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Northern Beaches Council (“NBC”) – Have your say

Northern Beaches Council (Council) has invited the Northern Beaches community to have their say in relation to the “Northern Beaches Sportsgrounds and Golf Courses Discussion Paper” (Paper) issued by Council in April 2017. The Paper is based on the two associated reports prepared at Council’s direction by Otium and GBAS.

Warringah Golf Club (“WGC” and or “we”), as a key Northern Beaches sports community stakeholder, have prepared the following submission in response to the Paper:

1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 WGC supports the identified need expressed by Northern Beaches sports bodies and Council that the current supply and condition of local sports fields should be addressed.
- 1.2 WGC submits that taking away nine holes from a highly used and in-demand golf course to create additional playing fields and associated infrastructure in an already high density sports field precinct in North Manly is not the solution to the shortage of playing fields on the Northern Beaches.
- 1.3 It is WGC’s view that both the future needs of the golf community and its facilities have not been adequately represented in a balanced and even handed manner in the Paper and in its underlying reports. We believe the Paper has used selective data, analysis and commentary to unduly influence the local community to accept, or support a preconceived outcome determined by Council.
- 1.4 We believe, in our opinion, the report to be critically flawed in its failure to consider the future shifts in the age demographics and in its inadequately researched data. Independent data (from “id – the population experts who are the same demographic company source referred in the Otium Report” - see page 8 company reference) forecasts that the future trends in population growth on the Northern Beaches reveal that the **average age of the community in the age category 50 to 84 will increase at a greater rate than all other age categories combined**. For the reasons set out subsequently, Council should therefore be encouraging the retention of financially viable golf courses to enable it to cater for the needs of a growing section of the community that has been ignored in every:
 - 1.4.1.1 Document advanced by Council.
 - 1.4.1.2 Media comment.
 - 1.4.1.3 Council advisory meeting.
 - 1.4.1.4 Public comment advanced.

- 1.5 Participation in golf is an activity that provides positive contributions to the community through social capital, social cohesion, physical and mental health benefits as discussed subsequently. Unfortunately, none of Council's commentary (either by way of the Report, discussion or media exposure) considers or refers to these key community wellbeing factors. To simply suggest the compromise, or closure of currently viable golf courses, solves one problem without consideration of the consequences to what should be a valued segment of the northern beaches community and is, in our view, irresponsible.
- 1.6 It is WGC's view that Council had a responsibility, in the interests of full disclosure and balanced community discussion, to include a traffic study (or at a minimum, alert the public to the issue) to detail the potential impacts the conversion of golf course land to sports fields will have on surrounding precincts, together with the knock-on effect increased traffic will have across the wider northern beaches road system.
- 1.7 As outlined later in this submission, the need for additional playing fields is not in the already sports field concentrated precinct of North Manly and Manly Vale, but rather in the northern end of the peninsula. The northern end of the peninsula is where current sports field undersupply has been previously reported, and is also where the highest area of future population growth has been independently forecast.

2 Response to Council's Proposed Actions

- 2.1 We have expressed our view on numerous occasions that we acknowledge and support the need for additional sports fields on the northern beaches. This matter is not in dispute and we acknowledge Council's endeavour to provide a basis for discussion.
- 2.2 Council's options set out in "Actions 1 to 3" are in the public interest and receive our support and commendation.
- 2.3 "Actions 4 and 5", in our view, requires detailed commentary and further review to ensure they have been properly considered to achieve a balanced discussion and outcome. Specifically, more in-depth research and analysis in the commissioned Reports would have allowed the local community to properly consider and evaluate all aspects of the needs of sport (which, by definition, includes Golf) as they currently stand, and also into the future. We comment in detail in relation to Action 4 later in this submission.
- 2.4 We do not support option, Action 6, to do nothing as we acknowledge the need for additional local sports fields. However, as a matter of principal, we suggest the wording "meaning a shortfall of supply, deteriorating playing surfaces and ultimately not enough fields for everyone to play" is highly emotive and provocative and beyond the normal process of a Council committed to serve the community.

3 The Facts

- Currently, only 23% of the Northern Beaches playing fields (14 out of 62 locations – see page 16 of the Paper) are located north of Narrabeen.
- The Northern Beaches community is an ageing population with 69% of the population aged 25 and over (Source: Northern Beaches Council Community Strategic Plan).
- The 45 and over age bracket on the Northern Beaches will increase at a significantly faster rate than the 0-44 age bracket over the next 10 years (Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics).
- 63% of Council's future population growth will be north of Collaroy and north-west of Allambie Heights. (Source: id – the population experts).
- An estimated 11.2 million adults (63%) were overweight or obese compared to 27% of children (Source: Federal Government's "Australia health 2016" Report).

