalism, and anti social behaviour.
- Recreation for youth.
- A suitable local venue for skateboarding.

The workshops and community forum must be well structured, facilitated by an independent person, positively focused and result in action plans that address the issues discussed above.

- Recommendations:**
1. That the proposed skateboard facility at Queenspark Reserve be deferred pending the outcome of the community forum.
  2. That community workshops and a community forum be facilitated through the Shirley Service Centre Advocacy Team to address youth recreation needs in Parklands.
  3. That \$1,000 be allocated from the Board's Discretionary funding for the workshops and community forum.

**Chairperson's**

**Recommendation:**

1. That recommendations 1 and 3 be adopted.
2. That independently facilitated community workshops and a community forum be organised by the Shirley Service Centre Advocacy Team in liaison with the Parks Planner to address youth recreation needs in Parklands.