



Locals question club's motives

By Carmen McIntosh

A PROPOSED residential development on a parcel of land adjacent to the Federal Golf Club could potentially impact southside residents, according to community group the Red Hill Regenerators.

The golf club has put a proposal to the ACT Government to change part of its concessional lease to develop 59 units on just over four hectares of land.

President of the golf club, David Nelson, has refuted claims by the regenerators that the development will impact the Canberra Nature Park and that the club will benefit from the sale of community land.

He said they were looking to raise the funds to complete essential irrigation works, vital to the club's long term viability.

But the Red Hill Regenerators, who made a presentation to the Woden Valley Community Council last week, have questioned the club's motives.

They say the development would require bulldozing of valuable woodland and major works within the nature park and reserve to provide roads, fire protection and service connections, and could result in a rat run through the streets of Garran.

Hughes resident and Red Hill Regenerator, Norm Pushack, said this was the fourth time the Federal Golf Club had

attempted the development since the mid-1990s, but had each time been knocked back by the government.

He pointed out the club had received a \$250,000 grant for a water retention pond in 2009 as well as a \$137,000 grant for grass species replacement, both from the ACT's Territory and Municipal Services.

"The Federal Golf Club keeps saying time and time again if it doesn't get the money it will go broke, it's a very tired argument," he said.

"On one hand Federal Golf Club is a not-for-profit organisation, and yet on the other hand they seek to gain a financial windfall for the sole benefit of its club members.

"They talk about it as being their land like they own it - they don't own the land at all.

"How could this possibly be seen as being in the public or community interest - the golf club can't have it both ways."

Mr Pushack said the feeling in the community was one of anger and frustration.

"The people just consider this a few people who live around Red Hill are just whingeing - far from it," he said.

"This proposal is just wrong, it was wrong on three previous occasions and it's just wrong again. Whatever happened to user pays?"

Mr Nelson said the golf club needed to raise \$1.5 million to install vital irrigation ponds at the club, which had been hit hard by drought in recent years.

He said the club had levied its members for almost two decades, which was currently set at 15 per cent of annual subscriptions. "So, our members do pay their way and their fees are the second highest among all ACT golf courses," he said.

"The claim that the club will profit from the sale of this development land is ridiculous.

"Every dollar raised from the land sale will be returned to the community through either the change of use charge or direct investment in this community sporting facility."

Mr Nelson said the development land had been 75 per cent clear of trees for probably more than a century and claims that it would require bulldozing of valuable woodland was "ridiculous nonsense".

"The residential development will be contained entirely within the club's lease and will not touch one tree or blade of grass on the nature reserve. In fact, the development land is separated from the nature reserve by a road lease," he said.

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Petition attempts to stop development

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A DRAFT impact statement is now before the ACT Planning and Land Authority, looking at the first step

of deconcessionalising the lease of the 4.26 hectares of the proposed development area. Following deconcessionalisation, negotiations can begin with a developer,

and the proposal will be subject to a number of government approvals.

The Red Hill Regenerators are currently circulating a petition around

nearby suburbs to demonstrate community opposition to the development.

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Edition Changes - South Edition

Region: Canberra

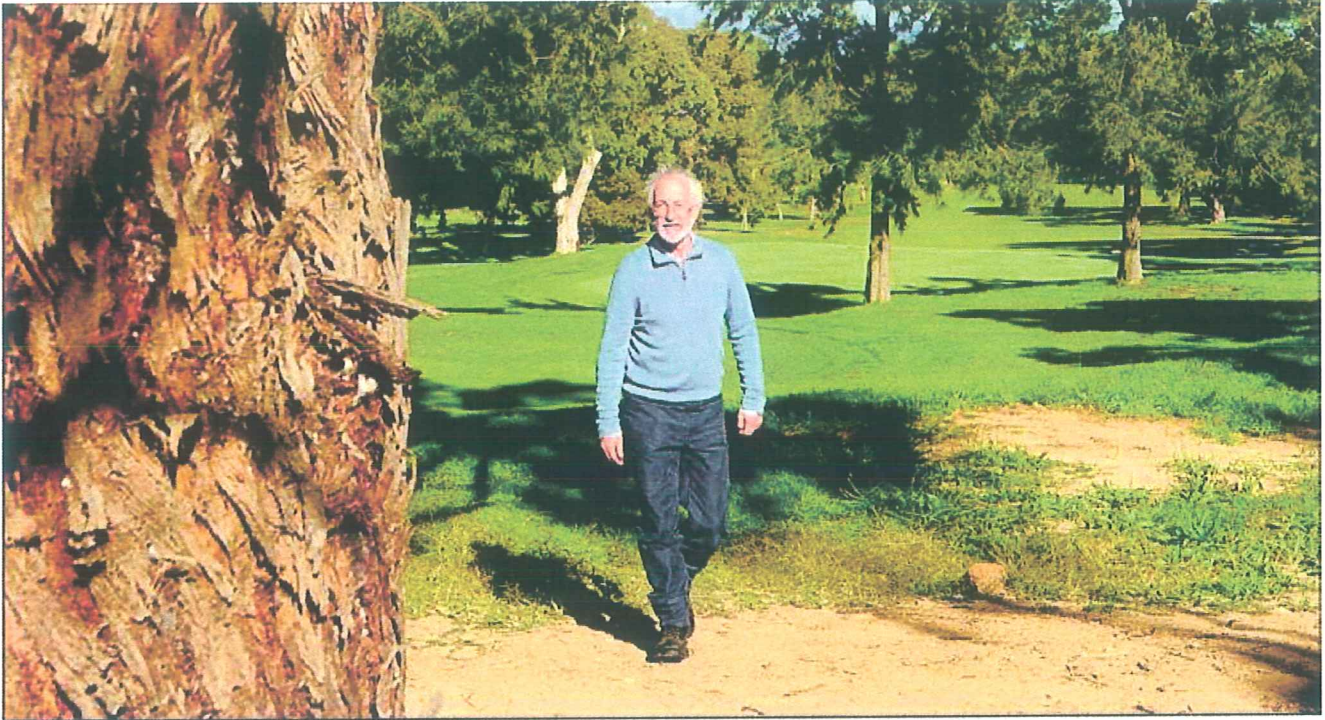
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Type: Suburban

Size: 513.27 sq.cms

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Red Hill Regenerator Michael Mulvaney is concerned the Federal Golf Club's proposed residential development will impact on nearby woodland and could cause traffic problems in Garran. He spoke at the Woden Valley Community Council meeting recently.