

Ivanhoe Northcote Canoe Club  
Incorporated

Affiliated with Canoeing Victoria

**incc.org.au**

Registration No. A0008830P  
ABN 35 350 725 748



**REDEVELOPMENT OF CANOE CLUB FACILITIES**

Panther Pavilion, Fairfield Park

Submission to Yarra City Council  
**BUDGET 2016-17**

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## Contents

Purpose .....	3
Executive summary .....	4
Background .....	5
History.....	5
Current situation .....	6
Council’s investment in sport and recreation facilities .....	10
Current need and potential for future growth in participation .....	10
Rationale for the redevelopment.....	10
Redevelopment proposal .....	12
Concept Design .....	13
Detail of key design elements .....	15
Budget .....	15
Recommendations .....	16

## Purpose

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**To recommend that the 2016-17 budget include funding for the redevelopment of Panther Pavilion in Fairfield Park to be fit for purpose as a paddle sport facility, meet the standards required for City of Yarra sports pavilions and comply with the Disability Discrimination Act.**

In the event that the recommendation is not accepted, this submission:

- recommends that Council acknowledge that the current 12-month planning cycle for community infrastructure has failed to deliver a satisfactory outcome over a long period despite the redevelopment of the facility being rated as a high priority, and commits to completing the redevelopment in 2017-18
- outlines temporary and short-term measures necessary to ensure current participation in paddle sport from the facility can be maintained and address key safety issues.

This submission provides the Council with a strong rationale for the investment in community facilities for paddle sports, including letters of support from Canoeing Victoria and Australian Canoeing.

## Executive summary

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Somewhat ironically for the 'City of Yarra', the Council provides only one river-focused sport and recreation facility for use by the community along the 22.6 kilometres of its eastern border. Designed for use as a swimming clubhouse in the 1920s, the building has been the home of the Ivanhoe Northcote Canoe Club (INCC) since the 1970s. After several aborted plans (including one scheduled for 2015-16) and decades of deterioration and inaction from successive Councils, there is now an urgent need to redevelop the pavilion to be fit for purpose as a paddle sport facility, meet the standards required for City of Yarra sports pavilions and comply with the Disability Discrimination Act<sup>1</sup>.

Redevelopment of the site will be a cost-effective investment to expand recreation opportunities in the municipality. The return on investment in terms of participation is high compared to other sports that require expensive infrastructure such as playing fields. The current usage of the pavilion best fits the description of a *B grade facility: Pavilion with social room*. Under the Council's standards, the minimum space for the kitchen and social area should be 20m<sup>2</sup> and 60m<sup>2</sup> respectively. Meeting these standards will necessitate a larger footprint than the current building.

INCC has grown to be the largest canoe club in Victoria with approximately 400 members ranging in age from 10 to 84 years, 46% of whom are female. Unlike most other canoe clubs, INCC offers low-cost entry to the sport by providing members unlimited access to a fleet of more than 50 modern boats and other equipment. The club has regular programs for adult beginners, a successful junior development group and supports school programs. INCC also has an outstanding competitive record. In 2015, more than half of the Australian team for the World Championships were members of the club.

In late 2015, senior Council officers approached the club regarding possible use of the slab roof of a nearby structure (known as the 'bunker') as the foundation for a new structure for additional boat storage. The additional space would enable the existing building (the Panther Pavilion) to be reconfigured to provide accessible change rooms and sufficient social space for the club's programs and members. The INCC committee was pleased to be engaged in the planning process and invested significant time in developing a workable concept in collaboration with Council officers.

The club understands that Council management accepted the concept design and that early drafts of the 2016-17 budget included \$520,000 to complete the project. The project does not appear in the draft budget published in April 2016.

### Recommendations

For Council to reinstate the funding allocated in earlier drafts of the 2016-17 budget to redevelop the Panther Pavilion site as a paddle sport facility as per the design concept developed with Council officers in late 2015.

