



## Friends of Manuka Pool Inaugural Newsletter – May 2016

### Welcome to newsletter #1.

#### Topics in the newsletter include:

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#### 1. Why We Formed

Many Canberrans were shocked to open their newspapers in February to see that a massive development was in the pipeline for Manuka Oval. Greater Western Sydney Giants had teamed up with Melbourne developer Grocon to submit an "unsolicited bid" to the ACT government that would include upgrades to the Oval paid for by encircling it with 1,000 apartments plus offices, retail space and a hotel. The apartments would be stacked 7-storeys, or even 9-storeys high, completely dominating the entire Manuka area.

It was not an April Fool's day trick played by the Canberra Times, although the enormous scale of the proposed development was grounds for thinking it might be.

One of the most alarming aspects of the GWS-Grocon proposal was their intention to annex 1200 square metres (15%) of the grounds of Manuka Pool. It was a sign of the arrogance of the developers that they believed they could over-rule the ACT's heritage laws and grab a large chunk of a Canberra icon to turn into flats. Even without this land grab the construction of 7-storey apartment blocks

looming over the pool and the lawns, where children play and girls sunbake, made some of us think that these guys must come from another planet.

For patrons of the much-loved pool there were plenty of other reasons to believe that their little oasis of serenity and conviviality would be wrecked by the redevelopment of the precinct. Parking would become much more difficult. Traffic would multiply. Over 4,000 people would be working and living within 200 metres of the pool. And for the 8-10 year construction period our leisure time would be blighted by noise, fumes, dust and disruption.

Our fears were multiplied when the Kingston-Barton Residents Group obtained, under Fol laws, a copy of a consultant's report to the ACT government proposing that Manuka Pool be integrated into an elite sporting complex and that the pool be used by pumped up footballers for training and recovery sessions.

In addition to these direct impacts on the pool, all of us are alarmed at the way this monster development would transform Manuka itself, including the ambience of the shops and surrounding streets in this original part of the city.

And so a handful of us came together to form Friends of Manuka Pool with the objective of protecting the pool and its grounds, and the amenity and ambience of the surrounding area, from this invasion by out-of-town developers given the nod by the Barr government to annex open public space so they can turn it into a mini-city marketed as a place where cashed-up buyers can live, work and play.

The campaign has only just begun. We expect it to be long and bruising, but we have already had some success. GWS/Grocon this month submitted a revised proposal, reducing the scale by 30 per cent. The grab for Manuka Pool land has gone, the apartment blocks have been shifted back from the perimeter of the pool and the developers have promised not to integrate the pool into an elite sports complex. But in the end the whole development proposal, other than improvements to Manuka Oval itself, makes no sense to us.

## 2. Our objectives

- a. Protecting the amenity, ambience and heritage of Manuka Pool, including the main pool building, wading pool and lawns for the benefit of future generations.
- b. Raising awareness of and protecting the national, historical, heritage, social, community and cultural significance of Manuka Pool and its environs.
- c. Promoting community engagement in the maintenance, conservation, accessibility and management of the Manuka Pool and environs.
- d. Supporting effective planning and management for a sustainable Manuka Pool and ensuring the community's continued access to and enjoyment of the pool and associated grounds.
- e. Encouraging creative and effective planning and management of land surrounding and adjacent to Manuka Pool.
- f. Maintaining the linkages to heritage in the immediate area including Telopea Park, Manuka Oval, MotherCraft and ANU School of Music.

## 3. Our Committee Members

**President** – Clive Hamilton

**Vice President** – Rebecca Scouller

**Secretary** – Su Muir

**Treasurer** – Kasey Tomkins

**Ordinary Member** – John (Tav) Taverner

## 4. Join us

Please see our membership form attached – we'd love you to join.

The membership year will run from October to November the following year however if you join now you receive a bonus five months.

### Membership fees:

- Annual single concession (Centrelink/student) \$10
- Annual single \$20
- Three year single \$50

## 5. Our logo



It is hard to pick one image that represents Manuka Swimming Pool. From the beautiful shells situated on the outside walls as you enter the pool, to the symmetrical bleachers lining the path around the 30 metre long main pool. We settled on an image that is as unique as the pool itself, the beautiful centre piece of the wading pool that was sculpted by Danish artist Otto Stein in 1962. The 'creature' has many names, from "Baby Unicorn" to "Sammy" and Su from our committee assures us it is definitely a unicorn!



*National Archives Australia 1962*

**6. Our Launch** – the FoMP launched on 27 April outside Manuka Pool. The committee, our first life member Mervyn Knowles, and about a dozen friends of the pool, came along for our launch. Clive was interviewed on ABC 666 and WIN news, and Friends featured in the Canberra Times.

## 7. Welcome to our Life Members

### Mervyn Knowles and John Taverner (Tav)

Mr John Taverner and Mr Mervyn Knowles have been given life membership to FoMP. Both have spent a large part of their lives within the walls of Manuka Swimming Pool. Mervyn Knowles was present the day the pool was opened in 1931 and has spent many a cold morning being the first patron of the day taking a dip (including when the pool was not heated). We estimate the Merv has swum the equivalent of Canberra to Geelong over many many lap over the decades. John (Tav)

Taverner and his family managed the pool for almost 60 years. Tav has always shown an unmatched passion to the pool, its heritage and atmosphere.



