

## **Concerned members table petition to remove ATC director - call for end of sales process**

Wednesday, 29 January 2025

The Save Rosehill group confirmed today that a member petition calling for a General Meeting to consider and vote on a motion to remove Mr Peter McGauran as an Australian Turf Club director had been sent to the Club. It represented more than the five per cent threshold of voting members required in order to compel the Board to facilitate such a meeting.

Save Rosehill said evidence that emerged from the NSW Legislative Council inquiry into the proposed sale of Rosehill Gardens had completely destroyed member confidence in the ATC Chairman's leadership. They also called for the process entered into with the NSW Government to be abandoned.

The inquiry's key findings included that there was "conflicting evidence and uncertainty with the financial assumptions behind and the financial viability of the proposal to develop Rosehill Racecourse."

Also, the inquiry not only confirmed that Mr McGauran's only proposed alternative to Rosehill Gardens – a racetrack built around the Brick Pit at Sydney Olympic Park – was fanciful, but also that in the (then) six months since the plan was first publicly mooted, the ATC had not even engaged with Sydney Olympic Park Authority to investigate its feasibility.

Mr McGauran's claim that the vulnerability of the green and golden bell frog, for which the Brick Pit is critical habitat, had "eased considerably" was refuted emphatically by Sydney Olympic Park Authority's CEO, Carla Armanet.

Asked by the Committee Chair whether she agreed with Mr McGauran's claim, Ms Armanet said:

"No, it is a high risk, very small population and we are one of the biggest populations in New South Wales."

Ms Armanet's evidence also addressed a number of serious concerns held by the Committee about a racetrack at Sydney Olympic Park, including the lack of space, the geotechnical stability of the site and the impact on other sensitive environmental areas adjacent to the Brick Pit.

In its report, the Select Committee said it "shares the incredulity of a number of witnesses that the Brick Pit could even have been proposed as an option."

Save Rosehill said that there was simply no justification for the ATC to have embarked upon a MOU to sell the racetrack.

"No-one disputes that two first class racing tracks in metropolitan Sydney are necessary to sustain a viable thoroughbred racing industry in NSW. It is therefore beyond comprehension that the ATC Board entered into a MOU to sell Rosehill Gardens, without first having itself



identified and secured a viable alternative and putting that proposal to members for approval.

“Also, the excuse that government officials had communicated to ATC officials that the sale of the racetrack in its entirety was necessary to create sufficient housing to merit locating a metro station at Rosehill, as justification for rushing into the MOU, was shown to have no basis in fact,” Save Rosehill spokesperson, Ms Julie Ritchie said.

The Upper House inquiry also revealed that it was Racing NSW’s intention to deny the club and its members the true value that would accrue from a sale of its only meaningful asset. According to a disclosure by Racing NSW, which was forced by the Upper House Committee, the minutes of Racing NSW’s board meeting held on 21 November 2023, said this about the proposed sale of Rosehill:

*“Having further considered the matter the Board resolved to endorse the proposal in principle subject to further negotiations with NSW Government. Further, Racing NSW to have oversight over the majority of the proceeds of the sale after providing a reasonable sum to the ATC (with a proviso that those funds only be used for racing and racing infrastructure).”*

However, at the ATC’s AGM on Thursday, 28 November 2024, the ATC’s Chair, Mr Peter McGauran (in response to questioning) was still insisting that the *“bulk of the money will come to us”* and that Racing NSW would be given some accommodation for rest of the industry.

Save Rosehill said that the evidence unearthed by the Inquiry showed unequivocally that the MOU process was a ‘stitch up job,’ designed to disenfranchise ATC members.

“There is overwhelming evidence that the best interests of members and the wider racing industry can only be served by a change in leadership at the ATC and the board withdrawing from this highly flawed, controversial and biased process. The Club must regain control of our own destiny and end this charade now.

“Members can have no faith that any proposal emerging from this MOU process, concerning either the potential revenue the club would receive or the viability of an alternative to Rosehill Gardens in metropolitan Sydney, will have any foundation in reality and that is why the process should be halted now,” Ms Ritchie said.

The Save Rosehill campaign is comprised entirely of ATC members and is supported by many highly respected leaders in the racing industry who are also members of the ATC, including Julia Ritchie (former AJC Vice Chair), Debbie Kepitis, Matt McGrath (former ATC Chair), Frank Cook, Greg Kenny (former STC Vice Chair), Neil Werrett, Jason Abrahams and Annette English.

A number of leading Sydney trainers have already publicly expressed support for the campaign.

The Australian Turf Club is a company limited by guarantee and is governed by the Corporations Act (2001), which requires directors conduct a general meeting on the request of members with at least 5% of the votes that may be cast at the general meeting.

The Select Committee report into the sale of Rosehill is available [HERE](#)