

Submission to CoGG RE-

Portarlington Community Infrastructure Scoping Study - Community engagement phase 2

Portarlington Neighbourhood House (PNH) is based on a ‘club’ model. PNH is the third largest club in town, after the *Golf Club* and the *Portarlington Demons Football Netball Club.* Our membership has grown from 600 to more than 700 in 2022, and it’s still growing.

At present PNH provides more than 50 activities per week, encompassing over 80 hours, mostly to retirees. Our club’s aspiration, under our vision and mission, is to extend the program to all age demographics, and to work together with similar community organisations to meet member and community needs. Our infrastructure prevents us meeting current need, and meeting our aspirations for the community.

**PNH Vision** Active and vibrant participation in the community

**PNH Mission** To provide opportunity for learning, and social and community connection

CoGG’s draft report is scant and vague. This community study appears to have been designed to answer the **study question -** **does Portarlington need a new community hub?**

Given that PNH is the only organisation in the study with a significant infrastructure problem, the whole-of-community view is not necessarily relevant to PNH. **PNH’s question is a different one - “What is the solution to PNH infrastructure needs”?**

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| **PNH’s reply to CoGG in response to the ‘draft report’ is in three parts, as follows:** 1. PNH requests that CoGG initiate URGENT redevelopment of Parks Hall to meet PNH’s short to medium term infrastructure needs, ensuring that PNH conducts its program in one venue.
2. PNH members support a new purpose-built community hub in Portarlington in the longer-term.
3. PNH UGENTLY seeks an equitable and non-discriminatory leasing arrangement with CoGG for our current and future needs.
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1. **Redevelopment of Parks Hall**

The ‘network model’ seems to mean sharing facilities. PNH clearly requires its own facility with capacity for its growing program. Our club needs to conduct the majority of our activities under the same roof to support our club ethos, create a ‘home’ feel, and maintain a cohesiveness. Scattering our club members across a network of buildings is not acceptable. You would not ask a football club to use several geographically dispersed ovals as their ‘home’.

PNH currently needs suitable spaces in one place to ensure our club:

* Has the ability to offer all (or the vast majority of) activities in the one venue to create a greater sense of belonging among PNH’s large and growing membership
* Achieves operational efficiency by having one venue through which all members pass regularly, with our administrative personnel on-hand to manage our activities.

Considering CoGG-leased facilities reviewed under this study, all other leasing organisations generally have adequate suitable space (e.g. PDFNC, Portarlington Cricket Club, and Senior Citizens Centre).

Clearly, the exception is PNH.

PNH cannot adequately develop its program due to lack of suitable space. PNH currently has only two suitable and affordable rooms. This is not adequate even for our current program. PNH estimates that our growing program requires six rooms of varying sizes.

PNH is looking for an urgent infrastructure solution. At this stage all options to solving PNH’s infrastructure needs should be still open. However, for expediency, **PNH would like to explore redevelopment of the Parks Hall to suit our current and mid-term future needs.**

There are obviously many concerns to overcome in the redevelopment of Parks Hall, e.g. car parking for our aging members, accessibility to rooms, partitioning the hall with soundproofing, suitability of rooms, and heating costs. However, all obstacles could be addressed.

1. **Purpose-built community hub**

In twenty to twenty-five years, as the percentage of retirees peaks in Portarlington and the population in all age demographics grows (according to your population data), community needs will be very different.

A community hub is the long-term preference for our members and the community in the longer-term. The network model is not supported.

A Portarlington community hub will strengthen community identity and cohesion, continuing to build a vibrant and healthier community as the population of Portarlington grows. It should provide council services such as library, support networks, an art gallery, as well as support community organisations and community development.

1. **Leasing Model**

Our current leasing arrangement, especially with regard to the main hall, is not suitable, and is discriminatory when compared to other organisations.

Other organisations reviewed in this study have different leasing arrangements with CoGG. Equitable leasing models have not been considered in the study.

Under our current leasing arrangement:

* PNH pays far too much under our ‘free lease’ for a hall that is unsuitable for our use. The cost of using the main hall is inhibiting current use of that space when compared to cost of using the Parkviewor Bayview Rooms. This will limit our program going into 2023. The current cost of using the hall space under our ‘free lease’ is not viable.
* PNH cannot sub-lease to increase our income, and keep our fees low, as other organisations can - this is not equitable.
* PNH does not always get to use our facility when needed, and is not compensated when CoGG suspends our program for repairs or to accommodate other community groups. PNH loses income opportunity when the program is suspended, especially in peak hours.
* If PNH uses other facilities, it is not operationally cost-effective.
* PNH pays its staff and runs the office at a cost, even when the program is suspended, or there is not enough available space for our program. This is not operationally effective.

