

Development will ensure the club's future

By Carmen McIntosh

FEDERAL Golf Club president David Nelson is fed up with "misinformation" being spread in the community about the club's proposed residential development.

The not-for-profit club recently applied to deconcessionalise the lease of about four hectares of disused golf course allowing it to sell the land and turn it into a residential development.

It is the fourth time the club has attempted the development since the mid-1990s, and Mr Nelson said the sale of the land to a developer was the only way to ensure viability of the club.

He said the course had been severely affected by drought during the past few years, and funds were needed for further drought proofing measures and "other urgent works" as part of a staged program.

Mr Nelson said the club had already constructed two irrigation ponds, but they provided for less than half its requirements.

"With no natural watercourse and no lake on our doorstep, four ponds are necessary to capture sufficient water to irrigate the course," he said.

"Our approved DA was for four ponds and they are expected to cost in excess of \$1 million. We have no other way of paying for such necessary but costly projects that have been deferred already for too many years."

Mr Nelson said the essential drought proofing works had cost the club many members over the last eight years and



The president of the Federal Golf Club at Red Hill, David Nelson, at the proposed residential development site.

this, coupled with the cost of the works – almost \$3 million funded by borrowings – had seriously affected the club's financial position.

But community land care group the Red Hill Regenerators, who are in

opposition to the proposal, said the club's financial position was not justification for a poorly located housing development.

"The Red Hill Regenerators and general community aren't opposing the

development of irrigation dams on the golf course, just how they are to be paid for," regenerator Michael Mulvaney said. "For most of the club's history they rented the land on a peppercorn basis (only having to pay

back on an interest free basis some of the cost of course development work provided by the government).

"The current rent for 90ha of land is \$13,000. The rent is subsidised by the taxpayer, on the basis that the land is only used for golf and related purposes [such as] a community activity.

"The golf club now wants to be given the right to build houses on part of this golf only lease."

Dr Mulvaney believed the development, if approved, would have significant environmental and social costs on the wider community.

He argued that at least a third of the site contained woodland trees and that much of the road reserve, which would need to be widened to accommodate the development, supported high quality, critically endangered woodland.

Mr Nelson said the development area was 75 per cent clear of trees, and most of those that remained were noxious weeds.

He said the club had greatly improved the golf course land since the 1940s, at no cost to the community.

"It's been a huge financial investment," he said.

"Properly cared for, it will be here for another hundred years absorbing [carbon emissions], providing sporting and health benefits, and adding to the natural beauty of our capital.

"I and many club members of my age won't be playing golf when the golf course reaches full bloom in a couple of decades but we continue to improve it and make it viable for future generations, not ours."

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