



# Fierce opposition to club plan

By Camen McIntosh

A PROPOSED residential development on a parcel of land adjacent to the Federal Golf Club in Red Hill is once again causing controversy with local residents.

The club has again put a proposal to the ACT Government to change part of its concessional lease to develop 59 units on approximately 4.26 hectares of land. It is the fourth time they have proposed the development since the mid-1990s.

The not-for-profit golf club have stated the development is the only way they can ensure the long term viability

of the golf course.

But community group Red Hill Regenerators, who regularly volunteer to restore native woodland in monthly working bees, are strongly opposed.

"It's going to have a major impact on a woodland that is of national significance and a woodland that we've spent 21 years looking after with the support of the government," Red Hill Regenerator Michael Mulvaney said.

"[The golf club] say it's because [of] viability but if they're so stretched for funds, why would they be chasing up this proposal.

"This is the fourth time, each time

15 years ago, 10 years ago, they say, 'we're going to go bankrupt, the sky's going to fall down if it doesn't happen' and it doesn't happen – but they keep going."

Mr Mulvaney said his group had identified over 300 Yellow Box, Blakley's Red Gum and Apple Box within the proposed development area, including 53 trees with a trunk circumference greater than 150cm.

He said the area was a national treasure, and provided habitat for a number of threatened and endangered species.



Red Hill Regenerator Michael Mulvaney is against the Federal Golf Club's proposal to develop 4.25ha of land, due to its environmental impact



## Concern for nature park if plans approved

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BUT Mr Mulvaney said the concern was not just for the vegetation within the development area itself.

He said the surrounding Canberra Nature Park would need significant understorey clearance to lessen fire danger to homes, and would also be impacted with the widening and possible realignment of Gowrie Drive.

"It's just not a suited place for the type of development and there are a lot better places where you can put [59] units," he said.

"We would prefer to work with [the golf club] it's just that what they're coming up with now is going to be so destructive.

"The local community, because it is the fourth time, are just getting fed up with it.

"When is a no a no?"

President of the Federal Golf Club, David Nelson, said the club had considered options other than residential development but none of them went anywhere near meeting their

requirements. "The Federal Golf Club has been hit hard in the last decade by drought and heavy costs associated with buying in very expensive potable water and installing vital irrigation ponds," he said.

"Two ponds have been constructed already at great cost.

"There are plans to build another two ponds and our early estimate is that this will cost the club in the vicinity of a further \$1.5 million.

"These works and many other essential works are vital to the club's long-term viability and there is no satisfactory way of funding them other than through the sale of this very small parcel of land."

Mr Nelson said approximately three quarters of the land proposed for development had been cleared for 60 years.

"The remainder comprises some perimeter tree planting, much of which was done by the golf club, and a small triangular section of bushland that contains some old eucalypts but mostly Monterey pines, Rowans, and other

species now regarded as noxious weeds," he said.

"Every tree on this tiny piece of land has been surveyed and evaluated by an independent expert and all significant trees have been identified and will be preserved.

"We have even gone to great lengths to ensure the protection of valuable native trees along the golf club's access road which is outside the golf club's lease."

A draft Environmental Impact Statement is now before the ACT Planning and Land Authority, looking at the first step of deconcessionalising the lease over the 4.26ha.

Following deconcessionalisation, negotiations can begin with a developer, and the proposal will be subject to a number of government approvals, including a development application which will include community consultation.

The Red Hill Regenerators are currently circulating a petition around nearby suburbs to demonstrate community opposition to the development.