

Herald Sun

INNER EAST



© Camberwell Green campaigner Victor Franco with his children Pascal and Joaquim, both aged 9, at Boroondara Council's Reserve Rd carpark. Picture: Norm Oorloff

INNER EAST

Boroondara Council rejects community proposal to turn its Reserve Rd carpark into public parkland

Rebecca DiNuzzo, Progress Leader

November 21, 2019 6:00am

 Subscriber only

A dream to create open parkland in the heart of Camberwell has been left in tatters after Boroondara Council rejected the community-backed proposal.

Camberwell Green supporters met at the council's Camberwell offices on November 18 to argue for the Reserve Rd carpark, which is used by council staff, to be turned into green open space, but councillors voted five to three not to support the park, even going so far as to say if the State Government, which owns the land, chose to turn the carpark into open space without their consent the council would not pay for its maintenance.

The carpark was originally a park before the council turned it into parking in 2010; it was earmarked for public recreation in the 1800s by the government of the day.

Families, sport clubs, politicians and the adjacent Camberwell Primary School had thrown their support behind the plan.

Camberwell Green campaigner Victor Franco slammed councillors after the meeting for their aggressive questioning of park supporters, which he said was an attempt to "demean" and "belittle" them.

He also said the meeting was a "farce" designed to "give the illusion of public consultation", when really he thought the councillors had already made up their minds not to support the proposal.



► The council's Reserve Rd carpark has a two-hour time limit but council staff, who have permits, are allowed to park all day.
Picture Norm Oorloff

More than 15 people contacted the *Progress Leader* following the meeting to complain about councillors' conduct, and Mr Franco vowed to fight on for the park despite the decision.

Camberwell's Mary Drost, who was at the meeting, said she supported the council's decision to retain the carpark.

Mayor Cynthia Watson rejected suggestions attendees at the meeting were bullied, and said councillors questioned park supporters to gain further clarity on their proposal.

She also questioned if the park was genuinely meant to create open space for the whole community or just Camberwell Primary School.

MORE:

"The proposal for a change of use on the site ... at face value looks to be one that provides additional space for the community, however, in reality, it is driven by the desire from the primary school to increase their play area," Cr Watson said.

Camberwell Primary principal Janet Gale has previously said the park would be open to all members of the public not used just by the school.

Two councillors were absent from Monday's meeting.

rebecca.dinuzzo@news.com.au