

(DSL logo)

Dr Hanna Jaireth  
Committee Secretary  
Standing Committee on Planning and the Environment  
Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory  
GPO Box 1020  
Canberra ACT 2601

7 March 2005

Dear Dr Jaireth

Thank you for your letter to Deakin Swimming Limited (DSL) dated 24 January 2005. The Board of Directors of DSL wish to take this opportunity to respond to your request for comments on the *Draft Variation to the Territory Plan No. 205 (DV205) – Deakin Block 11, Section 68 (Oasis Leisure Centre) Proposed Office Use*.

In your letter you also mentioned that at some date in the future the Committee intends to hold a public hearing in relation to the proposed variation. I would like to register DSL's interest in appearing before the Committee when the hearings are scheduled. We are conscious that some evidence that we might wish to provide to the Committee may involve questions of commercial confidentiality. If evidence is sought on the commercial activities of DSL regarding the proposed development, then we would respectfully request that this evidence be taken *in camera* so as to protect commercially sensitive information.

Yours sincerely

(Signed)

Anthony Johnston  
Board Chair  
Deakin Swimming Limited

Telephone: 0411 408 479

Enclosure:

# Submission by Deakin Swimming Limited

to the

## Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory Standing Committee on Planning and Environment

Concerning

### Draft Variation to the Territory Plan No. 205 (DV205) Deakin Block 11, Section 68 (Oasis Leisure Centre) Proposed Office Use

March 2005

---

#### Introduction

1. Deakin Swimming Limited (DSL) is a **not for profit**, limited liability company created by swimming professionals with a vision to develop a centre of excellence for swimming and aquatic activity benefiting communities in Canberra and surrounding districts.
2. Established in October 2002 in response to the sudden and unexpected closure of the Deakin Health Spa pool, DSL operates the Oasis Leisure Centre pool under a sub-lease arrangement. DSL is currently in negotiations with the lessee of Unit 17 Block 11 Section 68 Deakin, to renew the sub-lease contingent upon certain guarantees in relation to the safety and viability of operations at the centre. DSL notes that the applicant in the Draft Variation is the lessee.
3. For the benefit of the Committee a more detailed brief on the operations of DSL is contained as an attachment to this submission.

#### DSL Support for the Draft Variation

4. DSL supports the draft variation that would see a new complex comprising modern offices combined with a refurbished pool and aquatic centre. DSL support is contingent upon the requirement that, before the purpose clause for any unit within Units Plan No. 1556 is varied to allow offices, the indoor pool must be refurbished to the satisfaction of the Territory. We understand that an indicative cost of around \$3.7 million (in 2003 prices) has been previously used to estimate the expenditure required to satisfactorily refurbish the facility. DSL would welcome the opportunity to work with the Territory, the lessee of the centre and any other interested parties to ensure that this redevelopment opportunity maximises the benefits to the whole community.
5. Commercial redevelopment of the site provides a tremendous opportunity to rejuvenate a facility that in part is now approaching 30 years of age. The pool in particular is very costly to operate and maintain due to the lack of adequate environmental heating and cooling, the condition of the pumping and filtration equipment, the condition of the pool surrounds and most critically, the safety of the roofing structure over the pool area. Without significant investment the pool has a limited life of perhaps two to three years left before health and safety concerns close the facility. DSL does not wish to see the West Deakin precinct and indeed Canberra more widely, lose a critical piece of swimming infrastructure in the current 50 metre pool. DSL is open to any options or ideas and is willing to work with any competent authority to prevent this from happening.
6. With the right support DSL is of the view that the Oasis pool redevelopment could go beyond the current plans and include such enhancements as;
  - a. A heated toddlers pool that would allow an expansion in learn to swim classes for the very young;
  - b. A hydrotherapy pool to assist with rehabilitation treatment, and

- c. The addition of two lanes to provide the flexibility for simultaneous, multiple users that are not currently catered for in the six lane configuration.