- Further concentration of sports fields in the North Manly / Manly Vale area will create further traffic chaos in an already congested precinct which is bordered by the main arterial roads, Condamine Street and Pittwater Road, plus the adjacent location of Warringah Mall – one of Australia’s biggest shopping centres.
- Warringah Golf Course is one of NSW’s most highly played public golf courses. Up to 65,000 public and member golf rounds are played at Warringah Golf Course over seven days a week, 52 weeks of each year by all age demographics. In particular, more than 70% of players are over 50 years of age.
- Golf is Australia’s second highest participation sport with 724,141 participants (Source: AusPlay Report, Jan-Dec 2016).
- Golf has over 487,000 more participants than Rugby League, over 445,000 more participants than Touch Football, over 180,000 more participants than Cricket and over 58,000 more participants than AFL (Source: AusPlay Report, Jan-Dec 2016).

4 The Otium Report

4.1 The Report refers to and has reliance on the GBAS Report. To the extent that, in our opinion, the GBAS report is flawed we respectfully suggest that the Otium Report suffers from its unfettered reliance on it.

4.2 Notwithstanding our reservations, we support the creation of additional playing fields and agree it should be a key element of Council’s future strategy.

4.3 **“Catalyst for the Project”** (on page 3):

Otium states that “Groups representing almost all of the estimated 50,000 active playing members have advocated that Council also review whether Council golf courses could be more equitably used for sport”. Our understanding is that the **majority** of the referred to sporting bodies did not make that specific request, and they do not support a review which examines “how to best use the land currently occupied by Warringah Golf Course”. Specifically, we refer to:

4.3.1 Council’s included comment in the paper from MWFA which refers to golf courses (rather than Warringah as a specific target) for “converting them into additional football fields to meet the footballing community’s requirements”. We assume from the quote that the MWFA has no regard for any other sporting activity other than its own.

4.3.2 Manly-Warringah Pittwater Sporting Union secretary, Kevin Millsom, said in the Manly Daily on April 12 that “of the six options that had been suggested, the union favoured keeping golf courses.”

4.3.3 Cricket’s message to its members “this is not about Golf v Cricket”.

4.3.4 Council’s included comment from AFL NSW / ACT which advocates a review of golf course allocation and also refers to a review of all golf courses and whether they “continue to be the best purpose for green space sporting usage”. The quote is taken in isolation from what we understand was a broad ranging submission to Council and we submit it was not confined to Warringah Golf Course.

4.4 **“Golf Market Assessment” (at 2.3 on page 4)**

Each of the four identified areas of scope refer to the future level of demand for golf and associated issues. Unfortunately, in our opinion, the Report did not comment on, nor address, the future needs of golf.

4.5 **“Population” (at 4.3 on page 8)**

Otium’s report quotes an increase in population of 12.3% (or 32,375) by 2031 and comments on average ages taken from the 2011 census and concludes “a likely demand for more traditional sporting activities”. The Report does not consider this matter further to actually understand the projected age shifts anticipated on the Northern Beaches. Attached at Annexure 1 is an extract from “id – the population experts”, which provides an analysis and forecast of “The Northern Beaches Council area population and age structure” over the period 2011 to 2036. Annexure 2 attached further summarises the data and critically, we note that:

4.5.1 The age demographic 50 to 84 will increase by 34.4% over the period and that increase far exceeds each of the other individual age categories.

4.5.2 In total, the 50 to 84 age group projected increase of 29,410 exceeds all other age categories combined which total 25,578.

4.5.3 Nowhere in the Otium report (nor the GBAS report, or the Paper) has this matter or its significance been commented on, or given any consideration.

4.6 **“Background Research” (at item 4.1 on page 6)**

Otium references the 2004 Sports in the Warringah Strategy document that noted “Warringah’s supply of sportsgrounds is higher than Manly and Pittwater and generally higher than most metropolitan Council’s in Sydney”. It also noted the 2011 Pittwater Local Planning Strategy and the 2014 Pittwater Public Space and Recreation Strategy highlighted that sportsground’s within the former Pittwater Council “are insufficient to meet the needs of the existing community”. Any reasonable analysis of those studies would, or should conclude that the most pressing need for increased facilities is within the former Pittwater Council precinct and **not** in the former Warringah or Manly Council areas.

4.7 **Traffic issues generally**

4.7.1 Common sense dictates that, from a traffic and people movement perspective, it is flawed to further concentrate facilities at the most distant point away from where the need for new sportsgrounds are most needed – i.e. in the former Pittwater Council area.

4.7.2 Future independent forecasts (<http://www.forecast.id.com.au/northern-beaches>) reveal that 63% of northern beaches population growth of 42,457 persons between 2017-2036 will live north of Dee Why and west and north-west of Allambie Heights. The biggest areas of growth are Ingleside (8,865), Frenchs Forest (6,678), Warriewood (1,874), Belrose-Oxford Falls (1,674), Narrabeen (1,419) and Forestville (1,382). The location of sports fields on Warringah Golf Course at North Manly will not address the inadequacy and need of sports fields in these high growth Council areas.

