



Christ Church
Grammar School
PERTH, WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Media release

March 2023

Christ Church Grammar School - Mount Claremont Playing Fields

At the heart of the School's recent request for the rezoning of the Mount Claremont Playing Fields (MCPF) is our absolute dedication to the health and wellbeing of boys.

Physical activity is an important aspect of health and wellbeing, and the School's vision is for many sports to be played in one location, hence the recent and planned developments at St John's Wood.

Last week, the School received notification from the Minister for Planning that the request to initiate a scheme amendment to rezone the MCPF for housing development would not be supported.

This decision is disappointing for many reasons, including:

1. The rezoning and subsequent sale of the land at Mt Claremont would have assisted the School in funding the development of St John's Wood phase 2

[FOMCF: the word "assisted" requires context so as not to be misleading. Based on the school's own public statements, remediation of the St John's Wood phase 2 land will cost between \$15m - \$20m. The rezoning of the Mount Claremont Playing Fields would have provided proceeds of at least \$100m and covered the costs of the remediation multiple times over. The school also has more than \$50m in its current endowment fund and is the wealthiest school in Western Australia by some measure.]

2. The development of this land would assist with the State's current and future residential housing needs.

At every stage of this process, from application to the Town of Cambridge through to the submission to the Minister, the School followed the advice of statutory authorities.

[FOMCF: this claim of propriety is misleading. In 2020 the school told the WA Planning Commission they "had started looking for an offsite strategy 3-4 years ago." But at no time during this 3-4-year period did the CCGS Council table its plans with the school community, or the Old Boys' Association, or the Town of Cambridge or the local community. During the same period, the Town of Cambridge was carrying out a local planning strategy process to which the school made no submission or application. Instead, the school Council deliberately acted to not engage with any stakeholders and keep its scheme confidential. In August 2020 the school Council actively sought to circumvent the Town of Cambridge and the local planning strategy process through a direct submission to the WA Planning Commission. In October 2020 the WA Planning Commission heard the matter and said that

the school had “not followed the orderly and proper process and the community has not been provided with the opportunity to consider and comment on this matter.”]

During the process, misinformation has been prolific in the media, and I provide the following to ensure you have the facts.

The MCPF were purchased by and are owned by the School

On numerous occasions the MCPF have been referred to as being ‘gifted’ to the School. This is completely incorrect. The School purchased 20 acres of unimproved bushland for fifteen thousand pounds in 1959. The School’s advice is that this was a full and fair price for the property.

[FOMCF: the claim FOMCF has made is that the land was tantamount to a ‘community gift’ to a growing school in need of playing fields and short of funds. Preliminary investigations by the Town of Cambridge indicate that the school received a discount from the City of Perth of approximately 85% of the value of the surrounding residential land. The school was also given 12 years to pay off the land and the City of Perth paid for the construction of an access road for the school. These facts all suggest that the price paid by the school was based on the representations made by the school at the time that the land was for playing fields, and not a residential sub-division. Applying the average long-term Perth residential property growth rate of 6.82% pa to the price the school paid in 1959, yields a current value for the playing fields of approximately \$2m, which is less than the value of two surrounding residential blocks! The school’s amendment request was proposing that the playing fields be rezoned for at least 70 residential blocks. If the school is claiming that it paid a “full and fair” price for residential land, then that is misleading. It only paid a “full and fair” price for land designated and zoned for parks and recreation, being the representation the school made to the City of Perth when it asked to purchase the land.]

MCPF is private property and NOT public open space

The MCPF is not public open space. The land is private property, over which the School has a freehold title with no conditions. The School has demonstrated years of goodwill by allowing the local community access to its playing fields.

[FOMCF: the school’s freehold title to the playing fields has never been disputed, but the school’s assertion that it holds the land with “no conditions” is misleading. When the land was gazetted in 1985 by the City of Perth, it was specifically Reserved for Parks and Recreation reflecting the intent, purpose, and terms of the original sale. The zoning or reservation of any land represents a fundamental condition attaching to its use and freehold title does not provide a landowner with the right to develop land in any way it chooses.]

Use of School’s playing fields is encouraged

The School has always offered the use of its playing fields to other schools and community sporting groups. The surrounding girl’s schools and IGSSA regularly access the fields at St John’s Wood.

Playing fields and green open space in the vicinity

There is an abundance of green open space in and around the MCPF.

Our St John’s Wood playing fields phase 1 is 8.63ha of green, manicured space just one kilometre from the MCPF. When St John’s Wood phase 2 is developed an additional 15.16ha of playing fields will be available. Other green open space near MCPF includes:

- UWA Sports Park

- Perry Lakes
- Bold Park

[FOMCF: the above claim suggests that the CCGS Council continues to misunderstand issues about systemic equality that both Dr Stratton and Minister Saffioti have set out in detail. Government schools, girl's sport and community sporting associations all face a current and growing shortage of playing fields. Girl's sport in particular is suffering from huge levels of inequitable access and so suggesting that green open space like Perry Lakes and Bold Park is the equivalent of playing fields is to miss the point. Minister Saffioti determined there was not sufficient evidence and merit to support a scheme amendment that sought to destroy existing playing fields.]

The School is considering its next steps and makes no apologies for acting in the best interests of its community.

For further information:

Joanne Wheeler

Director Communication & Engagement

Christ Church Grammar School

Phone 9442 1531