

Netball Trial at Artarmon Reserve

with input from the APA Committee and local residents

In December 2007 residents of Burra Rd and surrounding streets received advice from Willoughby City Council concerning a proposal to trial the use of the oval at Artarmon Reserve for Junior Netball ("Nettas") on Saturday mornings during the 2008 winter season which runs from April to August.

The Northern Suburbs Netball Association has requested the use of the oval for use by junior netball players (under 8/9/10). These teams have previously been playing at courts at Bicentennial Reserve and Naremburn Park.

The proposal involves marking six netball courts onto the grass at the southern end of the oval and providing removable goal posts. Games would commence at 8am and finish by 1pm.

Council accepted submissions on the trial from residents up to 30 January 2008. A number of residents have responded to Council.

While most of us agree that we would be happy to see greater use of the oval for sport and recreational activities, the general feeling expressed by a number of residents is that the problems currently experienced at Bicentennial Reserve, Willoughby, as a result of netball traffic will simply be transferred in part to Artarmon.

The Progress Association, along with many residents, is concerned about the likely impacts of this proposal on the safety, amenity and environment of Artarmon Reserve, the local streets and neighbourhood.

Traffic congestion in the Reserve and along Burra Rd is likely to be a major issue. Whilst the Reserve is near Artarmon Station and on the cycleway network, experience shows that the majority of parents will bring their children by car. Many of the netball clubs affiliated to the Northern Suburbs Association are not within walking distance of the Reserve and many Willoughby/Artarmon families will choose to drive, partly because the netball game may be just one of a number of sporting activities on that day or because of wintry weather.

As one local resident suggests in a submission to Council, "Whilst there is off-street parking next to the oval ...there is only a

shared access road used by pedestrians and cars.... should cars be entering and leaving at the same time, the queues will be substantial as two cars cannot pass whilst travelling in opposite directions".

Observation of the current usage of the oval for cricket and touch football shows that when all participants arrive and leave at roughly the same time many participants choose to park in Burra Rd and surrounding streets in preference to the car park due to access difficulties.

It is likely that these difficulties will be magnified in the case of Saturday Nettas due to the number of sessions of 45-60 minutes duration. At the conclusion of each session there may be up to 100 cars leaving just as another 100 or so cars will be arriving for the next session.

It is inevitable that parents will choose to park in local streets rather than experience the inefficiencies of the car park. This has the potential to turn Burra, Cooney and Pyl Rd and other local streets into 'one-carriageway-only streets' as cars parked on both sides will leave a central gap for one car only. This is clearly a safety and access risk should, for example, emergency or ambulance vehicles need to gain quick access to the Reserve.

Streets near to Willoughby Leisure Centre, such as Garland, Tulloh and Gaza Rds, are currently already parked out on winter Saturdays by parents wishing to avoid the car park access problems.

The potential environmental impacts from the traffic growth the proposal will encourage are significant. As other residents observed, "We see the proposal inevitably generating demand for expansion of the parking and road space in the Reserve and leading to destruction of valuable native bushland and threatening already endangered plants... Preserving natural bush areas, as well as providing for active recreation are essential to the mental and physical health and well-being of the City's residents".

Residents are looking for leadership from Council in relation to this issue rather than simply transferring a problem from one



location to another. It is clear that what is needed is improved traffic planning. It has been suggested by one resident that "a plan of action is required under which the sporting group using the Reserve assumes responsibility for the travel it generates and works with Council to reduce car travel and its impacts".

In the absence of a strong strategy to address traffic impacts, Council must expect ever-increasing dissatisfaction and opposition from a growing number of residents.

The Progress Association, along with a number of residents, calls on Council to apply its transport planning expertise to develop an effective transport management model for the benefit of participants in organised sport, local communities and the environment.

If the trial proceeds, it is essential that Council ensures:

- the installation of traffic monitoring devices to measure the impact on all local streets
- that Rangers are available to monitor and control traffic, including registration day(s)
- that surveys are undertaken to see what might be possible in terms of achieving alternative access to the site.

The Progress Association will provide an update on the progress of the netball trial and Council's response to the various submissions in the next edition of the *Gazette*. ■