When comparing to other organisations using CoGG facilities, this funding model is discriminatory.

The leasing model should be included in the study to ensure equitable opportunity.

PNH seeks opportunity to URGENTLY negotiate a more appropriate and equitable lease agreement that will support our current and future needs.

**Assessment of Parks Hall against CoGG’s Social Infrastructure Planning Objectives**

The City of Greater Geelong’s Social Infrastructure Policy has identified five objectives to guide its planning, provision and investment in social infrastructure. PNH’s use of Parks Hall does not currently meet these objectives, as described in the table below. PNH’s infrastructure needs and discriminatory leasing arrangements need **URGENT** CoGG attention: for short-term and long-term solutions.

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| **Objective**  | **Description**  | **PNH Assessment against objective** |
| **Equitable**  | Fair access to facilities and services that are needed across the municipality including healthy, safe and inclusive places, spaces and services.  | With over 700 members, representing almost 25% of seniors in Portarlington, PNH does NOT have equitable access to facilities to provide our program, compared to other organisations in Portarlington. We do not have enough suitable rooms for our program. In addition, our leasing arrangement with CoGG is discriminatory.  |
| **Accessible**  | Accessible for all abilities, affordable and easy for people to get to.  | Parks Hall is not very accessible for our members, e.g. lack of parking especially disabled parking; access to amenities is via main hall; access to our office is not easy to find, too exposed to weather, and not very welcoming; access to Bayview Room is actually a safety issue for many of our members.Our lease agreement, particularly regarding the ‘free lease’ of main hall, inhibits our ability to keep fees low and affordable.  |
| **Adaptable**  | Flexible to meet the changing needs of the community and can be used for more than one purpose.  | Parks Hall has not adapted to changing needs. Parks Hall is not suitable for its current users. |
| **Integrated**  | Integrated with other services where possible and a place for people to come together.  | The leasing/booking arrangement for Parks Hall inhibits positive integration.  |
| **Sustainable**  | Environmentally, fiscally, socially and culturally responsible, well designed, effectively managed and usage is optimised, now and into the future.  | Usage is not optimised due to limitations of the facility. For PNH use of main hall is not fiscally effective. For CoGG the centre is probably not fiscally effective. This inhibits the social and cultural potential of the facility. Management of the facility is not always effective, particularly the booking system. Parks Hall probably does not meet current design standards. |

**In Summary**

Of those organisations considered in the study which lease from CoGG, PNH is the only club which has a significant problem in regard to meeting its operational needs, from both infrastructure and leasing perspectives.

Parks Hall is currently not a suitable facility for PNH.

The immediate needs of PNH are separate from the long-term community aspiration of a Portarlington Community Hub. **Our members support redevelopment of Parks Hall to meet our URGENT infrastructure needs. In the longer-term, PNH does not support the ‘network model’ put forward by the draft report, but supports the creation of a purpose-built community hub.**

Our current leasing arrangement, especially with regard to the main hall, is not suitable, and is discriminatory when compared to other organisations. PNH’s infrastructure needs and discriminatory leasing arrangements need **URGENT** CoGG attention: for short-term and long-term solutions.

PNH looks forward to working with CoGG on a solution to our issues.

*Submitted by -*

Margaret Belfrage

President, Portarlington Neighbourhood House,

On behalf of PNH members

**PNH Consultation process**

This submission was subjected to a consultation process with PNH members, and hence represents the opinions of the majority of PNH’s more than 700 members.

A first draft of a submission was sent to all members for consultation. Many members attended a forum on Wednesday 30th November and contributed to lively discussion that informed this final submission. Some members also made a written submission to the PNH Committee of Management regarding the first and second drafts, and their thoughts have also been reflected in the final submission.

Attachment - PNH’s comments re the ‘draft report’s’ pillar opportunities implementation

