

26 July, 2018

Eden Park forced to withdraw LifePod Appeal concert application

Eden Park regrets to announce that due to time constraints and the prospect of substantial Environment Court costs, it has been forced to withdraw its application for the LifePod Appeal concert, planned for Waitangi Day (6 February) 2019.

Auckland Council's Unitary Plan provides for up to six concerts in a 12-month period at Eden Park as a "discretionary activity". Discretionary activities require resource consent for each individual activity. This is the first time since the introduction of the Unitary Plan that The Eden Park Trust has tested the framework. It has become clear that it is impossible to practically give effect in a timely or affordable manner to these Unitary Plan provisions.

The Trust's lawyers, Meredith Connell, advised that the process (under the Resource Management Act) to obtain a consent for the concert is likely to stretch beyond October and cost in excess of \$750,000, not including The Trust's legal costs.

Trustees of The Eden Park Trust met this week and concluded that it is not viable for the stadium to continue with its application due to the likely costs and timeframe for court proceedings. The Trust hoped it could work with the minority who objected to reach an agreement for this one-off worthy event. This would have avoided the Environment Court process but unfortunately that was not to be the case.

Direct referral of the application to the Environment Court provided a shortened timeframe to reach a decision but The Trust would be liable for the costs of proceedings, including consultants' fees, Council and court costs and the cost of advisors to assist submitters wishing to be heard. The Trust has now been advised these costs are likely to exceed \$750,000 and including legal fees would likely surpass \$1m.

The Trust consulted widely with its local community, various neighbourhood associations, Council, Local Board, business associations and other stakeholders prior to submitting the application and throughout the process. Consultation with the community included making its environmental planners, traffic, acoustic and lighting specialists available to address any concerns as well as bringing locals together through stadium tours, a 'Friday Family Fish 'n' Chips' evening and other events to inspire open conversation and share the recent independent research.

Eden Park encouraged all neighbours to have their say during the process. Three-quarters of submissions to the resource consent process support the LifePod Appeal concert and UMR Research shows that 91% of Aucklanders and 87% of people living nearby also support it.

The Trust acknowledges that Eden Park is iconic and at the centre of many special memories for both Kiwis and visitors to our country. It is unsurprising that the future usage of the stadium has evoked some emotion however the Trust was disappointed to see personal attacks play out in the public domain.

MEDIA RELEASE

Under the Trust Deed, The Eden Park Trust exists to “promote, operate and develop Eden Park as a high quality multi-purpose stadium for the use and benefit of rugby and cricket... as well as other sporting codes and other recreational, musical, and cultural events for the benefit of the public of the region”. With the overwhelming support over recent years, the Trust saw the opportunity to optimise the Park for wider community benefit and bring new content to the city, including concerts.

The Eden Park Trust’s Chairman Doug McKay says, “We get no financial support from the Council or the Government and more activity would help to make us financially sustainable. Our neighbourhood and local community remain at the core of Eden Park and we are thrilled the majority of our neighbours supported this concert. Independent research tells us that 83% of locals are in favour of six concerts as a permitted activity. We will continue to consult them closely and reiterate that we have heard their voices and we will keep exploring greater utilisation to bring new content to New Zealand’s national stadium for them and our wider community.”

The LifePod Appeal concert was to be headlined by an international act and the promoter agreed to Eden Park as a venue due to its iconic status, superior capacity, public transport connectivity, proximity to the city and amenities that cater to all demographics.

Chief Executive Nick Sautner says, “Although we respect the process in place, to bring events like concerts to our stadium we also have to work in with promoters’ lead times which include confirming the venue as well as securing ticket on-sale dates. Unfortunately this time it was unworkable but we now look to the future to ensure this half a billion dollar asset can host unique and memorable events for the city.”

The Eden Park Trust will now consider its options to ensure it can deliver the best possible entertainment offering, whilst achieving financial sustainability, and seek opportunities to deliver that to our wider community in ways that are sensitive to the views of our local neighbourhood.

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About Eden Park

Eden Park is New Zealand's national stadium and a globally-iconic arena, located in central Auckland.

Its rich history and profile is unmatched by any other stadium in the country. From its beginnings as a cricket ground in 1903, Eden Park became the primary venue for major summer and winter sport in Auckland when in 1913, the owner, Auckland Cricket, leased winter use of the ground to Auckland Rugby.

A Deed of Trust establishing Auckland Cricket and Auckland Rugby as the beneficial owners of Eden Park was signed in 1926 and has since been enshrined in legislation. Most notably remembered for hosting the 1987 and 2011 Rugby World Cup Finals, Eden Park remains the home of both Auckland Cricket and Auckland Rugby as it has been for more than a century.

Eden Park Trust operates as a statutory not-for-profit body corporate, registered as a charitable trust with the Charities Commission. Its objectives are to promote, operate and develop Eden Park as a high quality multi-purpose stadium for the use and benefit of rugby and cricket as well as other sporting codes and other recreational, musical, and cultural events for the benefit of the public of the Auckland region.

Each year, more than half a million sports and entertainment fans from around the world visit Eden Park. The stadium successfully hosts sell-out crowds of up to 50,000 on match days and hosts more than 1,000 non-match day functions per year.