If the redevelopment is not included in the 2016-17 program of works, Council should commit to the completion of the project in 2017-18 and immediately approve expenditure for:

- reconnection of electricity to the southern end of the building
- maintenance work to close all points of access by rats and possums
- completion of the new boat storage facility outlined in this submission as the first phase in the redevelopment to be completed in 2017-18 or at minimum, purchase and modification of a shipping container for storage of club members' boats until the redevelopment is completed.

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<sup>1</sup> The facilities audit conducted in 2012 found that the "the [canoe club] pavilion does not meet DDA and functional standards" and rated action to "upgrade pavilion to include disability access, change facilities, toilets and additional storage" as high priority.

## Background

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The Yarra River is an extraordinary natural asset that attracts people from across metropolitan Melbourne for recreation, healthy exercise and competition. While the river has been the focus for the majority of urban renewal and residential development projects within the municipality in recent years, the 22.6 kilometre eastern boundary has been neglected by the Yarra City Council as an asset for use by the local community.

Somewhat ironically for the 'City of Yarra', the Council provides only one river-focused sport and recreation facility for use by the community – that facility is the home of the Ivanhoe Northcote Canoe Club (INCC).

Canoeing, kayaking and other paddle sports are low impact activities suitable for people of all ages and abilities, including people with physical and other disabilities. Recreational participation is growing, while at the elite level, Australians are regularly amongst the medalists in international competition. In 2012, Canoeing had the eighth highest participation of all sports in the municipality<sup>2</sup>, higher than athletics and tennis.

## History

The Panther Pavilion was constructed in the 1920s as a swimming clubhouse but by the 1960s, had been abandoned and vandalised. In 1971, the Northcote Council invited INCC to occupy the building. The Council completed minor works at the time and club volunteers contributed hundreds of hours to make the building usable as a canoe club. Since then, the Council has completed only essential maintenance with an overall decline in amenity as the building has aged. The club now leases the building from the City of Yarra.

Construction of a new canoe facility was first proposed by the Northcote Council in the 1980s but not pursued after council amalgamations.

In 2002, the City of Yarra commissioned architects Prior Cheney to prepare detailed plans for redevelopment of the pavilion. The plans included complete redevelopment of kitchen, social area, toilet, shower and changerooms, new doors on the western side to improve the movement of boats out of the building and a six metre deck extending from the building at the southern end. The plans were issued to prospective tenderers in early 2003, however the project did not progress.

Redevelopment of the canoe facility was again rated as a high priority in 2014 Yarra Sport and Physical Activity Strategy.

Following external drainage work adjacent to the pavilion in 2013-14, the club was advised that Council's 2014-15 and 2015-16 capital works budgets would include \$60,000 and \$360,000 respectively to fund the redevelopment of the pavilion (including the attached caretaker's residence).

Preparatory testing and initial design work was carried out during the 2014-15 year. Following receipt of the Council's initial concept design in mid-2014, INCC club officials have been involved in ongoing discussions with Council officers and Langridge ward councillors regarding options that would meet the needs of the club and comply with the Council's standards for pavilions.

The Council's draft budget for 2015-16 had no provision for the redevelopment and despite a submission from the club to reinstate the project; plans for the pavilion were shelved yet again.

In late 2015, senior Council officers approached the club regarding possible use of the slab roof of a nearby structure (known as the 'bunker') as the foundation for a new structure for additional boat storage. The additional space would enable the existing building (the Panther Pavilion) to be reconfigured to provide accessible change rooms and sufficient social space for the club's programs and members. The INCC

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<sup>2</sup> 644 participants – 461 adults and 183 juniors. Source: Yarra Sport and Physical Activity Strategy 2014-19

committee was pleased to be engaged in the planning process and invested significant time in developing a workable concept-level design. The club understands that this design was accepted in principle and that the project was included in early drafts of the 2016-17 budget. The redevelopment project does not appear in the draft budget published in April 2016.

