Response to the Hunter Indoor Sports Centre EIS and supporting documentation

Demand

The Newcastle Basketball Association has existed in its various forms and locations around Newcastle since 1924 – some 100 years. The Basketball Association of Newcastle Limited (BANL) has existed in its current location at Broadmeadow since May 1969 – some 55 years.

The current Newcastle Basketball Stadium is all but past the end of its useful life.

The Newcastle Basketball Stadium consists of 6 courts, has high levels of utilisation, with the main court seating up to 1,700 persons. Competitions are held seven days per week and 49 weeks per year. More than 7,000 persons are estimated to use the complex each week, translating to over 350,000 per year.

A range of social adult and junior indoor sports and events other than representative basketball teams use the Newcastle Basketball Stadium, such as volleyball, pickleball, floorball, netball, futsal, and gymnastics. As well as mainstream sports, the Newcastle Basketball Stadium is frequently used for special interest sports such as Wheelchair Basketball, Life Ball, Wheelchair Rugby, Aussie Hoops, and Basketball for the intellectually impaired.

The Basketball Association has also been active in promoting the use of the facility to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups and multicultural groups. Special interest groups such as Starstruck, and recreational groups with a range of interests from computers, to fashion, to mass formation dance ensembles regularly use the Newcastle Basketball Stadium.

Current membership of BANL is 6,200 on track to grow to 10,000 by 2030. In order to meet this current demand from the diverse range of users of the Newcastle Basketball Stadium, we currently lease an additional 8 external courts @ approximately $250,000-$300,000 per annum. All up, our current demand requires us to have 14 indoor basketball courts available each week for 49 weeks of the year.

BANL is currently turning away 500 children per competition season (summer and winter) due to the lack of indoor court space available.

Location

BANL have already investigated 3 other locations, all of which were unsuitable for an indoor sports facility:

- Hillsborough;
- Glendale 1; and
- Glendale 2.

A design for a regionally significant 12 court Hunter Indoor Sports Centre has been prepared to meet contemporary standards and the growing demand of basketball and other indoor sports in the lower Hunter Region.

BANL understand the significant strategic importance of our current site at Broadmeadow to the NSW Government's overall Broadmeadow Place Strategy in terms of:

- Staging;
- Structure plans;
- Broadmeadow Town Centre;
- First Mover Requirements;
- Key infrastructure moves; and
- Implementation.

This means that BANL are going to be required to vacate their current location by 2028. If we take construction time into consideration for a new facility being 18 months, then a new location needs to be established by June 2026.

The Business Case

The Business Case for the Hunter Indoor Sports Centre has the following points worth noting:

1. **Thorough Strategic Justification**
    - The business case aligns the project with multiple local, state, and federal priorities, highlighting its role in supporting community health, economic productivity, and sports participation. This strategic alignment strengthens the argument for funding and long-term support.

2. **Clear Economic and Social Benefits**
    - The business case projects significant economic output ($89 million) and employment (153 jobs) generated by the construction and ongoing operation of the facility. Additionally, it demonstrates broader health and social benefits, particularly through increased physical activity and inclusivity for diverse communities, including CALD and disabled groups.

3. **Detailed Community Impact and Inclusivity Goals**
    - The HISS emphasises inclusivity, aiming to support various underserved demographics, such as women, culturally and linguistically diverse populations, and individuals with disabilities. This community-oriented approach aligns with regional goals for social cohesion and public health improvements.

4. **Phased Development with Sustainable Funding**
    - The proposal's phased approach, starting with Stage 1 to establish foundational facilities (eight courts, allied health suites), helps distribute costs and meet initial needs. Furthermore, the business case includes a strong operating plan for financial sustainability through commercial activities like leasing space for allied health partners.

5. **Comprehensive Risk and Stakeholder Engagement Strategy**
    - The business case includes a well-developed risk management plan, along with proactive community and stakeholder engagement strategies. Continuous updates to stakeholders and collaboration with local groups enhance transparency and promote broader community buy-in.

Environmental Impact Statement

The strengths of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) (Environmental Impact Statement) include:

1. **Comprehensive Strategic Alignment**
    - The EIS demonstrates alignment with multiple state and regional strategic plans, including the Hunter Regional Plan 2041, Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Plan 2036, and Newcastle Local Strategic Planning Statement 2040. This alignment supports the project's justification and highlights its regional importance.

2. **Detailed Environmental Mitigation Strategies**
    - The EIS provides detailed mitigation measures for potential environmental impacts, including flood risk management, stormwater treatment, and waste management. For instance, it includes flood storage provisions and water-sensitive urban design (WSUD) to mitigate flood and water quality risks, ensuring that environmental concerns are addressed proactively.

3. **Community Engagement and Cultural Sensitivity**
    - The EIS describes community consultation, including with Aboriginal groups and neighbouring residents. It highlights efforts to incorporate feedback and adjust project

elements to align with cultural heritage requirements, demonstrating responsiveness to local and indigenous concerns.

