

STUDIES INTO MOTOR SPORTS SITE SELECTION (INCLUDING A DRAGWAY)

The issue of noise from Fairbairn Park affecting The Ridgeway, Oaks Estate and Queanbeyan became such a concern in 1992 that a study was carried out which looked at the noise levels at Fairbairn Park and the feasibility of moving those motorsports activities which generated excessive noise.

A feasibility study was undertaken which looked at the possibility of relocating some of the activities to Fairbairn Park. The study noted that some activities were not suitable for either location and recommended that the availability and feasibility of a more remote site be investigated.

In 1993 Matrix Planning Consultants carried out an evaluation of ACT motor sports options. The consultants included a dragway as part of the motor sports facility, and discussions were held with the Canberra Drag Racing Club to understand the requirements of a dragway.

In considering possible sites, the consultants determined that the following locational requirements were necessary:

- Proximity to central Canberra
- Distance from residential areas
- Good road access
- Proximity to visitor accommodation
- Proximity to transport nodes
- Proximity to workshop base.

Issues such as site characteristics, topography, vegetation, climatic and geological conditions were considered at each location.

The Matrix study considered eight potential motor sports sites:

- Kowen Block 87 (Murryong);
- Hidden Valley (part of the Majura Field Firing Range);
- Sutton Road (north of Fairbairn Park and partly in the Majura Field Firing Range);
- Fairbairn East (part of the RAAF Base);
- Pialligo (part of the Department of Defence's Airport Protection Zone);
- Majura;
- Hume (land being proposed as a waste recycling facility);
- Williamsdale (approx. 3km north of the village).

The Matrix study short-listed Fairbairn East, Pialligo and Majura. Of these, Majura was judged to be the preferred location for a motor sports facility.

Subsequently it was agreed that further modelling should be undertaken on a limited number of sites. In January 1994, it was announced that an acoustic study was to be undertaken of four short listed sites to examine whether motor sports activities would comply with ACT noise control legislation. The four sites were Fairbairn

East, Majura, Pialligo and Williamsdale.

In early 1994 the noise consultants Renzo Tonin and Associates Pty Ltd were commissioned to carry out an acoustic study at each of the four short-listed sites. The study did not include possible noise issues that might result from a dragway.

The preliminary results of the study indicated that for all motor sport activity operating simultaneously at Fairbairn East, Pialligo and Williamsdale, there were no practical measures of noise reduction that could be implemented to ensure that noise levels in the nearest suburban areas or nearest rural residences could meet the criteria set out in the *Noise Control Act 1998*.

The Williamsdale site had the additional problem that noise generated from the site would affect some properties located across the border in New South Wales.

In August 1994, a Working Group was established to further examine the issue of a possible future motor sports site in the ACT. The Working Group comprised representatives from Environment ACT, Planning and Land Management, ACT Forests, Sport and Recreation and the ACT Motorsport Council.

Taking into account previous studies that had been undertaken the Working Group recommended that the next stage of the study should be limited to examining the Majura site and two sites in Kowen (Block 1 – “Felled Timbers” and Block 87 “Murryong”).

As part of this work Renzo Tonin and Associates Pty Ltd were commissioned to undertake further acoustic analysis of the Majura site and examine both of the Kowen sites. The study also examined Fairbairn Park as it was recognised that in any further environmental planning assessment on a potential new site, comparisons with the existing site would need to be made.

Preliminary studies were undertaken on ecological, planning and cultural/heritage resource issues. The Working Group concluded that both Kowen sites were unsuitable for the complete range of motorsports activities, mainly because of cross-border impacts, and particularly under adverse wind and temperature inversion conditions.

The Working Group reported in October 1996 that the Majura site may be suitable for most motor sports activities but a range of factors needed to be considered:

- Site acquisition
- Costs of constructing the noise amelioration barriers
- Possible cost of acquiring noise affected properties
- Provision of infrastructure eg roads, sewer, stormwater
- Costs of constructing the facility
- Possible environmental, ecological and heritage constraints.

In 2001, the ACT Government provided funds to the ACT Motorsports Council to undertake a study, culminating in a draft Preliminary Assessment, for a proposed international standard dragway facility to be located on Block 52 Majura. The site is immediately south of the previously identified Majura site. The Government ruled the

site unsuitable owing to unresolved leasing issues, the high cost of development and the need for additional noise studies.

In July 2004, additional acoustic analysis was completed on Block 52 Majura and the report is currently being evaluated.