## **Current situation**

Four decades after moving to the Pavilion, and despite its deteriorating condition, INCC has grown to be the largest canoe club in Victoria with approximately 400 members ranging in age from 10 to 84 years, 46% of whom are female. Unlike most other canoe clubs, INCC offers low-cost entry to the sport by providing members unlimited access to a fleet of more than 50 modern boats and other equipment. The club has regular programs for adult beginners, a successful junior development group and supports school programs. INCC also has an outstanding competitive record. In 2015, more than half of the Australian team for the World Championships were members of the club.

As summarised in Table 1, INCC's strategic plan is to increase participation in recreational kayaking and other paddle sports, and to continue its leadership in junior development and elite competition.

Over the years the club has adapted spaces in the pavilion and caretaker's cottage to enable members to train<sup>3</sup> and socialise, although these are far from adequate. The majority of space is required for storage of the club fleet and equipment, and for 200 boats owned by individual members. In recent times the ageing building has constrained growth in the club's membership and programs. As illustrated in the photographs below, the key issues at this time are:

- insufficient capacity to store additional club boats and new members' private boats – there is a long waiting list for private boat storage and a nearby shed used for additional storage is full
- insufficient space and poor facilities for social interaction, meetings and programs
- an unsuitable configuration that makes the movement of boats in and out of the building awkward and in some cases, unsafe
- outdated change room and shower facilities, accessed via steep stairs, do not meet standards for access by people with disabilities
- power was disconnected from the southern section approximately four years ago
- insufficient and inappropriate space for gym / ergometer equipment
- general poor condition - one section and another is open to the roof and is inhabited by an increasing population of rats and possums,
- the building is known to contain asbestos and is rapidly deteriorating due to age and constant use, evidenced by recent incidents including blocked toilets, water leaks, failing floor joists

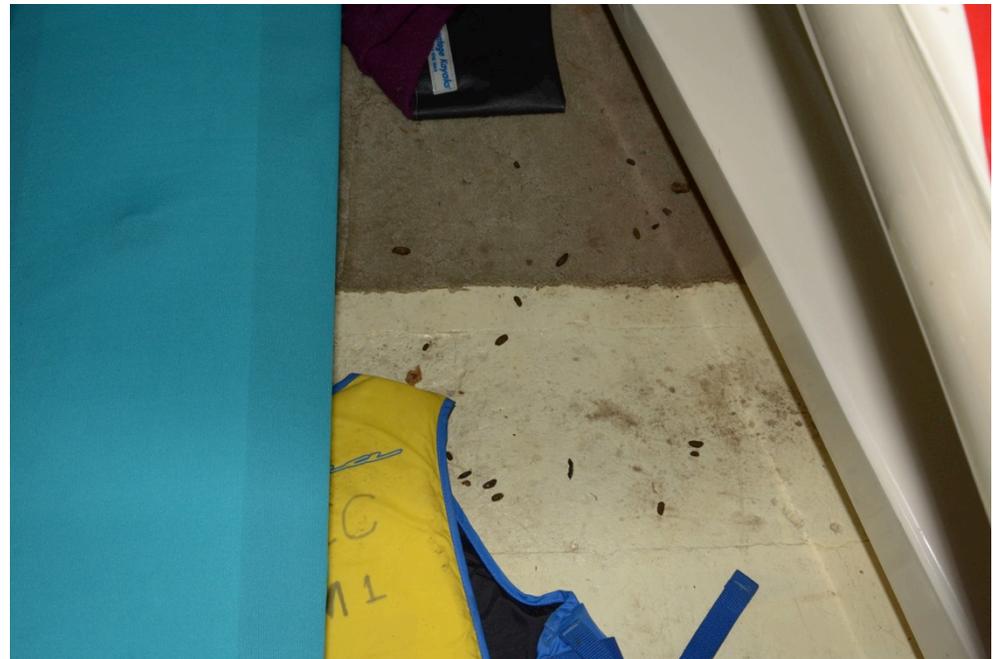
The paper mill site on Heidelberg Road is just over 1 km from Fairfield Park. The influx of residents from this and other nearby residential developments will substantially increase demand for recreation in the Alphington / Fairfield areas of the municipality.

