

Swing shift fires donor debate

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TENSIONS have arisen in Koondrook around plans for a new all-abilities playground, which is set to be discussed at the Gannawarra Shire Council meeting to-morrow night.

Councillors are due to vote on the award of a \$590,000 tender for the creation of the park to Cohuna builders CJ & BT McLoughlan, subject to the council receiving \$77,500 from the Koondrook Development Association (KDA) for the project.

Some Koondrook community members are unhappy that the final design of the park doesn't include a wheelchair-specific swing, which was the original inspiration for the playground, and say they have not been consulted about the substitution of a different swing.

In a letter published in today's *Gannawarra Times*, one Koondrook resident said the land for the park had been donated by the former Koondrook Hall Committee with the Liberty Swing in mind and a significant amount of money raised by the community was intended for the swing.

"The funds we have raised will need to be returned to all donors as they donated the funds for the Liberty Swing, not a sway sling or no swing," the letter said.

Former councillor Steve Tasker, who started fundraising and campaigning for a Liberty Swing about



Sway Fun equipment has been incorporated into Gannawarra Shire's design for the Koondrook all-abilities park.

the time he was elected in 2016, said he was angry about the decision, which he said had been made without consultation.

"This isn't about Steve Tasker, this isn't about a Liberty Swing; it's about the process," he said.

"I just want them to be honest with their consultation and inform the councillors."

According to council documents, the wheelchair-accessible Sway Fun, which has been chosen for the park, enables children of all abilities to play together.

The playground design includes a flying fox with accessible harnesses, an all-access carousel and a basket swing.

KDA president Bryan Goble said the Liberty Swing had been promoted from the start as a key part of the project and was still the preferred option.

"During the development of the park with shire staff and consultants, another swing was identified as an alternative option," he said.

"We had a core group working on that project who considered both options."

"It was discussed responsibly, we had a vote on it and the vote came up to support the Liberty Swing."

That vote is not referred to in the council agenda.

However, Mr Goble said KDA recognised the work that had gone

into developing the project and was "respectful of the process".

"If the council decide the alternative option, we'll support it," he said.

The \$77,500 to be contributed by the KDA is made up of \$22,500 raised from the public for the project, including \$15,000 donated by the Bus Stop Recycle Shop, and \$35,000 from the former Koondrook Hall Committee, which has been held in trust by the association for future work on the site.

The bulk of funding for the project comes from a \$390,000 grant from the Regional Infrastructure Fund with an additional \$130,000 in council funding.



Keith Pitt

Basin plan protest on hold

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MEMBERS of the Central Murray Environmental Floodplains Group (CMEFG) joined Federal Water Minister Keith Pitt and Member for Mallee Anne Webster in a phone hook-up last week after they expressed anger over the Murray-Darling Basin Plan.

The irrigator-based group said members were irate after Mr Pitt recently refused to entertain a review of the plan and demanded the Federal Government engage with local communities over what it called socioeconomic and environmental damage.

CMEFG had threatened to organise a protest in Barham last Friday if Mr Pitt, Environment Minister Sussan Ley and Dr Webster didn't agree to meet to hear the group's concerns.

After the phone hook-up last Tuesday and the prospect of a meeting, protest plans were put on hold.

CMEFG president Geoff Kendell said members had had "a good hearing" from the federal politicians but were still waiting to find out about the meeting.

Mr Kendell described Mr Pitt as very keen to have "on-ground visits throughout the Murray-Darling Basin".

"He wants to come and have a look but he hasn't given us a commitment," he said.

Mr Kendell said any visit would happen in the new year.

Avian influenza alert eases

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THE alert over outbreak of bird flu at Longview Emu Farm in Tragowel has eased, with the restricted area near Kerang being replaced by a reduced control area this month.

Agriculture Victoria said movement controls would remain in place until it was confident the disease had been eradicated and business could return to normal.

The agency asked all poultry and captive bird owners to continue monitoring their birds for signs of sickness and said they should continue following good biosecurity practices in order to prevent a recurrence

of the disease.

A permit is still required for anyone wanting to buy, sell or move eggs, manure or chickens, whether on the side of the road, on properties, at local shops, online or at markets.

Outbreaks of avian influenza were confirmed in late August at several locations around Victoria.

Four poultry farms near Lethbridge and one near Bairnsdale were also affected.

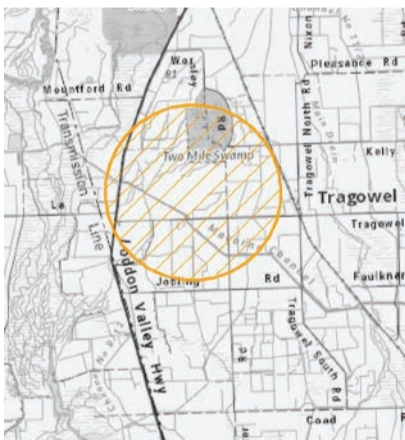
Three eggs farms had a highly pathogenic H7N7 strain, two turkey farms had a low pathogenic H5N2 virus, and at Longview Farm the birds were diagnosed with low pathogenic H7N6 avian influenza.

About 5500 birds at the emu farm were destroyed, about 2000 chicks, followed by about 3500 non-breeding one-year-old birds.

Despite the losses the emu farm's owner, Jeff Long, has reportedly weathered the storm and been able to continue operating.

Agriculture Victoria said it had been undertaking extensive surveillance in the restricted and control areas around each outbreak and across the state and no other infected properties had been detected.

For information on permits, call the customer contact centre on 4334 2715 from Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm.



Agriculture Victoria has reduced the avian influenza control area at Tragowel.



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