4.7.3 Council will be aware that even at current levels of population, the Dee Why and Collaroy traffic bottlenecks are untenable (particularly at peak weekend sports time movements) and, with increased population, these bottlenecks will become worse. Further development of new playing fields at the southern end of the peninsular (i.e. Warringah Golf Course) will only exacerbate that issue. To suggest that the new B line bus system will solve that issue is to demonstrate a total lack of understanding of the issue, and to not understand the complexities of families dealing with children playing multiple sports across varying playing timeslots at widespread Council locations.

5 The GBAS report

5.1 In general

WGC believes, in our opinion, the report to be critically flawed across several key areas and following we detail our concerns.

5.2 Population growth and the future

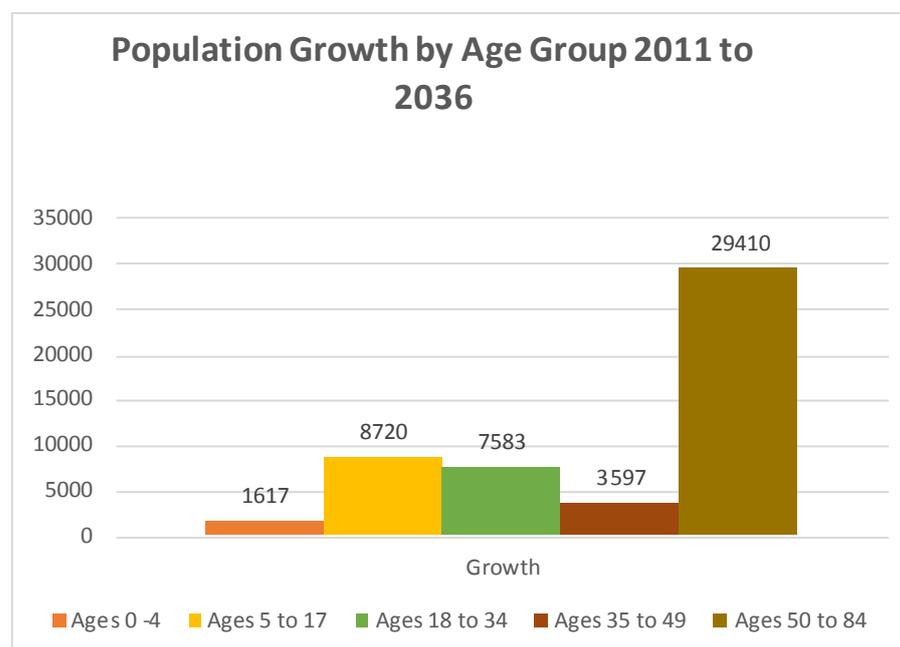
5.2.1 Fundamentally, any review of the golf market (or any other sports related market) that is designed to set a strategy for the next 15 years should have a focus on future needs. This requires a detailed analysis and consideration of population growth and age related shifts within that growth. At Item 3 “Market Demand Overview” on page 15 under the heading of “Population Trends”, we note the simplistic statement that population will increase and that is referenced from the Australian Bureau of Statistics data determined in March 2016. That is the extent of GBAS’ attention to the future of the Northern Beaches expected population and the needs that might come from that. Even the most basic notion that increased population might lead to a greater use of golf has been overlooked in the Report.