There is an urgent need to redevelop the pavilion to be fit for purpose as a paddle sport facility, meet the standards required for City of Yarra sports pavilions and comply with the Disability Discrimination Act. The redevelopment of the current ageing facility is vital to INCC's strategic plan to expand its programs, to become a hub for healthy recreational activity for local residents and to continue to be the leading club for junior development and elite competition in Victoria.

*Following pages: The photographs show deterioration in wet areas, animal droppings from infestations of rats and possums, unorthodox boat storage options in the roof space and the limited space available for gym equipment.*

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<sup>3</sup> strength training using free weights and other gym equipment, technique and fitness training using kayaking ergometers





**Table 1: Summary of INCC's strategic plan**

AIMS	STRATEGIES
<p>1. To respond to the increased demand for recreational and competitive paddlesports on the Yarra brought about by greater population density in the inner north</p>	<p>Maintain our current membership model to provide low-cost access to recreational and competitive paddlesports for people of all ages, which means</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ensuring financial sustainability through increased membership while maintaining affordable membership fees</li> <li>• maintaining and expanding the current fleet of high quality club boats for use by members</li> <li>• optimising the use of facilities and equipment</li> </ul>
<p>2. In conjunction with Canoeing Victoria, to establish INCC as a regional paddlesport facility, which means hosting Canoeing Victoria events and supporting a range of programs relating to various paddlesport disciplines</p>	<p>Host at least one Canoeing Victoria event each year on the Yarra at Fairfield</p> <p>Focus on junior participation by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• establishing new partnership programs with local high schools (Collingwood Secondary College, Fitzroy High School, Princes Hill Secondary College, Melbourne Girls College)</li> <li>• maintaining/expanding our current junior program</li> </ul> <p>Maintain our current position as the leading Victorian club in terms of elite talent development and international representation, which will mean</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• maintaining current school partnerships and continuing to provide pathways from junior and school programs to club membership and life-long participation in competition</li> </ul>
<p>3. To promote healthy lifestyles and community connections for our members, and for people in the local community</p>	<p>Create a community hub for people involved in paddlesports and other fitness and recreation activities on and around the Lower Yarra</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• providing opportunities for the public to participate in 'come and try' sessions</li> <li>• increasing the number of club events and opportunities for social interaction</li> <li>• providing a space for paddlesport programs and other community activities</li> </ul>

## **Council's investment in sport and recreation facilities**

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INCC members account for two-thirds of the participation in canoeing in the municipality, with the remainder at Fairfield Canoe Club (FCC)<sup>4</sup>. INCC is the only canoe club in the municipality providing low-cost entry to the sport and has been active in its recruitment of members from the local community through free 'come and try' sessions, council publications and beginners' programs.

The City of Yarra has 15 sporting pavilions, including the canoe facility. There are no other facilities for river-based sport and recreation in the municipality. Council has funded major upgrades and/or redevelopment of several pavilions in recent years, including:

- Maxwell Sutherland Pavilion for Cricket and Soccer - \$1.4M over 2 years (2013-14 and 2014-15) plus additional expenditure on the playing field and lighting
- Edinburgh Gardens Tennis Club - \$180,000 (2012-13)
- Ramsden Street Sports Pavilion for Cricket, Football and Soccer - \$1.2M (2011-12)

Club membership and participation at these venues is similar or lower than participation at INCC.

### **Current need and potential for future growth in participation**

As outlined above and in the attached letters of support from Canoeing Victoria and Australian Canoeing, the need for a new or redeveloped paddle sports facility at Fairfield Park has long been recognised and as the current building deteriorates, the need is increasingly urgent.

As a Regional Paddle Sports Centre, INCC would have the capacity to expand its programs and provide opportunities for greater participation by young people and adults from all sections of the local community.