## **Demographic Importance of the Oasis Leisure Centre**

7. In just two years, in a highly competitive market, with ageing infrastructure, DSL has managed to build a broad based community operation catering for young children learning to swim through to elite swimmers competing at national and Olympic level. Our programs offer aqua aerobic classes for all ages and abilities and classes for special needs swimmers from nearby schools and centres catering for the disabled or handicapped. The facility is used extensively by schools and other organisations for swimming competitions and other events. From casual swimming to triathlon and scuba classes the pool is frequented by more than 1500 patrons per week. Some patrons visit the pool for up to 10 training sessions per week leading to approximately 3000 transactions per week on a seasonal average.
8. The swim school at DSL has been in operation for over 2.5 years and is widely recognised as one of the largest operations offering one of the best, if not the best, learn to swim program in the ACT. Loss or closure of the Oasis pool would create substantial difficulties for patrons seeking a year round facility in which to exercise, train and play. The only credible alternatives are significant distances away in Civic, Tuggeranong and Belconnen. At present the shortage of 'lane space' for competitive swimming is a severe problem for amateur swimming clubs affiliated with ACT Swimming and a limiting factor to the growth of competitive swimming in the ACT. The loss of the pool at Oasis would result in at least two of Canberra's oldest and most successful amateur swimming clubs, Telopea and Burley Griffin, facing serious issues about where to train and how to sustain their activities in the long term.

## **Site Parking and Access**

9. DSL has already raised with ACT Planning the need for a bitumen surfaced car park and adequate street lighting in the area opposite the Oasis Centre off King street. This area is especially dangerous for patrons using the pool after dark during the winter months. Current arrangements would not be adequate for both full day parking for office workers and casual parking (for up to 3 hours) for swimmers and casual swimming patrons.

## **Conclusion**

10. As a model, DSL is totally unique in the ACT and NSW – we may well be the only not for profit swimming operation of this size in Australia. As an organisation we are determined to support any initiative to rejuvenate the pool located within the Oasis centre and operate it for the long term for the benefit of swimming and the ACT community more broadly. DSL appreciates the opportunity to make this submission and would be grateful for the chance to meet with the Committee at some stage to further develop the points outlined above.

The Board of Directors  
Deakin Swimming Limited

7 March 2005

## **Background Brief on Deakin Swimming Limited – March 2005**

### **Deakin Swimming Limited Operations**

1. The 50 metre pool in the Oasis Leisure Centre is a critical piece of infrastructure servicing over 1500 clients and several major organisations in the southern central area of Canberra.
  - a. Learn to swim – 1300
    - i. Nursery and pre school classes – 7 mornings per week with a total of 95 classes
    - ii. School age lessons – 5 afternoons and 2 mornings per week with a total of 145 classes
    - iii. Development squads – 7 days per week with a total of 16 classes
  - b. Competitive swimming
    - i. Home to two of the longest established and most successful amateur swimming clubs in the ACT – Telopea and Burley Griffin
    - ii. Five professional coaches, close to 200 swimmers with 20 expected to compete this year at Age Nationals, another 6 to 10 to compete at Open Nationals and in Olympic years, both clubs have sent swimmers to either qualification meets or to compete.
  - c. Aqua
    - i. Ten to 13 classes per week averaging 25 to 35 participants
  - d. Special needs
    - i. For both disabled and handicapped clients wishing to learn to swim or exercise through swimming, DSL has established and run special sessions with qualified teachers and or coaches.
  - e. School programs
    - i. Usually 7 schools over 6 weeks, normally in Term 4 with 90 to 400 children per day
  - f. Public swimming
    - i. Over 130 members on short (3 month), medium (6 month) and long term (12) membership contracts plus 40 to 100 casual swimmers per day
  - g. Triathlon training
    - i. Offered up to 3 times per week involving 25 or more swimmers per session
  - h. Facility hire
    - i. The facility is hired by public, private and special schools, scout clubs, AustSwim, NSW Swimming and individual small businesses to conduct all manner of aquatic activities from scuba lessons to canoeing.
  - i. Employment opportunities
    - i. Directors – 5 (unpaid)
    - ii. Permanent – 2

- iii. Permanent part time - 2
- iv. Part time administration, maintenance and reception - 8
- v. Coaches - 5
- vi. Swimming instructors - 33
- vii. Aqua instructors - 4
- viii. Pool attendants – 9
- ix. Book keeping and accounting services provided off site