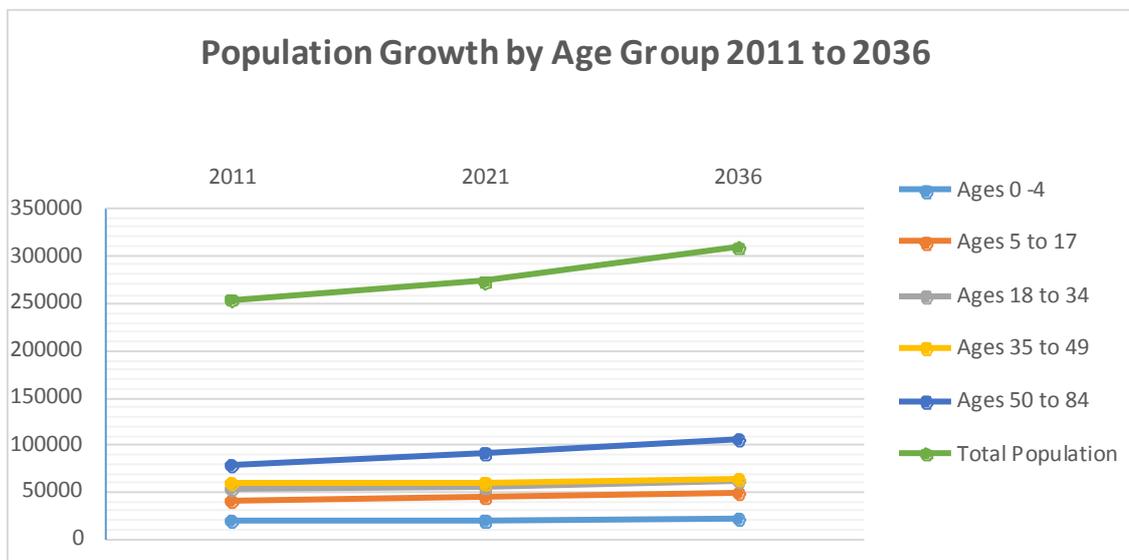
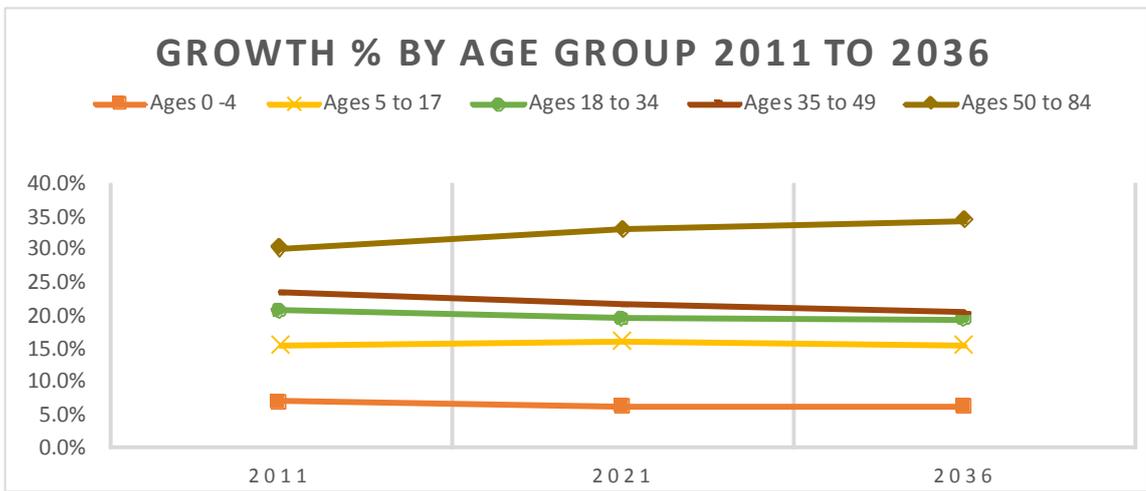
Otium at 2.3 on page 4 of their report set out the Scope of the GBAS report as set by Council. However, at Item 1 “Report Background” (where the scope of the report should be set out) on page 2, the only reference GBAS make to the future is in the last line of “The Brief”. Here it is noted that “GBAS has been commissioned to undertake this study with findings to provide input to the long-term sporting facilities strategy draft report due for completion in March 2017”.

As a matter of credibility, any report has an obligation to set out a scope of work required to enable a reader to be satisfied that the scope and application allowed the reader to make informed judgements.

Unfortunately, in our opinion, **GBAS focussed solely on current demand** and did not address the future, leaving the reader with no ability to reasonably interpret the future needs of golf in the Northern Beaches community.

At item 4.5 above, we set out the forecast change in age groups and the following three graphs illustrate the dramatic growth in the age group that are the most significant users of golf facilities: Source: id – the population experts.





5.2.2 A five-week age participation analysis of playing traffic at Warringah Golf Course during September-October 2016, indicated that 77% were aged 50+ with the balance spread between the ages of 12 to 50.

An analysis of the current Warringah Golf Club Membership age demographic (which we assume is representative of the Northern Beaches) indicates that 85% of members are over the age of 50. This again reinforces the view that it is an illogical conclusion that suggests a reduction in the facilities that cater for an age demographic as it is today, and will increase by 38.47% throughout the strategy period and beyond to 2036.

5.2.3 The Sydney property market, particularly on the Northern Beaches, has accelerated in price such that it is now beyond the financial capacity of the younger generations of home owners. Consequently, a high majority of the younger generation are now effectively locked out of the local market. At a practical level, this ensures that the future population of the Northern Beaches will increase in age and the analysis above reinforces that view.

5.2.4 The above forecasts clearly indicate that the future population will age and suggests that the future supply of golf courses on the northern beaches should not be compromised.

5.3 Golf Participation

- 5.3.1 According to the recent Roy Morgan Research study of Australian sports participation levels (March 20, 2017), golf is the second largest participation sport in Australia with 621,000 regular participants. Clearly, its participant popularity remains with almost 160,000 more participants than tennis which is the third highest participation sport.
- 5.3.2 Golf provides an active sporting and social activity which provides an opportunity for the retired and/or older community members. Golf courses are utilised by all age groups and genders – seven days a week and 52 weeks of the year from dawn to dusk.
- 5.3.3 WGC concludes that, in our opinion, a proper analysis of the Northern Beaches population growth, had it been undertaken by GBAS, would or should have led them to an entirely different conclusion in relation to the needs and requirements of golf courses in the future.