The City of Yarra has a unique natural asset that can provide recreation and sporting opportunities for a growing local population. Council's investment in infrastructure for paddle sports<sup>5</sup> offers a high rate of return when measured in participation as no expensive outdoor infrastructure or playing fields are required.

### **Rationale for the redevelopment**

As an inner urban area with a growing population,<sup>6</sup> access to a range of community and recreational activities in the limited open space is integral to the quality of life for residents of the City of Yarra. Demand for physical activity and recreation is growing rapidly, evidenced by a 43% increase in sporting participation between 2006 and 2013<sup>7</sup>.

#### *Yarra Sport and Physical Activity Strategy*

The Yarra Sport and Physical Activity Strategy 2014-2019 acknowledges the importance of an active, healthy community and the importance of having a range of quality facilities, programs and opportunities for sport and physical activity that result in increased levels of social connection, physical health, participation and wellbeing.

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<sup>4</sup> FCC's clubhouse is located on private land about 500 metres upstream from INCC. FCC has small number of club boats. In addition to annual subscriptions and boat storage fees, members of FCC must pay a once-off fee to become shareholders of a non-trading cooperative. The overall cost for FCC members is significantly higher than for INCC members.

<sup>5</sup> club and training facilities, storage for boats and trailers

<sup>6</sup> Over the next 20 years, the population is forecast to increase by 40% and further increases in housing density are expected. Source: Yarra Sport and Physical Activity Strategy 2014-19 accessed at <http://www.yarracity.vic.gov.au/services/Recreation/Yarra-Sports-Strategy>

<sup>7</sup> Yarra Sport and Physical Activity Strategy 2014-19

The strategy aims to celebrate Yarra's uniqueness and commits to resourcing and supporting the development of opportunities for the community to participate in sport and physical activity. The strategy identifies several roles for Council relevant to the redevelopment of the pavilion including:

- provision and management of sports and physical facilities including pavilions;
- community development – working in partnership with local sports clubs, schools, community organisations, peak sporting bodies and other government bodies to develop targeted sport and physical activity participation opportunities for sections of the Yarra community that have lower sport and physical participation rates;
- support for local sports clubs and community organisations in the development of sport and physical activity programs;
- provision of sport and physical activity spaces within its parks.

The facilities audit conducted for the strategy found that the “the [canoe club] pavilion does not meet DDA and functional standards” and rated action to “upgrade pavilion to include disability access, change facilities, toilets and additional storage” as high priority<sup>8</sup>.

#### *Yarra City Council Sporting Pavilion Standards*

A paddle sport / canoe facility has unique requirements for the secure storage and safe movement of boats and equipment in and out of the building that are not specified in the Yarra City Council Sporting Pavilion Standards, as many of standards relate only to team sports. Despite these limitations, the standards provide a valuable guide for the redevelopment. In particular, the principles on which the standards are based recognise the importance of providing access to a diverse range of activities and maximising participation by a wide cross-section of the community.

The current usage of the pavilion best fits the description of a *B grade facility: Pavilion with social room*<sup>9</sup>. Under the Council's standards, the minimum space for the kitchen and social area should be 20m<sup>2</sup> and 60m<sup>2</sup> respectively. Meeting these standards will necessitate a larger footprint than the current building.

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<sup>8</sup> Appendix 1, Yarra Sport and Physical Activity Strategy 2014-19

