

COUNCIL WATCH FLEURIEU INC.

Accountability with Integrity — The time for change is Now !

NEWSLETTER No. 67 — June 2026



A Message from Mr. Keith Climpson:

Dear Readers,

For several months I have sought answers regarding the proposed Victor Harbor Regional Community, Sport and Recreation Precinct. Like many residents, I attended public meetings, reviewed council documents, asked questions, and corresponded directly with Council administration in an effort to better understand the project and its implications for our community.

While I appreciate the responses that have been provided, a number of important questions remain unanswered in my view. Ordinarily, correspondence between a resident and Council remains a private matter. However, this project involves public land, public money, long-term financial commitments, and decisions that may affect Victor Harbor for generations to come.

For that reason, I have decided to place my concerns into the public arena through Council Watch rather than continue what has effectively become a private exchange. My purpose is not to criticise individuals. Nor is it to oppose development for the sake of opposition.

Rather, it is to encourage informed public discussion about matters that I believe deserve greater scrutiny, including:

- The true long-term financial exposure to ratepayers.
- The lease arrangements proposed for community-owned land.

- The adequacy of community consultation.
- The release of prudential and financial modelling.
- The loss of open recreational space.
- The governance processes being followed by Council.

Trust between a Council and its community is built through openness, transparency and accountability. When significant questions remain unresolved, it is appropriate that those questions be examined publicly rather than behind closed doors.

The following article outlines the concerns that remain and why I believe they deserve the attention of every Victor Harbor resident.

Keith Climpson
Secretary
Council Watch Fleurieu Inc.

QUESTIONS THAT REMAIN UNANSWERED

Following receipt of Council's response to concerns raised at the 13 May 2026 public briefing session, a number of important questions remain unresolved. The purpose of raising these matters publicly is not to criticise individuals, but to ensure that issues involving public land, public money and long-term commitments receive appropriate community scrutiny.

Has Council Already Committed to the Project?

One of the most significant concerns arises from Council's confirmation that the planning process, Code Amendment, Community Land Revocation process and operational planning have all been progressed concurrently.

Many residents reasonably expected that the Community Land Revocation process would be completed before Council advanced further commitments associated with the project. Community Land Revocation exists to protect community-owned land and ensure that residents have an opportunity to be heard before significant changes occur. Questions therefore remain as to whether progressing multiple processes simultaneously creates the perception that the outcome has already been predetermined.

Do Community Surveys Represent a Community Mandate?

Council has relied upon Community Satisfaction Survey results as evidence of support for the project. However, the surveys measured general sentiment and community priorities. They did not ask residents whether they supported the current proposal in its present form, including:

- Long-term borrowing commitments
- Commercial development components
- Operational risks and future subsidies
- Changes to public land use
- Long-term lease arrangements

Council's response confirmed survey participation numbers of 488, 533 and 581 respondents across several years. Given Victor Harbor's population of more than 17,000 residents and approximately 11,000 rateable properties, many residents continue to question whether these survey responses constitute a mandate for a project carrying potentially multi-generational financial consequences.

Has the Project Changed Since Community Consultation Occurred?

A further concern is that the proposal currently before the community appears substantially different from the concepts originally presented during earlier consultation exercises. The project now includes a broader range of commercial and operational activities, including allied health services, childcare, food and beverage operations, gymnasium facilities and other commercial components. As the project has evolved, many residents believe updated consultation should occur based on the current proposal rather than historical concepts.

What Do the Prudential Reports Tell Us?

Council has commissioned two separate financial assessments relating to the project. These include the Nathan Gray (SGL) prudential analysis and the later UHY Haines Norton modelling. The Nathan Gray (SGL) assessment examined utilisation assumptions, operating performance and long-term financial sustainability in considerable detail. Many residents continue to ask why all supporting financial assumptions and prudential assessments have not been fully released for public scrutiny. If public confidence is to be maintained, ratepayers should have access to the information necessary to understand both the opportunities and risks associated with a project of this scale.

What About Community Petitions?

Council's response addressed petitions and survey material submitted by community members, including former Councillor Carlos Quaremba. Regardless of administrative classification, the broader issue remains unchanged. There is clearly organised and ongoing community concern regarding the scale, cost, governance arrangements and financial implications of the proposed Precinct. The existence of that concern should not be dismissed simply because debate exists regarding the form in which it was presented.

Open Space and Dog Walking Concerns

Questions also remain regarding statements made during the public briefing concerning dog walking within the grassed area proposed for development. Residents attending the meeting were advised that dog walking in the area was "**illegal**". Subsequent discussion appeared to focus on vehicle access rather than dog walking itself.

For many attendees, the issue was never adequately clarified. The significance of this matter should not be underestimated. Council's own figures indicate there are approximately 3,366 registered dogs within the Council area, demonstrating the importance many residents place on accessible open recreational space.

Why Has a Second Dog Park Not Progressed?

Council has confirmed that despite public discussion and deputations regarding a second dog park, no formal resolution was progressed. Some residents question why certain projects appear capable of advancing rapidly through Council processes while other community priorities remain under consideration for extended periods.

Was the Public Briefing Sufficiently Transparent?

Questions also remain regarding the promotion and conduct of the 13 May 2026 public briefing session. The session was not prominently advertised through Council's normal communication channels and no formal public agenda accompanied the event. Given the scale of the project and its potential long-term implications for the community, many residents expected a higher level of visibility and transparency.

Why These Questions Matter

The proposed Regional Community, Sport and Recreation Precinct carries potentially long-term implications for:

- Public land ownership and control
- Council debt levels
- Future rate increases
- Operational subsidies
- Community infrastructure priorities

For these reasons, many residents continue to call for:

- Updated and transparent consultation
- Release of prudential modelling and financial assumptions
- Greater clarity regarding lease arrangements and public land control
- Full disclosure of long-term financial risks and obligations

Ultimately, public trust depends upon transparency.

The more information that is made available, the greater the opportunity for residents to make informed decisions about a project that may shape Victor Harbor for generations to come.

Terry Andrews

Chair – Council Watch Fleurieu Inc.

Council Watch Fleurieu Inc.

Email: councilwatch44@gmail.com

Web: <https://councilwatchvictorharbor.com/>

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