4. **Comprehensive Traffic and Accessibility Analysis**
   - The report includes a thorough analysis of traffic impacts, supported by mitigation strategies like enhanced public transit connectivity and carpooling initiatives, to minimise traffic congestion around the facility. This approach can support long-term accessibility and reduce reliance on private vehicle use.

5. **Sustainable Development Focus**
   - The EIS emphasises ecologically sustainable development (ESD) through energy-efficient designs, waste reduction strategies, and the inclusion of electric vehicle charging points. These sustainability measures align with state goals for reducing carbon emissions and promoting environmental resilience.

<u>Social and Economic Assessment</u>

The strengths of the Social and Economic Assessment (SEA) (Appendix II - Social and Economic Assessment) include:

1. **Clear Strategic Justification and Alignment**
   - The SEA establishes strong alignment with local, state, and federal strategic priorities, including health, economic productivity, and sports participation goals. This alignment reinforces the project's relevance to broader regional growth and public health objectives.

2. **Detailed Community and Stakeholder Engagement**
   - The assessment outlines a structured engagement process with various stakeholders, including community members, indigenous groups, and local sporting associations. This inclusive approach increases transparency and considers diverse community perspectives.

3. **Quantified Economic and Health Benefits**
   - Economic impacts are projected, such as job creation (260 jobs during construction and 91 ongoing roles). The SEA also discusses potential productivity gains from increased physical activity, valuing them at up to $186 million per year based on health cost reductions and improved productivity.

4. **Emphasis on Social Inclusion and Well-being**
   - The report highlights the social benefits of the HISC, including fostering inclusivity for people with disabilities, women, youth, and culturally diverse communities. The facility's role in promoting community connectedness and reducing social isolation is emphasised, particularly for indigenous and immigrant groups.

5. **Health and Fitness Focus**
   - The SEA links increased physical activity through the HISC with reduced rates of obesity and inactivity-related diseases, aligning with public health initiatives. This focus on health outcomes strengthens the justification for the project by highlighting its preventive health benefits.

<u>Flood Impact and Risk Assessment</u>

The strengths of the Flood Impact Risk Assessment (Appendix CC - Flood Risk Impact Assessment) include:

1. **Detailed Flood Modelling**
   - The study uses TUFLOW software to model flood behaviour accurately for a range of flood events (10% AEP to PMF). This provides a clear understanding of flood depth, hazard classifications, and flow distributions across the site.

2. **Conformance with Local Guidelines**
   - The report aligns with the Newcastle Local Environmental Plan (LEP) and Development Control Plan (DCP) requirements. For instance, it respects floodways and storage areas, avoiding high-impact modifications that would increase flood risk to surrounding areas.

3. **Flood Emergency Management**
   - It includes a Flood Emergency Response Plan (FERP) with a dedicated refuge area on the building's first floor. This area can accommodate up to 2,000 people and is designed to withstand PMF events, with monitoring systems and safety measures to minimise risk to life.

4. **Alternative Mitigation Options**
   - While it doesn't fully satisfy parking hazard management requirements, the study proposes alternative mitigation strategies, such as bollards to prevent vehicles from being displaced by floodwaters, thus minimising potential blockages in nearby watercourses.

5. **Future Climate Consideration**
   - The study addresses future flood risks by simulating the 1% AEP event with a 2050 planning horizon to account for potential increases in rainfall intensity due to climate change.

Flood Emergency Response Strategy

The strengths of the Flood Emergency Response Strategy (FERS) (Appendix UU - Flood Emergency Response Strategy) include:

1. **Structured Flood Refuge Area**
   - The strategy includes a designated refuge area on the first floor with a capacity for up to 2,000 individuals. This refuge is provisioned with emergency supplies such as clean water, lighting, communication devices, and medical kits, providing short-term safety during flood events.

2. **Comprehensive Flood Intelligence and Warning Systems**
   - The FERS integrates multiple flood alerts, including the Bureau of Meteorology (BoM) and the Newcastle Flood Alert Service. This ensures timely information on severe weather and rapid response capabilities, leveraging a localised network of rainfall gauges to provide alerts specific to the area.

3. **Detailed Risk Analysis of Flood Behaviour**
   - The report includes analyses of flood probabilities, expected water rise rates, and possible flood paths, noting that flash flooding from East Coast Lows and thunderstorms is the primary risk. This risk profiling aids in developing realistic and location-specific emergency response actions.

4. **Clear Egress and Ingress Pathways**
   - The plan outlines a flood-safe access path to Womboin Road, enabling emergency services to reach the site during floods and allowing for potential evacuation when safe. This dedicated route provides an extra safety measure for staff and attendees if the building must be vacated.

5. **Annual Training and Preparedness Measures**
   - The plan mandates annual flood drills and includes educational programs for staff to maintain readiness and familiarity with flood procedures, ensuring that all personnel are well-prepared to implement the FERS when required.