<sup>9</sup> Yarra City Council Sporting Pavilion Standards

## Redevelopment proposal

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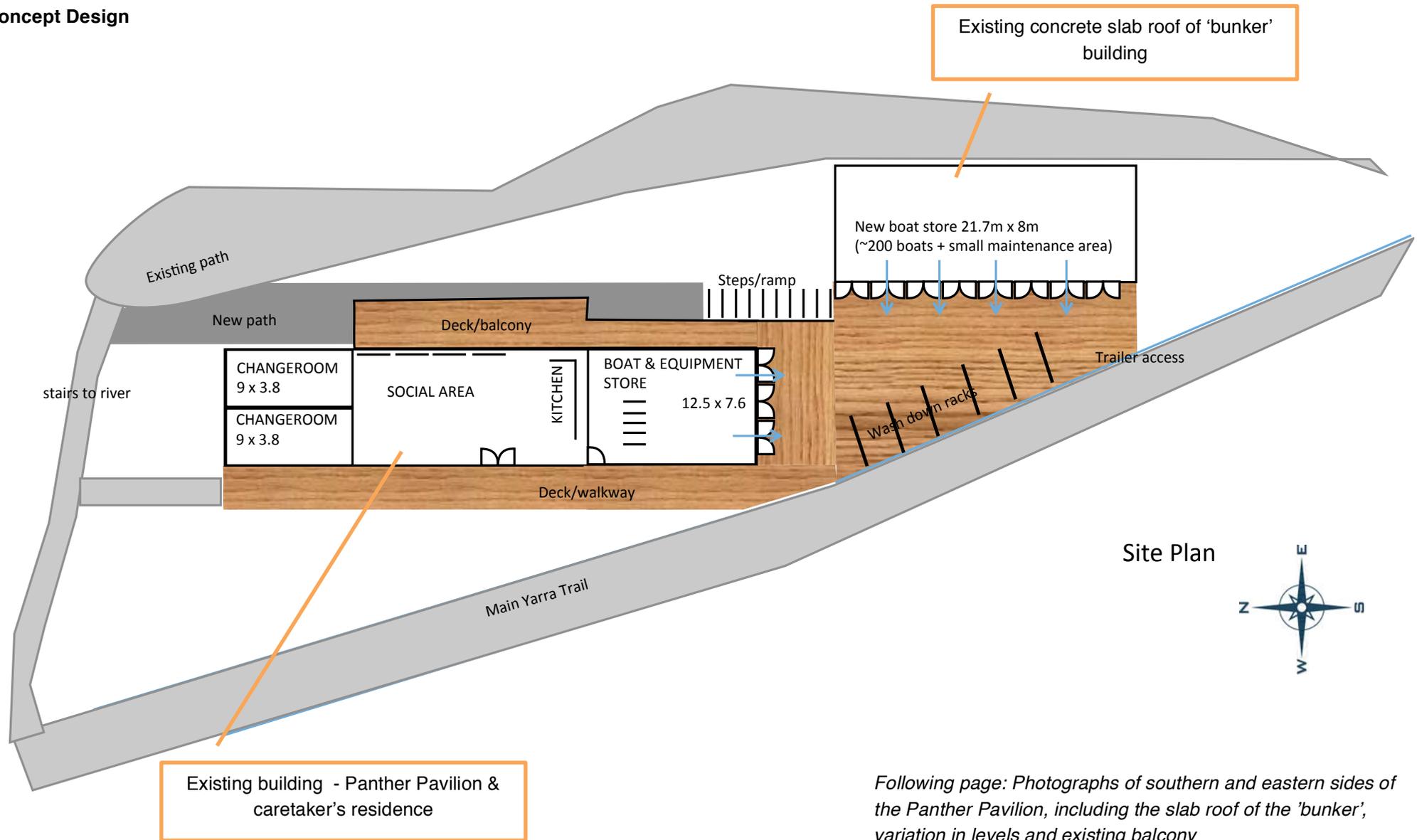
INCC's proposed design concept is based on the following principles and assumptions

