



ROYAL HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF VICTORIA INC.

239 A'Beckett Street, Melbourne 3000

Future Melbourne Committee, Agenda Item 6.1, 2nd May 2022

Ministerial Planning Referral: ID-2022-1:

Punt Road Oval, Yarra Park, Punt Road, East Melbourne

I write on behalf of the Royal Historical Society of Victoria to urge the Committee to reject the recommendation and to advise the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning that the Melbourne City Council opposes Amendment C421melb in so far as it would result in the demolition of the historic Jack Dyer Stand.

Throughout the process of consideration of the status of the Stand and the development of the Punt Road Oval, the RHSV Heritage Committee, having examined these alternatives, strongly and consistently commended 'Option 4: Retain Jack Dyer Stand and redevelop Swinburne Centre' of the report by Cox Architects for the consultants for the applicant. This option would retain the Jack Dyer Stand while still allowing for the optimal training oval dimensions central to this development proposal. Although it would necessitate added costs for the redevelopment of the Swinburne Centre, this is infinitely preferable to the demolition of the highly significant Jack Dyer Stand, which is central to the identity of the Richmond Football Ground within Yarra Park. We submit that the Richmond Football Club can afford the additional cost whereas the City of Melbourne cannot afford the loss of this remarkable part of its heritage.

The City of Melbourne itself detailed the case for the significance of the Jack Dyer Stand in its recommendations concerning an amendment (C405) to the Melbourne Planning Scheme. This is to be considered by the Future Melbourne Committee meeting 16 November 2021. (See pp. 1162–65 'Statement of Significance for Punt Road Oval', and pp. 1179–1232 Punt Road Oval (Richmond Cricket Ground) Heritage Review). By way of explanation the Heritage Review document notes: The Punt Road Oval (East Melbourne) had local heritage protection from the 1980s until 10 July 2020 when the C grading in the heritage places inventory was inadvertently omitted following the gazettal of Amendment C258. As a result of this omission, the grading was never translated from C to the new Significant/Contributory system through C258.

In arguing for Option 4 in the HIS, which would preserve the Jack Dyer Stand, we highlight the importance of the stand (named for Dyer in 1998) as a rare surviving example of an Edwardian-era grandstand (1913–14 designed by Thomas Watts and Son, extended 1927 in accordance with plans by architect Frank Stapley). It is characterised by an unusual curved design reflecting the curve of the oval and foreshadowing the later streamlined and curved forms of Moderne stands. The stand is of representative significance as an example of the larger and more elaborate football stands that emerged in this period and a fine example of the work of Watts and Stapley, two of the key

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architects of such stands. It is also the earliest surviving building on the site and is largely intact apart from replacement of the original stairs and alterations to some fenestration and the podium. As such we contend, as is also argued by the City of Melbourne, that the stand meets Heritage Victoria's Criterion B, Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of our cultural history (rarity). It is also, however, meets Criterion D, Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural places (representativeness), though they are becoming rare.

Because it is of great significance as the longest and most evocative surviving symbol of the Richmond Football Club's long association with the Punt Road Oval and its spiritual home, the stand also meets Criterion G (Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons). The Richmond community generally has had a strong attachment to the place for over a century, anchored in deep working-class community identity and loyalty through much of the 20th century. It still has powerful symbolic meaning to many Richmond residents and club followers. This is particularly evident in the association of the stand and its longevity with the name of Jack Dyer who played for Richmond from 1931 to 1949, much of that time as captain and coach, and has hero status at the club and throughout the Victorian football community. The names of those who contributed to the Jack Dyer Foundation, which was set up to fund ground improvements, are on nine plaques at the back of the stand. As such the Jack Dyer Stand meets Criterion H, Special association with the life or works of a person of importance in our history (associative significance). To this we add its association with the early history of Federation: Prime Minister Andrew Fisher opened the stand before the match between Richmond and South Melbourne on 6 June 1914.

We therefore strongly urge the Committee to reject the recommendation and to make representation at every level to preserve and protect for re-use the Jack Dyer Stand.

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Chair, Heritage Committee,
Royal Historical Society of Victoria.