5.4 Mergers, Club Capacity and Playing Supply

- 5.4.1 Throughout its Report, GBAS makes reference to and populates statistics with both private and public golf course data, notwithstanding that the private golf market is out of reach to the vast majority of the Northern Beaches community and is not a market that should be influenced by a Council committed to provision of community facilities.
- 5.4.2 Private golf club land and facilities are utilised to the extent of 90% to 95% (as determined by GBAS at page 18) and a significant proportion of those facilities are utilised by a segment of the population that will never use public facilities, as they are a lifestyle decision by those who have the financial capacity to pay for these high-end memberships, and by members from communities living outside the Northern Beaches.
- 5.4.3 GBAS (at page 18) indicate that 118,000 public rounds were played across six key facilities in the last full year. We requested details from Council as to the makeup of that number. However, we were formally advised it is not available to the public or WGC. We indicated to GBAS that WGC's public playing rounds in the 2015/16 year amounted to 41,424, which indicates that WGC provides approximately 35% of the public rounds played across the six locations. We further submit that the public rounds played at Warringah would be a greater percentage if compared to Council's four 18 hole courses. Further, we are not able to determine whether the inclusion of Bayview (being private) and Balgowlah (being 9 holes) create a distortion that precludes a determination of WGC's actual contribution.
- 5.4.4 At page 10 titled "Potential Future Divestment" – this matter deals with a perception that Bayview and Mona Vale Golf Clubs discussed amalgamation issues and, by implication, seems to allude to a notion that there may be some golf related outcome. As a result, the reader is encouraged to view the existence of the courses as a golf related negative. If this matter has a place at all in the GBAS study, in our opinion, GBAS should have considered and advised the background to Bayview's financial pressures that did not come from golf usage etc, but rather from past unwise financial decisions related to their development of clubhouse facilities and other associated matters. We assume Council is aware there is little prospect of any future amalgamation of the Bayview and Mona Vale facilities as the overall dynamics and issues are beyond resolution and that Bayview has now moved on with their own plans.

- 5.4.5 At page 18 titled “Market Membership Capacity”, GBAS states “based on our knowledge of desired levels, we estimate current average market membership capacity within the public club market to be 60% to 70%”. It further states “we note that some facilities are required to offer public tee times, this requirement restricting the number of members they could otherwise accommodate.” This matter is central to the GBAS Report as it is prominent in its key findings and within their key findings and conclusions.

At the outset, we assume GBAS is referring to the Northern Beaches golf market and we further assume the message being promoted is that there is 30%-40% available capacity in the Northern Beaches public golf playing market.

Fundamentally, all public courses are required to (as a condition of their lease) provide public tee times as these courses exist to provide a balanced public/membership experience. Any expansion of tee times to accommodate more members conversely means that there is less public tee times available and such a suggestion is contrary to the basic tenure of a public course.

- 5.4.6 Whilst GBAS discussed capacity with private club managements, in our opinion, they appear to rely on their own knowledge to support the view that there is 30%-40% available capacity. In our view, this matter is of such significance that GBAS had an obligation to provide Council and the community with an appropriate analysis club by club across genders and time frames. Clearly, it is not appropriate to simply assert a view when the assertion is a fundamental issue to influence Council and public opinion as to the future supply of public golf course facilities. **It is with considerable dismay that we are advised that GBAS did not enquire about or test market capacity on the Northern Beaches and the assertion of capacity based on their own knowledge is, we submit, clearly incorrect and misleading.** The GBAS report is in the public domain and is the substance upon which Council have endeavoured to influence public support for the conversion of Warringah Golf Course to other sporting fields. We further submit Council should, as a matter of public confidence and record, make it publicly known that a key finding of the GBAS Report, which goes to the heart of the available capacity issue is flawed.

In relation to capacity, all sports have peak times and others when usage is limited. Otium contend that maximum field usage is 35 hours per week and clearly that does not mean that the balance of the week is spare capacity. Golf has different dynamics than other sports in that its peak times (which vary from club to club) are governed by lease conditions, membership levels and key playing days. We submit that capacity is judged on membership utilisation of available tee times and public usage at other times. Each of the four 18 hole courses have limited capacity to take on additional members and we provide the following information provided to us by the relevant Clubs:

- 5.4.6.1 Wakehurst – Members total 945 currently and they advise they could take maybe 20/25 new members which equates to an increase of 3%. Any new applicants (which average five per week) are placed on a waiting list. Member tee times are not constrained by lease conditions (other than an obligation to provide public access on every day). Competitions are held every day and, notwithstanding the extensive tee time offering, all competitions are basically full with the public having limited access.
- 5.4.6.2 Long Reef – Members total 814. Competitions are held every day. Saturday, Sunday and Wednesday competitions are full and each of the other days are at near full capacity. New membership capacity is limited.