Traffic Impact Assessment

The strengths of the Traffic Impact Assessment (Appendix P - Traffic Impact Assessment) include:

1. **Comprehensive Traffic Modelling**
   - The study includes extensive modelling by Bitzios Consulting, analysing peak hours, vehicle flows, and intersection performance for current and projected conditions. This helps predict and manage the impacts on traffic along the Turton Road corridor.

2. **Event Management Planning**
   - The report addresses large-scale event impacts with a dedicated Event Management Plan. It anticipates traffic volumes for major events and includes provisions for overflow parking at the McDonald Jones Stadium, which mitigates excessive traffic around the site.

3. **Public Transport and Active Transportation Integration**
   - The study considers bus services on Turton Road, proximity to Broadmeadow Railway Station, and pedestrian and cyclist connectivity. This focus supports sustainable transit options, reducing dependency on car-based trips.

4. **Sufficient On-Site Parking**
   - The site offers 240 parking spaces, including accessible spots and dedicated drop-off areas, meeting most daily needs without relying on surrounding streets. This approach aligns with local council parking guidelines, ensuring minimal disruption for neighbouring areas.

5. **Detailed Construction Traffic Planning**
   - A preliminary Construction Traffic Management Plan addresses construction impacts, including parking on-site for workers and suitable access to Turton Road, minimising disruption on local traffic during construction phases.

Traffic Event Management Plan

The strengths of the Traffic Event Management Plan (TEMP) (Appendix S - Traffic Event Management Plan) include:

1. **Detailed Event Classification and Mitigation Measures**
   - The plan categorises events by expected attendance and aligns mitigation measures with existing practices at nearby McDonald Jones Stadium, ensuring that the area can handle varying crowd sizes with minimal disruptions.

2. **Coordination with Existing Precinct Plans**
   - By coordinating with Venues NSW and referencing the McDonald Jones Stadium Traffic Management Plan, the TEMP ensures that large events do not overlap, minimising the cumulative traffic impact on the area.

3. **Encouragement of Public Transport**
   - The TEMP leverages Broadmeadow Station's proximity and nearby bus services, advising event attendees to use public transportation and reducing reliance on car travel. Information on public transport options is also integrated into ticket sales and event pages, supporting sustainable transit options.

4. **Overflow Parking Arrangements**
   - On-site parking for 240 vehicles is supplemented with overflow parking arrangements at McDonald Jones Stadium. Variable message boards guide visitors to these additional spaces, helping manage parking demand during larger events.

5. **Comprehensive Pedestrian and Safety Controls**
   - The TEMP includes a designated pedestrian route with controlled crossings and a drop-off zone, which helps manage foot traffic and improve safety for attendees crossing busy roads like Turton Road.

The Green Travel Plan

The strengths of the Green Travel Plan (GTP) (Appendix Q - Green Travel Plan) include:

1. **Comprehensive Sustainable Transport Options**
   - The GTP includes detailed strategies to promote public transit, carpooling, cycling, and walking, with tailored incentives like priority parking for car-poolers and end-of-trip facilities such as showers and secure bike storage. This encourages staff and visitors to use alternative transportation options.

2. **Well-Defined Mode Share Targets**
   - The plan sets mode share targets, including a 10% goal for cycling, 5% for walking, and specific percentages for public transport. This goal-setting allows measurable outcomes that can be assessed over time to track progress.

3. **Local Area Transportation Insights**
   - The GTP provides a clear assessment of nearby transport options, including proximity to Broadmeadow Railway Station and multiple bus routes. This highlights available public transportation options and positions the site as accessible for those who commute without a private vehicle.

4. **Employee Engagement and Education**
   - The plan includes resources for employee orientation, encouraging sustainable travel through information packs, active transport events, and carpooling promotions. These educational efforts increase awareness and can facilitate higher participation rates in sustainable transport initiatives.

5. **Flexible Emergency Travel Solutions**
   - Emergency options, such as providing taxi vouchers for employees who may miss public transport due to work requirements, offer practical solutions that can help employees commit to sustainable commuting without sacrificing convenience.

Summary

There is significant local and regional demand for the Hunter Indoor Sports Centre to be constructed, sooner than later. The proposed location is site number four to be proposed and investigated.

The City of Newcastle have deemed the Wallarah and Blackley Ovals to be surplus to requirements due to the water inundation issues, making the playing surfaces unable to be utilised by either soccer or cricket. Existing sports who use the ovals have agreed to be relocated to upgraded facilities that meet their seasonal and patronage demands. Lambton High School who utilises the Wallarah and Blackley Ovals on an ad-hoc basis are comfortable to utilise the Hunter Indoor Sports Centre as an all-weather facility.

The Environmental Impact Statement and Appendices submitted for the Hunter Indoor Sports Centre, provide a sound basis for approval of a State Significant Development Application (SSDA) for the site. I have provided commentary on the relevant strengths of the SSDA documentation that those opposing the use of the site for the Hunter Indoor Sports Centre have raised – ie, flooding and traffic.

I am available for further discussion or questions as required and would welcome the opportunity to speak in support of the Hunter Indoor Sports Centre SSDA application.

Regards

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