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| PILLAR OPPORTUNITY IMPLEMENTATION  | PILLAR OPPORTUNITY IMPLEMENTATION  | PNH COMMENTS  |
| Building functionality Modifications to achieve contemporary building standards, including accessibility  | Consider building improvement works at CoGG owned/managed community facilities to: * Improve programming opportunities (i.e. facilitate after hours use).
* Address concerns with accessibility and functionality
 | PNH supports URGENT redevelopment of Parks Hall, or another venue, to meet PNH current needs. PNH facility needs are listed below |
| and ensure each facility is fit for its purpose and contributes to the network of facilities across Portarlington. | Advocate for building improvement works at State Government or privately owned/managed community facilities to: * Improve programming opportunities (i.e. facilitate after hours use, social meeting spaces for informal interactions and meetings).
* Address concerns with accessibility and functionality
 | PNH supports, in principle, development of privately owned or State Government owned facilities.However, this study finding is not detailed enough. What is actually required by the community? Where are the details?Which facilities are being targeted, e.g. church facilities, Guide Hall? Should these facilities be explored for PNH use?  |
|  | As the largest building within the study area, the demonstrated importance to the community and opportunities for improvement, the following are suggested at Parks Hall: * Expansion of the building footprint towards Newcombe Street to enhance building presentation, improve accessibility, provide compliant amenities, and provide a casual foyer area for information and socialisation.
* Provision of new spaces including larger office, wet activity room, technology room, informal meeting space (lounge area) and a combined library services / arts display space.
* Internal refurbishment of existing rooms to improve accessibility, functionality, heating and storage.
* Improvements to the main hall to enhance multi-functionality i.e. lighting, acoustics, partitioning.
* Enhance the current library space to provide opportunity to increase the library service offering within Portarlington (in conjunction with the mobile library service).
 | PNH supports redevelopment of Parks Hall as our ‘home’.PNH looks forward to exploring all options to extend Parks Hall.PNH has requested:* A central café-type area
* 6 community/meetings rooms, capacity 10-30 people, for creative or quiet activity. This should include 1 wet room. All rooms with technology access.
* At least 1 larger space for exercise and large social activities (with good light)
* Indoor-outdoor spaces for BBQs etc. and outdoor functions, e.g. a covered large deck
* Occasional crèche facilities (for parents attending a PNH activity)
* An office that is large enough for 5 office personnel, and at the front of our venue
* Adequate car parking (including disabled car parking)
* Casual meeting space (preferably with small café and access to our book borrowing)
* A secure art exhibition space – NOT a foyer
* Space to display PNH memorabilia (to establish a club feel) – NOT a foyer.
* Plenty of storage space with good access (internal and external)
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| Enhanced programming | Explore greater use of facilities in off-peak times, particularly in the evening. | *PNH Strategic Plan ’22-26* aims to extend our program into the evenings. However, Parks Hall is not currently conducive to encourage participation in a welcoming, modern, bright environment. The Main Hall is also not cost-effective, unless the activity is for a large number of people. Bayview Room does not have acceptable, safe access.PNH prefers to keep its activities in one venue. |
|  | Explore increase of programs specifically targeted to babies, children and young people. | *PNH Strategic Plan ’22*-26 aims to target all age demographics to meet community need. However, Parks Hall is not suitable as described above, and there are not enough rooms at present for activities in peak time. Any redevelopment needs to consider more rooms. (Most of our members are not convinced that partitioning the main hall will achieve the right space as there will be very little natural light for daytime activities, and it might not resolve noise issues.) |
| Enhancing the programming of existing spaces to respond to  | Encourage community access to the pavilion at the Portarlington Recreation Reserve outside of peak sporting times | This already happens, but does not resolve the PNH problem. It is too far removed from the heart of town to encourage use by PNH, unless it is a joint activity. |
| community building opportunities | Review the system for booking rooms at Parks Hall to reduce complexity of booking spaces by the community. Led by CoGG  | PNH is getting mixed messages from COGG regarding booking systems and leasing arrangements. This needs lots more collaborative work, a lot more clarity, and a workable solution. |
|  | Explore a coordinated approach to programming community facilities in Portarlington. Examples of this could include:* Sharing of facilities, and use of alternate venues for programs, outside of the facility normally used by each group.
* Directory of community spaces made available to assist promotion and knowledge of options
* Managers of facilities working together and sharing information to improve programming and identify opportunities.
* Identifying opportunities to maximise utilisation by providing the right programs at the right time.
* Creation of partnerships for joint marketing and communications, surveys, funding/grant opportunities.
* Seeking a shared resource to support the above.
 | *PNH Strategic Plan ’22*-26 aims to form partnerships for a more coordinated approach to community resources.PNH deserves to be treated as one club with one space. While PNH is happy to share a communal space, it isunfair that PNH loses prime time to other organisations without compensation. PNH still has overhead obligations when our income capacity is reduced. This is discriminatory practice, and does not meet CoGG Social Infrastructure objectives.PNH is not the Manager of a facility like other organisations in the study. PNH does not gain monetarily from sharing a facility, as other organisations do. This is not an equitable system and discriminates against PNH. PNH should be able to keep fees low through sub-lease of a facility as other organisation can do.  |