- 5.4.6.3 Mona Vale – Members total 753. Memberships are offered on a five day basis (which are at full capacity) and seven day memberships have limited capacity and they have capacity for an additional 30/40 members which equates to an increase of 6%.
- 5.4.6.4 Warringah members total 690. Unlike the other 18 hole courses, Warringah is restricted under its lease to limit member tee times to 16.5 hours per week and the balance is utilised by social groups and social play. It is for this reason, WGC is less attractive to prospective members and provides a greater attraction to the general playing public. Competitions run at approximately 90% capacity which would equate to an additional 60 members. Any capacity not utilised by members is open to the public and is the reason why Warringah is a fully based community facility.

Whilst overall capacity is not easily quantified due to the complex membership offerings available. However, it is clear that membership capacity across the Northern Beaches public 18-hole golf courses is extremely limited and, in our opinion, nowhere near the levels indicated by GBAS, in our opinion, and which have been promoted publicly by Council and by local sports bodies during the review period.

5.5 “Market Sustainability Conclusions” (at item 4 on page 21)

- 5.5.1 Notwithstanding any of the matters detailed within the Report, GBAS conclude that no new “Golf” supply is required and that a reduced supply pool could be accommodated and would assist sustainability. We conclude the fundamental assertion that supports this view is not, in our opinion, soundly based and is, in effect, untrue. When future population trends are considered in a proper and/or full context, in our opinion, the GBAS conclusion is unfounded and insufficiently researched and or argued. We assume GBAS is aware of the information contained on the PGA website under the heading “Golf numbers on the rise across Australia” which is able to be accessed at the following link:

<http://www.golfnsw.org/newsdisplay/comp-rounds-continue-to-flourish/96626>

GBAS was a participant in the report and (note that the source data is referenced to Golfink, Golf Australia and GBAS) is obviously aware of its findings. Given this report also goes to the future assessment of golf needs and facilities surely Council should have serious doubts as to the basis and validity of a less than adequately constructed and or argued report.

- 5.5.2 GBAS comments on financial performance, sustainability and potential re-investment and concludes that the only avenue open (“we assume to golf sustainability”) is more demand and price growth. GBAS is well aware of WGC and its course. It is the central focus of Council’s review and has been critically examined in conjunction with previous studies conducted by them.

Given the above, we would have expected to see commentary within this study in relation WGC’s position including its:

- 5.5.2.1 Status as one of the busiest golf courses in NSW.
- 5.5.2.2 Pricing structure is the most competitive on the Northern Beaches and provides an affordable offering not matched by other local courses.
- 5.5.2.3 Financial capacity (that exceeds \$6 million) that can, and will be committed to new community based facilities and the current course infrastructure based on an 18 hole configuration.

- 5.5.2.4 Current off-course clubhouse facility that operates at a loss and is supported by income from the course via member and public playing rounds. The previous Warringah Council understood that position and was supportive of WGC utilising existing clubhouse assets and land to build a new on-course facility. Such facility (if it came to fruition) would not only enhance the long term financial sustainability of the clubhouse and the course, but to also deliver new and redeveloped facilities for wider general non-golf community use.

6 Northern Beaches Sportsgrounds and Golf Courses Discussion Paper

- 6.1 As previously indicated, we support Council's initiative to provide a forum to discuss the obvious need for more sportsgrounds. The improved facilities and Actions 1 to 3 receive our unconditional support. However, we believe that in relation to the supporting Reports and Council's prosecution of the Review, that a clear bias has been presented to create a negative case in relation to golf and, in particular, Warringah Golf Course. We have, in our previous comments, detailed our reservations, particularly in relation to the inadequacy of the GBAS report.
- 6.2 May we respectfully comment in relation to the matter of bias that permeates throughout Council's Discussion Paper which we believe should have been a balanced and even-handed document to fully inform the community so they can form a constructive and unbiased view:
- 6.2.1 In the Paper's opening Executive Summary on Page 4, Council quotes the more limiting numbers of golf club memberships without the inclusion of the higher public rounds and formal social golf groups. Public golf courses exist as a public facility and cater for the playing public in addition to club members. If playing public numbers were included in the Summary, as they should have been, the bias presented by the limitation of member numbers would be removed.
- 6.2.2 Action 4 on page 13, Council quotes the example "Warringah Golf Course could provide 11 hectares of additional supply" and then moves to "should Council consider the conversion of Golf Courses". It is often stated that this is simply a product of Warringah Golf Course lease expiring in advance of other courses.

With respect:

- 6.2.2.1 Council understands that any closure of Warringah Golf Course will not occur before August 2019, given all relevant timing issues and the approved extension to its lease to that date. Mona Vale Golf Course lease expires in October 2020 and in the context of a 15-year strategy, the 12-month variation in timing is not relevant. We submit that Mona Vale Golf Course offers similar but enhanced considerations if an 18 hole golf course is to be compromised (**which we, as a matter of principal, do not support**). In particular, Mona Vale comprises 37 hectares (as compared to Warringah's 28 hectares). It is located on the northern part of the peninsula where facilities (as noted by the former Pittwater Council) are most needed. It is located where high population growth is forecast, it limits the increase to congestion through Collaroy/Dee Why/Brookvale/North Manly bottleneck and provides better vehicular access to the site itself. We also remind Council that WGC offers a financial contribution in excess of \$6 million for the creation of community facilities in the District Park precinct (be the North Manly Bowling Club redevelopment or otherwise) and the future sustainability of an 18 hole golf course. Council's Paper effectively offers Warringah Golf Course as the answer to its requirement to provide more playing fields for the segment of the community

that has not yet reached age maturity. A balanced commentary perhaps should also have noted its intended contribution.

