



7.1 Petition - Fishermen's Bend Gymnastics Club (FBGC) Seeking Urgent Funding for Long Term Facility

A Petition containing signatures 1350 was received via change.org.

The Petition states the following:-

Why we urge the City of Port Phillip (CoPP) and the State Government to co fund a long-term venue for Port Melbourne-based Fishermen's Bend Gymnastics Club (FBGC):

*Not-for-profit FBGC has an outstanding reputation of providing invaluable year-round services to the local community for over 70 years and is the **only dedicated gymnastics club in the City of Port Phillip.***

FBGC has the largest child participation rate amongst community sporting clubs in Port Phillip with over 650 weekly members and thousands more actively participating in holiday programs, events and Kinder/School incursions; over 25,000 visits per year.

Children from diverse backgrounds and all ages and abilities participate in FBGC programs from grassroots to competitive state level – its ALP3 squad won the Victorian Championships last year. FBGC is held in high esteem in the gymnastics industry having previously been awarded Gymnastics Victoria's Club of the Year (Medium Category) for two consecutive years.

Through careful management, FBGC is in a strong financial position but commercial rent in Port Phillip continues to rise and FBGC will be priced out of the market, resulting in an **imminent closure if a more permanent venue is not secured.**

Most other sporting clubs in Port Phillip pay only \$100-\$3K per annum rent* (*CoPP Register of Leases) on council facilities whilst FBGC pays close to \$200,000 per annum as we do not have the benefit of being accommodated in council facilities. **Our rent should be going back to Council and the local community and not a commercial landlord.**

Each relocation of FBGC costs the club close to \$80,000*. We have already been forced to relocate three times over several years due to rent increases/facility works. The last rent increase was \$30k during Covid and forced our club to find an alternative premises. This is a huge financial and emotional burden on FBGC and **a waste of resources which would be better spent upskilling staff, investing in equipment, and further developing programs for our community.** The lease at our current premises in Salmon Street is secured until mid-2025 and thereafter apartments will be built on site, necessitating another relocation of FBGC.

FBGC members are **local residents** (Port Phillip and City of Melbourne including Southbank and Docklands), and it can be disheartening seeing funding go towards clubs that pay players from outside Port Phillip to play professional sport **whilst FBGC struggles to pay rent to provide children with life-long skills.**

Gymnastics is a crucial foundation sport that every child should ideally participate in from a young age; it has the second highest participation rate (behind swimming) in Australia from 1-8yrs of age and the third highest rate from 9-11yrs of age (*Ausplay 2022). **Gymnastics sets children up with skills that are transferable to any other sport and life in general.**

MEETING OF THE PORT PHILLIP CITY COUNCIL 4 OCTOBER 2023



FBGC is asking for an **urgent and equal level of support** that other clubs and sporting codes have when it comes to allocation of crown/council land and funding for capital works. This is particularly important when FBGC has the largest community club participation rate of children in the municipality. **Predominantly female youth sporting clubs and sports like Gymnastics continue to be disadvantaged when there isn't a level playing field in terms of funding.**

FBGC prides itself on its **inclusiveness and accessibility** and has forged excellent working relationships with various community stakeholders including South Melbourne Community Chest, Launch Housing and Team Sports 4 All. **Collectively, we subsidise fees and offer classes for marginalised, vulnerable and disadvantaged children** and offer one on one and **all abilities sessions for children with special needs**. FBGC also provides **employment/coaching opportunities for all ages** and our local youths particularly benefit from being mentored as part of our Leadership Program.

FBGC can further accommodate **more senior groups, special needs groups and school groups if a long-term purpose-built facility is secured**. City of Port Phillip would hugely benefit from a purpose-built facility that is a community hub, with FBGC running alongside an adjoining maternal health centre/kindergarten/school and meeting rooms/wellness space as **population growth will further increase demand for these services**.

People want their rate dollars to deliver quality services at a local level and FBGC is exemplary of the type of service that delivers long lasting physical, mental, emotional, and social benefits for local children and subsequently, **better health outcomes** for them as adults and a more **engaged and thriving local community**. A purpose-built facility will ensure that FBGC is sustainable and can continue to provide affordable programs that set children up with skills for life whilst also improving accessibility for people of all ages and abilities to improve their physical, mental, emotional, and social wellbeing. **FBGC has been overlooked for too long and is deserving of a long-term home.**

We urgently ask you to please sign and share our petition via email and social media.

Please also contact City of Port Phillip Councillors and Mayor, Heather Cunsolo, and local MP, Nina Taylor, as they have the power to rectify this inequality of funding and invest in facilities that will provide FBGC and the local community with a long-term solution.

References:

*Ausplay 2021/22

*City of Port Phillip Register of Leases

*\$80k includes the storage, re-location and re-installation of equipment and cost of shutting down classes for weeks/months, and refurbishing toilets that are fit for purpose etc.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

1. Thanks the petitioners for submitting their petition.
2. Receives and notes the Petition and provides a response to a future Council meeting.

ATTACHMENTS

Nil