

**Mark Brooker**  
Ward 3 Councillor  
City of Newcastle

48 Robinson Ave, Lambton NSW 2299

Thursday 18 September 2025

**Submission on the State Significant Development Application SSD-6559 Hunter Indoor Sports Centre (HISC)**

Dear members of the NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure, and the Independent Assessment Panel,

I write in my capacity as a Ward 3 representative for the City of Newcastle to present this submission **objecting** to the Hunter Indoor Sports Centre (HISC) proposal.

I acknowledge the need for modern, multipurpose indoor sports infrastructure in the Hunter region.

However, I share the concerns raised by many, many local residents, community groups, and other stakeholders about the proposed location, and I urge that these be addressed thoroughly before approval is granted.

**Matters of Concern**

**1. Traffic, Access, and Parking Management**

While the proposal includes traffic and transport assessments, concerns persist that Turton Road and adjacent residential streets will experience significant congestion during events. As Ward 3 covers the affected residential streets neighbouring Wallarah and Blackley Ovals, I request more detailed modelling of peak and event traffic scenarios, along with robust mitigation strategies. These might include:

- Dedicated event traffic management plans;
- Possible restrictions or improvements to local streets during major event times;
- Enhanced off-street parking; shared parking agreements (e.g. McDonald Jones Stadium) must be clearly secured;
- Clear signage, ingress/egress design to avoid queues spilling into residential areas.

## 2. **Flooding and Environmental Impacts**

The green space currently acts as a flood buffer and includes natural drainage paths, waterways and springs. Covering these with impermeable surfaces raises the risk of exacerbated stormwater runoff and flooding to neighbouring properties. I request:

- Independent peer reviews of flood modelling;
- Clear guarantees that post-development flood levels in neighbouring properties will not increase;
- Stormwater management design that maximises infiltration and retains green/open permeable surfaces;
- Environmental impact on native vegetation, biodiversity, groundwater and natural springs to be properly assessed.

## 3. **Loss of Green and Open Spaces and Impacts on Community Amenity**

The ovals are valued for both formal and informal recreation, school use, and community life. Their loss would harm amenity, especially for Lambton High School, Lambton Jaffas Junior Football and Wests Junior Cricket Clubs and for community groups hosting outdoor sports. I request:

- Assurance that the current level of public access to open space is maintained or replaced at equivalent capacity;
- Public open space design within the proposed development including accessible landscaping and recreation areas;
- Engagement with local schools to ensure their needs are preserved (e.g. required field space for outdoor sports);
- That the project ensures the community's usage of green space outside lesson times, weekends and evenings is protected.

## 4. **Site Appropriateness / Alternative Locations**

There is strong community sentiment that this site may not be the most suitable given its flood risk, residential proximity, and loss of high-value green space. I request that:

- Alternative sites continue to be investigated, or at least that previously assessed sites be compared explicitly for trade-offs;
- If this site is retained, additional design modifications be made to minimise negative impacts;
- That the scope and cost of relocating user groups (sporting clubs, schools) be quantified and mitigated if necessary.

## 5. Consultation and Transparency

Many residents feel they were not properly consulted early enough, if at all, and that their feedback has not been meaningfully incorporated. As an elected representative, I urge that:

- Ongoing meaningful consultation be conducted, including with local residents;
- Clear feedback be published showing how community inputs have altered or refined the design;
- Adequate time be given for public review of revised plans and changes;
- Transparency regarding project funding, stages of development, and what is guaranteed versus proposed.

## 6. Financial Viability and Staging Risks

There is concern that only part of the development will be delivered, leaving community expectations unmet and having destroyed green space without full benefit. I request:

- Confirmation of funding commitment for all key stages;
- Guarantees that partial completion will still meet minimum community benefit;
- Timelines and triggers for subsequent stages;
- Mechanisms to ensure that in case funding falls short, green/open space lost will be compensated or equivalent elsewhere.

## Recommended Conditions / Modifications

To support the project in a way that balances the community's needs with sporting infrastructure, I propose the following conditions should the development proceed at this site:

- Comprehensive traffic mitigation plan with oversight by Council, possibly including local road upgrades, signal adjustments, and parking management.
- Flood mitigation and stormwater treatment integrated throughout the design, with permeable surfaces, retention basins, and maintenance commitments.
- Preserved or enhanced green/open space, including mandatory public open space and landscaped buffer zones to reduce amenity impacts.
- Community access guarantees, especially for schools and local clubs, with allocated times, price protections, and facilities designed for flexible multi-use.
- Phased delivery with clear benchmarks so that even Stage 1 delivers meaningful benefit and does not lock in irreparable loss of green space if full project does not proceed.
- Monitoring and enforcement, including conditions in consent that require compliance reports on traffic, environmental performance, noise, and parking, with accountability to Council and residents.

## Overall Position

As a Ward 3 Councillor, I believe that the Hunter region needs a modern indoor sports centre. I support projects that enable broader access to sports, improve health and wellbeing, stimulate the local economy, and uplift community amenity.

However the proposed location at Wallarah Nos 1 and 2 and Blackley Ovals introduces real risks to residents, to Lambton High School, to junior sports clubs, to flood resilience, and to open-space amenity.

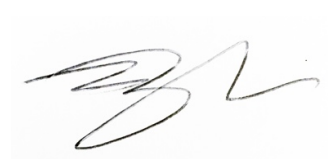
**Unless the concerns above are addressed with sufficient rigour, there is a danger that the harms will very much outweigh the benefits in this location.**

**I oppose the development of HISC on this site and will continue to advocate for relocating it to a more suitable location.**

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission. I am keen to work with all stakeholders to achieve a sports facility that serves the people of Newcastle and the wider Hunter community without sacrificing environmental integrity, residential amenity or community open space.

Yours sincerely,

Mark Brooker

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'MB', written over a light grey rectangular background.

Councillor – Ward 3, City of Newcastle