6.2.2.2 The “Introduction”, on page 8, provides quotes from Manly Warringah Football Association and the AFL NSW/ACT, both of which request the closure of golf courses. Clearly, the inclusion of both quotes in highlighted breakout text and font, is intended to unduly influence readers and create a biased discussion from the outset of the Paper. Public comments made by other sports bodies in support of the retention of golf courses were not included in the Paper and their exclusion further emphasises the issue of bias.

6.2.2.3 In Council’s recent “Your Say” online survey, Council suggest that to be in favour of Option B, which embraces the notion of not converting golf courses, “this means we will have a shortfall of supply, fields will be overused and we may not have enough space for everybody to play sport”. Surely it should be Council’s position to provide a balanced assessment for community review and not place undue biased influence on its community by including such inflammatory comments?

6.3 In relation to Action 4, our view is that it is not in the community interest to close or compromise a golf course that is utilised seven days a week, 52 weeks a year from dawn to dusk by all age demographics and both sexes. We note that throughout the GBAS Report, issue is made of the relative better supply of golf courses per head of population and greater use of land space by golf courses per hectare. Strangely and provocatively, this is portrayed as a negative. We submit that Council should be proud of the fact that it has facilities that cater for a growing older segment of the local community that are beyond the ability and/or age to engage in physical combative sports, or who simply choose golf as their preferred sporting and exercise activity.

6.4 In relation to Action 5, the purchase of Crown private or other land, Council simply states that these lands “are not considered affordable”. We question whether that is really the case, or whether Council is simply taking the easy option in their approach to this matter. At Page 13, the Paper states Council has conducted a “preliminary” view and has concluded “significant” tracts of Crown land are largely fully vegetated and would require clearing to convert to sporting facilities. We suggest, in the interest of public disclosure and proper evaluation and scrutiny, that Council should indicate what Crown lands are available and provide estimated costs to convert them to sporting facilities. If Council really want the community to have their say in this matter, as it seeks, it is incumbent on them to ensure the appropriate full details are provided to enable sensible commentary and analysis. Following its mergers, Council now comprises of three previous communities, with the commensurate increased financial capacity. Further, Council is dealing with a significant issue that embraces the whole of the Northern Beaches community long into the future. An issue of such wide community importance should have a significant budget set aside for its considered implementation rather than simply rely on the easy option of closing existing infrastructure which can never be replaced regardless of the future need of the community. WGC is of the view that a \$70.60 per annum (\$1.36 per week) per household is not an undue imposition on current and future ratepayers, particularly when these ratepayers are contributing to the inter-generational support for the creation of facilities for themselves, their children and grandchildren. Given today’s age of user pays, WGC is of the view that Council could, or should have promoted a discussion, or option in relation to a levy on the users of all public sports facilities (including golf) to contribute to the long term needs in relation to the provision of adequate sports facilities.

If past local Council's on the peninsula adopted the view that land acquisition was too expensive, as espoused currently by Northern Beaches Council, and did not invest in acquiring Crown land for the development of sports playing fields, no sports fields would have been created and developed on the Northern Beaches.

We further note that Council have been allocated an additional 140 hectares of Crown Land surrounding the Narrabeen Lagoon State Park for recreational use (Manly Daily 05/05/2017). Surely this indicates that the NSW Government has land availability which has been discounted by Council for community review when considering how to remedy the identified undersupply of sports fields.

- 6.5 In its Executive Summary, Council states it "has an important role in addressing the rise in childhood obesity by providing enough facilities and encouraging active sports participation." This is a worthy and commendable role and is supported by WGC. However, Council also has an obligation to maintain and/or expand active sports facilities for adult and older community members, particularly as the Northern Beaches community is ageing.

The Federal Government's "Australia Health 2016" Report revealed an estimated 11.2 million adults (63%) were overweight or obese compared to 27% of children. It is widely accepted that obesity is a significant contributor to cardiovascular disease, arthritis, diabetes and mental health disorders. Further Roy Morgan research data (<http://www.roymorgan.com/findings/7053-official-golf-is-good-for-you-201611160920>) released in November 2016 showed that golf's mental health benefits apply to participants of all ages.

Without attempting to diminish the genuine facts and concerns of childhood obesity, adult obesity is, statistically, a greater community health risk. Therefore, Council has an obligation to maintain the current numbers of sports facilities, including golf courses, to address and help lower the current high levels of adult obesity and its increasing financial burden on the public health system and budget.

