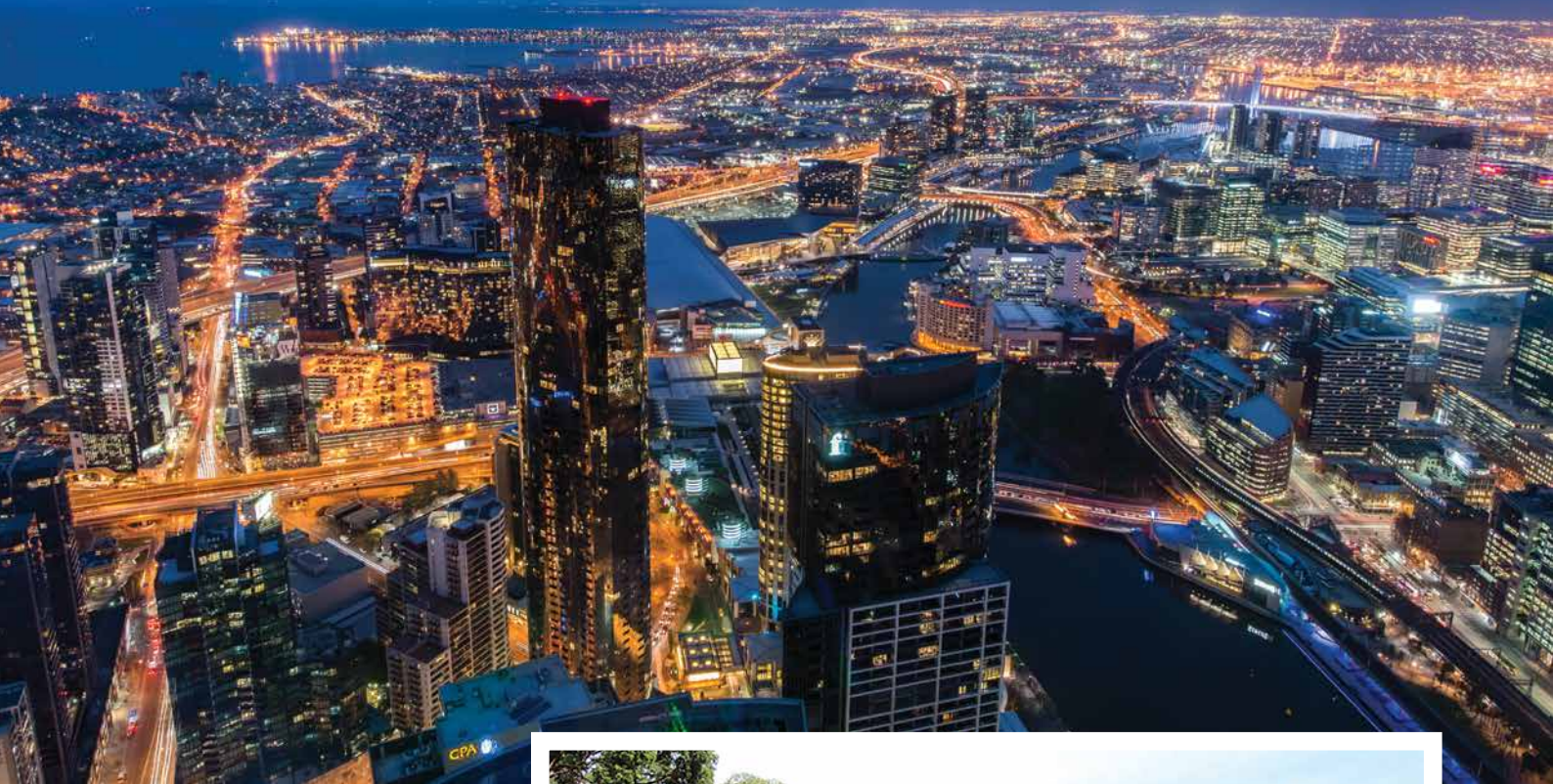


THE POPULATION OF MELBOURNE WILL PASS FIVE MILLION BY ABOUT 2021. BY THE EARLY 2050s, IT IS ESTIMATED THE GREATER METROPOLITAN AREA WILL HAVE EIGHT MILLION RESIDENTS.



Eastlake Golf Club and Botany Golf Club are under scrutiny. Two years ago Ben Keneally, mayor of the now defunct Botany Bay council, proposed turning both courses into public parkland. He wanted to give community access to 65 hectares of uninterrupted green space that includes the Botany Wetlands.

Citing urban consolidation and the desire to live closer to the CBD, Keneally said there was an increasing number of people wanting to enjoy Sydney's great beauty rather than have it "locked up inside these golf courses".

Marrickville Golf Club is another Sydney layout under threat. Earlier this year, Inner West Council gave the green light to pursue a 2012 council review that recommended abolishing nine of the 18 holes in favour of biodiversity corridors and sporting fields.

"There are more clubs financially distressed that are more of a threat of closing their doors than councils carving up land. But it is real, it's in the market. Councils are going to review leases whenever they come up," says Stuart Fraser, chief executive officer of Golf NSW.

Industry expert Jeff Blunden estimates there are the equivalent of 31.5 golf courses (18-hole equivalents) on government-controlled property in Sydney. All of these courses on council/crown/utility land will be hoping to avoid the fate of Parramatta Golf Club, which closed in 2015 after suffering a dramatic fall in revenue due



ELSTERNWICK GOLF COURSE IS CERTAIN TO SHUT DOWN BECAUSE OF FINANCIAL WOES.

to declining membership and usage.

The latest plans for the site, owned by Parramatta Park Trust, are to build a new aquatic centre and potential residential development. The aquatic facility would replace Parramatta Swimming Centre, which was consumed as part of the \$300 million Parramatta Stadium redevelopment.

CAUSE FOR CONCERN IN MELBOURNE

In Melbourne, Elsternwick Golf Course is certain to shut down because of financial woes. The nine-hole layout next to the Nepean Highway, nine kilometres south-east of the CBD, is currently run by a private

operator for Bayside Council. Its lease is up for review in 2018. Environmentalists propose turning the 20 hectares into a public park, wildlife reserve and wetlands.

Elsewhere, it's not just councils eyeing off golf courses. La Trobe University plans to redevelop the site of Strathallan Golf Club into a \$150 million sports precinct on its campus in Melbourne's northern suburbs. The golf club's lease expires in 2018.

The university, which bought the land at Bundoora in 1996, envisages an eight-court indoor multi-sport stadium for netball and basketball, strength/conditioning training facility, synthetic hockey and soccer pitches and upgrades to existing ovals and pavilions.