**Springfield Park Netball Court Amendment**

**Hard News Story**

10/5/2022

Miles Earl

The Whitehorse Netball club’s request for a netball court to be constructed in Springfield Park was amended at the Whitehorse City Council meeting last night.

The officer’s report in response suggested Council to vote against, due to the multiple constraints the cite had to accommodate a netball court.

Netball Representative of the club, Melissa Collard, addressed council on behalf of 1278 residents who signed the petition in support for the netball court.

"The current recommendation continues the pattern of on-going and systematic exclusion of facilities for female dominated sports in our community,” said Mrs. Collard.

Members of council agreed upon an amendment by Councillor Raylene Carr, to provide a detailed report on available options to accommodate multiple courts.

“One court is a serious waste of money in my opinion, you need at least two preferable three or four”, said Cr Carr.

With Councillor Blair Barker demanding the courts be “right next to Sion on Whitehorse Road”, in response to how “participation is correlated directly to proximity”.

"Let's show people that were about solutions not nit-picking community ideas,” he said.

While Councillor Prue Cutts, who seconded the amendment by Cr Carr, discussed her reasoning in an interview with RMIT University.

“I didn’t think that the officer report gave enough credence to a very significant number of signatures,” said Cr Cutts.

'It's not exactly where the club wants it, but I have to think about the bigger picture" she said.

However, Deputy Mayor, Councillor Denise Massoud spoke against the motion, issuing that the amendment “should be a separate motion”, in regard to the Springfield Park court.

“I would not object to someone at a later stage bringing a motion to council to say we request officers to investigate,” said Cr Massoud.

"This was about a single court for a single club and now were suddenly changing it to multiple courts,” she said.

**Colour News Story**

16/5/2022

Miles Earl

Residents of Whitehorse fall out of reach of gender equity in sports, with the motion of a Netball court at Springfield Park put on hold after an amendment was made last week at the Whitehorse City Council Meeting.

Melissa Collard a mother of three, spoke at the Meeting about her frustration towards the council. Going on to express how the decision affected her as a mother of her two daughters, Georgia and Emerson who are involved in the Whitehorse Football and Netball teams.

"I think it was a little bit of a slap in the face to our community from the council,” said Mrs. Collard. "They've had 4 years and they've done nothing, so what's to say were not going to wait another 4 years and another 4 years after that, we've waited my entire lifetime.”

A decision that in Mrs. Collard’s eyes, had rooted back to the archaic ways of gender bias. With it being one of the defining reasons that caused the push for the Netball court petition.

"Covid was a real eye opener to go wow we've got thousands and thousands of girls playing netball across our community and no spaces for them to access the sport they want to interact with their friends,” she said.

“I don’t think see it as a gender issue because it’s so ingrained in our society that this is the way it is,” she said.

The lack of netball facilities has left Mrs. Collard’s two daughters having less and less of the same opportunities than her eldest son Mitchell, who is given facilities to train on for both his Football and Cricket teams.

"If we had a facility in the community, we could get the girls to do some running on the ovals, we have some crossover between our teams and build that sense of community and connection,” she said.

"Our girls don't have access to a toilet, change rooms sometimes no access to drinking water based on COVID rules," she said.

This apathetic approach towards real change in the netball community inadvertently places Mrs. Collard’s daughters seriously at risk of future mental health problems.

"There's a whole generation of kids not coming to sport, not looking after their physical health because they feel excluded and that continues a pattern for the rest of their life,” she said.

Compared to facilities for male sports which allow her son to have opportunities where “that connection to friends and that social contact and those conversations made sure he still felt connected to his community".

**Contact Details**

**Melissa Collard**

Phone Number- 0410664032

Gmail- [Mcollard1978@gmail.com](mailto:Mcollard1978@gmail.com)

**Councillor Prue Cutts**

Phone Number- 0409867540

Gmail- [Prue.Cutts@whitehorse.vic.gov.au](mailto:Prue.Cutts@whitehorse.vic.gov.au)