

WORKS & SERVICES COMMITTEE 19 FEBRUARY 2008	6
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NORTHERN PRIDE REQUEST FOR MATCH DAY NAMING OF BARLOW PARK

Brett Andrews: BA : 19/9/25-01 : #1649770

RECOMMENDATION:

That Council resolve to:

- a) **Deny a request from the Northern Pride to name the Stadium for their match days over the course of the next three years, and**
- b) **Investigate opportunities for commercial gain for council for more enduring naming rights arrangements for Barlow Park while preserving the link to Mr James Barlow.**

INTRODUCTION:

Cairns City Council are in the process of finalising a Hire Agreement with the *CRGT Northern Pride Rugby League Football Club P/L*. As part of this agreement, the Northern Pride have requested naming rights for Barlow Park on their match days.

BACKGROUND:

The Northern Pride are a newly formed rugby league club who have entered the Queensland Rugby League (QRL) Wizard Cup competition for 2008 and beyond. The Wizard Cup is the premier rugby league competition in Queensland and a stepping stone towards the National Rugby League (NRL). The Northern Pride are a feeder club for the North Queensland Cowboys (based in Townsville) who compete in the NRL.

Barlow Park was named after James Aloysius Barlow. Mr Barlow was an alderman with Cairns City Council from 1955-1970. After volunteering as club secretary of Brothers Rugby League Club, he moved over to Cairns District Rugby League (CDRL) where he was the secretary/treasurer for 14 years. He holds life membership with the CDRL, NQRL and QRL. He is also a life member of the Cairns Show Association and Cairns Juvenile Eisteddfod and has been a board member of community groups including, Calvary Hospital's auxiliary, St Vincent De Paul, Cairns Penny Savings Bank and the Cairns Region Organ Society. He was awarded an OAM in 1988 and it was the Cairns Show Association who recommended the park be named after him. At last report he was living at Farnorha, a war veteran's home, after suffering a stroke in July 2006.

COMMENT:

The Northern Pride are looking for alternate revenue streams, and they have, it would appear, identified the opportunity of naming the stadium, presumably after their major sponsor (CRGT), as a way to do this. The specific wording of the clause they have requested as part of the hire agreement between Council and the Northern Pride is “16.1 Northern Pride has the rights to “NAME THE STADIUM” for Northern Pride events and games”. The Northern Pride has 10 scheduled home games for 2008.

The case for allowing this request is that it provides an added professional touch to the Northern Pride events, which will reflect positively on the Barlow Park precinct. There is also the opportunity to charge the user group, the Northern Pride, for the right to do this thus providing an opportunity for further revenue for Council. It should be pointed out however that Northern Pride have not offered any amount in relation to the naming request. Their payment to council would be limited to the \$18,000 hire agreement charge for 2008.

The case against is that it could create backlash in the community if the naming of the ground is changed for commercial purposes from that of a well respected member of the community whose contribution was not just limited to sport and recreation but to the entire community throughout the last 60 years.

If the Pride are allowed to change the name of the facility, the same opportunity would potentially have to be offered to other key user groups. This could result in the facility having as many as four different names over the course of the year which is far from ideal from a community perspective.

Finally, allowing user groups to name the stadium for their own use, takes away from the Council any opportunity it has to investigate the opportunity to create its own opportunity to develop a corporate relationship with a third party for long term naming rights to the stadium.

CONSIDERATIONS:**Corporate and Operational Plans:**

The matter at hand has no direct link to any of Councils Operational or Corporate plans.

Statutory:

Barlow Park is Crown land of which Council is the trustee. Sport and Recreation Queensland have been consulted, and whilst further investigation is taking place, it is their opinion that it is Council's right to approve, or deny such requests.

Policy:

The matter at hand does not appear to be covered by any existing Council policy. Council does have two policies which cover related matters, but they do not appear to cover this issue. They are Sponsorship of Council Activities and Assets #665829, and Naming of Parks/Reserves #665830.

Financial and Risk:

For major Sports facilities, companies pay considerable amounts for naming rights (either for particular events or for a set period of time), so there is an opportunity from a corporate perspective for Council to develop to new revenue strand. However Northern Pride has not made such an offer in this instance.

There is the potential risk of community disenchantment in the event of naming rights more so if no payment accompanies it.

Sustainability:

Whilst the request of the Northern Pride does impact on Council's opportunity to investigate opportunities to develop corporate relationships relating to Barlow Park, and hence possible new revenue streams to go towards funding for community facilities, it has minimal other sustainability impacts.

CONSULTATION:

Council submitted to the Northern Pride a draft hire agreement for the use of Barlow Park for the next three seasons. The Northern Pride returned the draft with some amendments they requested, one such amendment was to have the right to "NAME THE STADIUM" for Northern Pride events and games.

The Department of Sport and Recreation Queensland has also been consulted as Barlow Park is Crown land.

A report into naming rights of stadiums compiled by the Australian Sports Commission was also reviewed as was an article on Stadium Sponsorship by Kim Skildum – Reid (Author of 'Power Sponsorship').

OPTIONS:

Option one is to deny this request by the Northern Pride and investigate Council's own opportunities to rename the Barlow Park. The key benefit for each party (CCC and a third party) would be that the funds that the third party contribute would go toward improving the Barlow precinct in a way that benefits all members of the community, i.e. decrease in hire charges and casual use fees, further upgrades, etc. The Jim Barlow name could still be kept by naming the main grandstand or West Barlow Park after him if it was so desired. Such an approach may attract more widespread acceptance in the community than the proposed received as the commercial party would be seen to be contributing to the community.

Option two is to permit the Northern Pride's request with a nominated amount added. This amount would need to be substantial or further user groups will also seek to have the park named differently for their events also, which will see Barlow lose much of its identity.

Option three is to permit the Northern Pride's request at no charge with the condition added that council reserve the right to terminate the arrangement with minimal notice in the event of a more enduring (whole of year) commercial naming rights arrangement be negotiated by Council

Option four is for the request to be denied for the name change and for the status quo to remain and for the precinct to remain known as Barlow Park indefinitely.

CONCLUSION:

The preferred option is to deny this request by the Northern Pride to rename the ground for their match days and events and investigate Council's own opportunities to rename Barlow Park some time in the future. The key benefit for each party (Cairns Council and the third party) would be that the funds that the third party contribute would go toward improving the Barlow Precinct in a way that benefits all members of the community, i.e. decrease in hire charges and casual use fees, further upgrades, etc. The Jim Barlow name could still be kept by naming the main grandstand or West Barlow Park after him if it was so desired.

ATTACHMENTS:

Nil

Brett Andrews

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