- 6.6 Golf Victoria published a report in April 2016 "the Community impact of Golf in Victoria" and Golf NSW has commissioned a similar study. Whilst the outcomes will vary from state to state, the overall community benefits would, we submit, be relatively consistent.

The Report covers considerable detail. However, we offer the following extracts which should lead Council to the view that it is a short sighted and an inadequately researched approach that simplistically suggests, the answer to more sports fields is to compromise, or close a financially viable golf course to overcome the short comings of past Council planning:

6.6.1 "The industry (Golf) has had a significant impact on the health and social wellbeing of those who participate" which are the aged community ignored in this review by Council.

6.6.2 "The findings in this report will enable Golf Victoria to foster our relations at national, state and local Government level to boost participation and get more people, more active through the game of Golf". Council has an opportunity to preserve the facilities that provide our community with the opportunity suggested above, or they can ignore the opportunity and compromise the facilities that provide that opportunity.

6.6.3 "More than 300,000 Victorians are Golf participants with a considerable percentage of those people being 55 years or older. Playing Golf on a regular basis provides participants with positive health outcomes both in terms of physical and mental wellbeing". Council appear to take the view that the considerable percentage of over 55's do not really count (if they did, some commentary would have been proffered in the Paper).

6.6.4 “Golf’s physical health benefits contribute \$32.7 million per year to the prevention of ischaemic heart disease, type 2 diabetes, stroke, colorectal cancer and breast cancer” and “Golf’s mental health benefits contribute \$1.1 million per year to the prevention of anxiety and depression”. To a pro rata extent, Council’s golf courses provide the same benefits. However, nowhere in any of Council’s Paper or commissioned reports have these issues been intimated at, considered, or offered to the community for consideration.

7 Summary

7.1 Notwithstanding our support for Council’s Actions 1 to 3, we believe that Council has adopted a biased and prejudiced approach to its review of local golf courses.

While Council’s review was, in part, to examine “Council owned golf land as an option for conversion to new sportsgrounds”, Warringah Golf Course has been specifically targeted from the outset both publicly and privately by Council.

This targeting of our course by Council remained consistent throughout the Paper’s community consultation phase when a more even handed and balanced stance should have been publicly and privately adopted in the interest of equitable community analysis and discussion.

This specific targeting of Warringah Golf Course by Council, combined with the flawed Northern Beaches golf market assessment, has led to an unbalanced, biased and emotive Paper to be consumed for community analysis and comment.

We submit this unbalanced approach, the use of emotive and influential breakout quotes, and the use of selective data and analysis in the Paper has been prepared to support a preconceived outcome determined by Council.

Council’s biased approach went beyond the Paper with the questions asked on Council’s online “Your Say” survey, and the subsequent public and phone surveys, designed to support a predetermined outcome. These surveys were simply “push polling” to seek a set result.

7.2 It makes no logical sense to create new playing fields in an already sports field concentrated area at North Manly and Manly Vale, when it has been previously documented there is a significant undersupply of fields in the former Pittwater Council area.

Further underlying this lack of logic, is that 63% of Council’s future population growth between 2017 and 2036 will be north of Dee Why and north-west of Allambie Heights. Surely, therefore, the required new playing fields should be identified away from the North Manly/Manly Vale precinct and specifically located to accommodate the current and future playing field needs.

Additionally, it makes no logical sense to strip away one of four Council-owned 18-hole golf courses when population statistics and forecasts clearly illustrate the Northern Beaches has an ageing demographic which is set to accelerate over the next 20 years. Since golf is primarily played by adults aged 50 and over, it is illogical to target a golf course for conversion to playing fields when it is currently widely used by members and the public, and with the golf target market expanding year on year.

7.3 It has been remiss of Council to not properly explore or explain the issues surrounding Action 5, the acquisition of Crown land or other lands Council is an elected body of the local community and is appointed to serve its ratepaying constituents. However, Council has dismissed the option of purchasing Crown lands without proper community consultation. At Council's estimate of \$70.60 per annum, or a mere \$1.36 per week, to purchase and convert 11 hectares of Crown land to playing fields, we argue that Council has failed to provide the community with acceptable information and feedback opportunity to properly canvas local opinion. Furthermore, Crown land availability exists in the northern and north-western regions of Council borders and, if converted into playing fields, would meet the current and future levels of sports fields undersupply. Additionally, they would be readily accessible to Council's highest future population growth areas.

7.4 For the reasons detailed in this submission, we urge Council to maintain Warringah Golf Course in its existing 18-hole format. To consider or recommend to the newly elected Council that Warringah Golf Course be converted to playing fields would be a decision based on flawed research, inaccurate data and illogical observations and judgements.

In due course, we will submit to Government a petition signed by in excess of 11,000 supporters in favour of the retention of Warringah Golf Course as it currently stands.

Dated 5 May 2017

For and on behalf of Warringah Golf Club Limited

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Scott Campbell – President