



# Labor



**Terri Butler MP**

Shadow Minister for the Environment and Water  
Labor Member for Griffith

Lord Mayor Adrian Schrinner  
Lord Mayor of Brisbane  
GPO Box 2287  
**Brisbane QLD 4001**

By email: [lordmayor@brisbane.qld.gov.au](mailto:lordmayor@brisbane.qld.gov.au)

Dear Lord Mayor,

## **Re: Backbone Youth Arts & Mowbray Park Draft Concept Plan**

I write regarding Backbone Youth Arts and the proposal to demolish the former East Brisbane Bowls Club. Members of the community have indicated they disagree with the Mowbray Park planning documents. They have also questioned the way in which Council conducted its consultation, and the failure of the local Councillor Fiona Cunningham to represent their views.

The major areas of concern as expressed to me are:

### **1. The nature of the consultation, the data that Council considered in forming the plan, and the lack of transparency**

Council's indications that it received feedback from only 560 individuals is questionable given the Stop the Demolition of Backbone Facebook page had over 1600 followers within two weeks. I request you advise how the consultation was conducted, including how it was advertised, and whether all affected stakeholders had an equal opportunity to respond.

Council has not released in full the results of its consultation, including data to show how many people expressed any particular view on the future of the former bowls club and Backbone's use of the space.

### **2. Demolition of the former bowls club**

Community spaces and infrastructure should be preserved for community use, particularly in higher density areas close to the city. They offer a formal meeting place for community and special interest groups to gather for social connection. They need to be upgraded and made fit for purpose, not demolished. I am told that Backbone has spent a lot of money on making the bowling greens wheelchair accessible, removing asbestos, fixing plumbing, and doing other work that would in a normal tenancy agreement be the liability of the owner, not the tenant. Backbone should be thanked for such investment, not kicked out.

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The Concept Plan indicates the reason for the bowls club demolition is a lack of aesthetic appeal. Regardless of any one person's views on this, this is the asset of the community, entrusted to Brisbane City Council. In this case, it is Council's responsibility to address these concerns and, if needed, allocate the funding necessary to respond to the community and add value to an existing community-owned asset.

The Concept Plan expresses the secondary rationale for the demolition of the bowls club is because it is "underutilised". The community does not accept this. The venue currently provides space for many young people to practice their art and is a valuable space for bands and other artists to host events, community meetings and a large and diverse range of other activities. Further, I am advised that Council has repeatedly rejected applications for further activation of the bowling greens. Rather than demolishing the facility Council should work with Backbone to allow them to use the bowling greens more.

### **3. Broad community support for Backbone Youth Arts**

Since the release of the Mowbray Park Vision and Concept Plan, the broader community have demonstrated that they are aware of and support Backbone. There is considerable support for this group to remain in place rather than be relocated.

### **4. Transparency regarding Council's intent to develop the site**

Council's former plans to develop the site of the neighbouring croquet club, and the extensive development Council has allowed in and around Kangaroo Point, remain fresh in the minds of many locals. People are concerned that Council's real agenda is to not only displace a loved community space, but ultimately to allow further development at the site.

### **5. Impact of relocation on Backbone Youth Arts' operational model and funding commitments**

I am told that Backbone's board has rejected Council's proposal to relocate them to Seven Hills, on the grounds that the space does not fit the community organisational model on which their grants had been awarded. Any impacts on the organisation's revenue should be properly considered.

#### **I urge you to:**

1. Publish:
  - a. information about the manner in which the community consultation was conducted;
  - b. all results of any consultation;
  - c. any considerations that informed the development of the plan.

2. Allow Backbone more extensive use of the existing bowling greens, so they can better activate the space and increase the attractiveness of the space for community functions.
3. Work cooperatively with locals and Backbone to develop a plan to address concerns about the general aesthetics of the grounds.
4. Reconsider plans to remove Backbone, or to demolish this community facility.
5. Commit to ensuring that residents have the benefit of more publicly-owned, publicly-accessible community facilities, not fewer.

If you require any further information, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully,



Terri Butler MP  
**Member for Griffith**  
9 August 2021

cc: Cr Fiona Cunningham, Coorparoo Ward