1. The redevelopment should serve the community for 25 years and deliver good value for money to residents of the municipality
2. The design must support more than 100% growth in programs and 40% growth in membership over next 10-20 years, this means
  - 25-30% more boats, predominantly club boats for programs (~280 boats in total)
  - kitchen/social area and changerooms must be adequate for high demand periods (weekends, after school, events)
  - the use of space on the site should be integrated to maximise functionality and amenity for members and program participants, and ensure interaction between members using club boats, private boats and program participants
  - encouraging members and program participants to cycle to the club to reduce pressure on carpark areas
3. The design must ensure safety and access for all users, including
  - safe manual handling of boats (including height of boat storage), clear walkways
  - accessible for people using wheelchairs or with limited mobility
4. The construction must be robust and cost-effective, with design and materials sympathetic to the park environment and include
  - removing the unsightly shed in the middle of the park adjacent to the Main Yarra Trail
  - providing a secure lock-up area for the boat trailer elsewhere in Fairfield Park
  - avoiding removing trees, minimising landscaping required
  - fitting energy efficient lighting and renewable power supply

One of the most challenging aspects of the design will be to address the different levels across the site, which is adjacent to the Main Yarra Trail as it slopes down from Fairfield Park to the Pipe Bridge over the Yarra. The floor of existing pavilion is more than a metre higher (approx. 1250mm) than the slab roof of the bunker building.

Kayaks range from 4 to 11 metres in length. The proposed concept design provides for adequate space for a safe walking surface to be installed at the southern end of the existing building and to connect this area with existing paths to the river. The area connecting the two buildings will be used to remove the boats from storage; move to and from the site to the existing paths to the river; and to wash and dry the boats before returning them to storage.

**Concept Design**



*Following page: Photographs of southern and eastern sides of the Panther Pavilion, including the slab roof of the 'bunker', variation in levels and existing balcony*



## Detail of key design elements

- Existing pavilion
- locate changerooms at the northern end and use southern end for boat storage
  - both men's and women's to have a minimum of 4 shower cubicles, lockers and bench - 4 toilets in the women's, 3 toilets in the men's changeroom
  - consideration to be given to having an accessible toilet in each changeroom rather than one unisex toilet which would have to have its door opening into the social area
  - glass sliding doors to decking on eastern side for natural light and access (enlarge current balcony to provide outdoor space overlooking river)
  - northern steps to be covered over with new flooring
  - lower level of existing pavilion to be converted to gym and storage as per the 2014 concept design
  - boat storage at southern end (2850 clearance) – southern wall to have double opening doors
  - full length space (12.5m) along eastern wall at southern end to enable storage of K4
  - storage area for PFDs, paddles on the northern side of the steps leading down to the gym

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- New boat storage area (bunker roof)
- Possum and vermin proof building. Preferably without ceiling.
  - Lighting & power - energy-efficient lighting, maintenance area at southern end will need power
  - 3m high clear entry on western side to enable 28 rows each with 7 boats
  - Skylighting / Polycarb sections in roof supplemented by lighting in rafter space (allow clear space below and above rafters)
  - Double opening doors along western side (3000x600 each door opening to 90 deg with drop bolt) with 100mm posts (1300 modules to align with intended racking. Doors have latches and a single central locking system (like to a car)

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- External – decking, paths etc
- non-slip decking throughout to connect different heights, spaces and allow access to the site for trailers, wheelchairs etc
  - remove existing shed from area adjacent to the main Yarra Trail
  - new path to connect boat washdown area with lower path or existing steps on the northern side of the pavilion
  - secure trailer storage – preferred alternative is to have secure, flat area on opposite side of the path, or in the northwestern corner of the park (behind the timber yard).

## Budget

INCC understands the Council's estimated cost for the redevelopment, as set out in the concept above, is \$520,000

## Recommendations

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For Council to allocate funds in the 2016-17 budget to redevelop the Panther Pavilion site as per the design concept provided.

If the redevelopment is not included in the 2016-17 program of works, Council should commit to the completion of the project in 2017-18 and immediately approve expenditure for:

- reconnection of electricity to the southern end of the building
- maintenance work to close all points of access by rats and possums
- completion of the new boat storage facility outlined in this submission as the first phase in the redevelopment to be completed in 2017-18 or at minimum, purchase and modification of a shipping container for storage of club members' boats until the redevelopment is completed.