*Canberra Times - John "Tav" Taverner and Mervyn Knowles (2012) Photo: Rohan Thomson*

**8. Inner South Canberra Community Council (ISCCC), Kingston and Barton Residents' Group (KBRG) and Griffith Narrabundah Community Association (GNCA) Town Hall (28 April)** – close to 400 residents and concerned Canberrans attended the Town Hall meeting at the Wesley United Church on 28 April to hear a briefing on unsolicited bids, in particular the Greater Western Sydney and Grocon proposal for the development of Manuka Oval.

The meeting was addressed by Gary Rake, Deputy Director General and Chief Operating Officer, Environment and Planning Directorate, and Tony Harris, a former NSW Auditor-General. Mr Rake outlined the processes the government is using to deal with the Greater Western Sydney and Grocon unsolicited bid and disclosed that the ACT Government had first received the bid in August 2014. Mr Harris described his experiences with unsolicited bids and the risks, both to the Government's integrity, and the prospects of optimal outcomes for the public at large, when public servants find themselves up against determined and experienced commercial negotiators.



*It was standing room only on 28 April 2016 at the Town Hall meeting with people resorting to sitting on the stage behind the guest speakers.  
Photo: ISCCC*

#### **The meeting passed motions calling on the government to:**

1. Ensure that any proposal restricts development to sporting facilities and other improvement of Manuka Oval, and not include shops, residential or other development.
2. Reject the GWS/Grocon unsolicited proposal to redevelop the Manuka Oval precinct.
3. Initiate a comprehensive planning process for the Manuka Oval precinct and surrounding areas, in full partnership with the community and relevant stakeholders. It would take into account adjacent heritage and precinct plans, and would seek to agree on:
  - Objectives for any future development;
  - Strategies for achieving those objectives; and
  - Mechanisms for continuing community involvement.
4. Review the current arrangements for any events at Manuka Oval, including for parking, transport and access.
5. Revise the guidelines for unsolicited proposals with a view to strengthening transparency and to ensure the publication of reasons for decisions.
6. Ensure that MOCCA, a longstanding community based child care centre, is taken care of financially.

The ISCCC, GNCA and KBRG has put these to the ACT Government for action and are meeting with the Chief Minister later this month. We will update you as we learn more.

**9. Plans for the future** - The Committee has been meeting to discuss our activities over the coming months and we have a few ideas in the pipeline already. Watch this space for further details. Now is the ideal time to join up and bring your ideas and enthusiasm and have an impact on how we campaign against the Greater Western Sydney-Grocon proposal.

If you have other ideas for what we could do as a group to support Manuka Pool (other than resist the development threat) let us know.

## 10. What you can do to save Manuka Pool:

- become a member of Friends of Manuka Pool, or make a donation.
- email Chief Minister (and local member for Manuka Pool) Andrew Barr – [barr@act.gov.au](mailto:barr@act.gov.au)
- email Minister Rattenbury (local member for Manuka Pool) – [Rattenbury@act.gov.au](mailto:Rattenbury@act.gov.au)
- email Steve Doszpot (local member for Manuka Pool) – [Doszpot@parliament.act.gov.au](mailto:Doszpot@parliament.act.gov.au)
- email your local member if you live in an electorate outside of Kurrajong
- write a letter to the Canberra Times – [letters.editor@canberratimes.com.au](mailto:letters.editor@canberratimes.com.au)
- call into Chief Minister's talkback on ABC 666 (every second Friday from 9am) – 1300 681 666 or text 0467 922 666 to ask the ACT Chief Minister your question  
<http://www.abc.net.au/local/stories/2014/08/07/4062845.htm>

## 11. Photo of the month

Manuka pool being constructed back in 1930.

If you have a great photo you would like to see in the newsletter please email it to [friendsofmanukapool@gmail.com](mailto:friendsofmanukapool@gmail.com). We would like to be able to acknowledge the photographer and source where possible for all photos.



National Archives Australia 1930

## 12. FoMP print media

- GWS/Grocon downsize Manuka Development  
<http://www.canberratimes.com.au/act-news/giants-and-grocon-downsize-manuka-development-promise-to-protect-heritage-20160511-goscsww.html>
- Manuka proposal now irretrievably tarnished  
<http://www.smh.com.au/comment/manuka-proposal-now-irretrievably-tarnished-20160422-gochej.html>

- Dr Clive Hamilton launches Friends of Manuka Pool  
<http://www.canberratimes.com.au/act-news/dr-clive-hamilton-launches-friends-of-manuka-pool-to-fight-manuka-green-bid-20160426-gofcs8.html>



Canberra times - Dr Clive Hamilton, president of Friends of Manuka Pool with life member Mervyn Knowles, 94  
Photo: Elesa Kurtz

- Manuka Pool land sought for Manuka Green oval redevelopment  
<http://www.canberratimes.com.au/act-news/manuka-pool-land-sought-for-manuka-green-oval-redevelopment-20160317-gnlijit.html>



Canberra times - Andrew Henderson and Louise Chapman with daughter Poppy Henderson under the trees at Manuka Pool. Photo: Jay Cronan

If you wish to find out more information, contact us or join please visit [www.friendsofmanukapool.com](http://www.friendsofmanukapool.com) or email [friendsofmanukapool@gmail.com](mailto:friendsofmanukapool@gmail.com)

Thank you  
Rebecca  
Vice-President

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Thanks to East Hotel, Kingston for providing in-kind support to the FoMP

W: [www.friendsofmanukapool.com](http://www.friendsofmanukapool.com)  
E: [friendsofmanukapool@gmail.com](mailto:friendsofmanukapool@gmail.com)