



In 2005, Mark Webber drove an F1 car over the bridge at the modest speed of 90km/hr'.

**Sydney wants our grand prix!** On October 22, it was reported that the NSW government was seriously considering a bid to take the grand prix from Melbourne and stage it around Sydney's famous harbour, Monaco style. **What a great idea....** for the Victorian economy and its environment, and for Albert Park sports clubs and the park's many other users. Not according to our premier, Dan Andrews, who said that the grand prix is going nowhere. SAP disagrees.... the Melbourne grand prix event is going rapidly towards a two billion dollar operating loss and a falling popularity which has to be concealed by the issue of 'estimated' attendance numbers.

This is the third time that we have heard of a threat by Sydney to take the race from Melbourne. In 2005 there was a plan to stage the event at Homebush, then in 2015 premier Mike Baird set aside \$200 million hoping to stage the race from 2021. The planned route was through The Rocks area and across the Harbour Bridge. That was never going to happen as the problems in building a circuit through one of the city's busiest thoroughfares (including tram tracks) were insurmountable.

It would appear that these plans have been made without any assessment of the real benefits from the event, as occurred when Victoria 'stole' the Adelaide grand prix. It's the same story: the event will showcase the city and generate extra tourism. Totally forgotten (or disregarded) is Sydney's experience with the 2000 Olympics, after which tourism declined.

*(Ref. 'The Sydney Olympics, seven years on', James Geisecke/John Madden, 2007)*

**300<sup>th</sup> SAPIENS** The first issue of this newsletter appeared in May 1995 as a single double sided printed sheet. It stated: "Don't get the idea that we are totally opposed to the Grand Prix. WE ARE NOT! We are against holding the Grand Prix IN A PUBLIC PARK." This remains SAP's policy. SAP does not oppose the Australian Motorcycle Grand Prix held at the Phillip Island permanent circuit. SAP would not oppose an F1 Grand Prix staged, for example, at a suitable location such as Avalon. However, this does not mean that SAP is supportive, in any way, of F1 car racing.

## 2022 Grand Prix

It was announced on October 15 that Melbourne's next grand prix event is planned for the weekend April 8-10 next year. The event has been moved out of its coveted position as the opening race of the F1 race season, ostensibly in order to allow more time for travel restrictions to ease and vaccination rates to increase.

It will be a three day event, not the usual four. The park will probably be closed from Monday April 4 until Monday, April 11 (the week before Easter). This means the event will clash with the AFL season which has been avoided in the past.

Construction of the temporary circuit is likely to start early in February, which will cause major disruption for the sports clubs based in the park (see later)

It is not yet known how the event will cope with the covid pandemic. There has been talk about protective 'bubbles', but also consideration of loosening up contacts allowed during the event because the virus could be around for a long time, and people have to learn to live with it.

F1 team members, including the prominent Finnish driver Raikkonen, have tested positive at recent European races. These events, staged in secure permanent circuits, were apparently successful, but it could be a different story with Melbourne's temporary circuit.

### Impact on the sports clubs

On October 16, the Albert Park Sports Clubs Association, published a media release headed '**New grand prix date threatens community sport in Albert Park**'. It stated: *Holding the 2022 Grand Prix (GP) on 10 April 2022 – three weeks later than the traditional March date - will be a body blow for community sport in Albert Park Reserve, say the two dozen amateur sports clubs based in the Park representing thousands of club members and community sport fans.*

***"If it goes ahead with this date, the Victorian Government must force the Australian Grand Prix Corporation (AGPC) to minimise the event's impact, improve compensation, and significantly invest in improving sports infrastructure in Albert Park to cope with the impact,"** said Hugo Armstrong, President of the Albert Park Sports Club Association.*

### What impacts will an April 10 Grand Prix have?

- *April 10 is effectively a three-week postponement of the GP, moving it from its traditional date between sporting seasons directly into the busy winter season.*
- *GP occupation of Albert Park means clubs are forced off their grounds and pavilions for up to three months to allow for setup before the GP, and pack-up and ground rehabilitation afterwards. An April GP means some clubs could lose half their entire season. A few fear it may even threaten their existence.*
  - *Recovery of sports fields in the Reserve will take longer after an April GP, as rehabilitation will be taking place after the autumn growing season. A three-week delay for the GP means the resumption of sport is likely to be delayed four or five weeks.*
- *Alternative facilities are harder to find during the sports season than they are in between seasons. If no alternative arrangements for training and competition can be made, clubs may be forced to forfeit their season, and face the prospect of permanent closure, as players go elsewhere or drop out.*
- *Water sports on the lake such as rowing will also be badly affected as their access to the lake will be denied at in the middle of the important Masters' season.*
- *Heavy use of Albert Park sports fields post-GP will result in even worse deterioration during winter, and potentially unsafe playing conditions. It will also jeopardise fixturing and facilities allocation in an already crowded park.*
  - *Recruitment, retention, social activities and fundraising will all be jeopardised by loss of home facilities for such a large chunk of the season. Even if clubs survive, the loss of teams can take many years to recover from.*
  - *The importance of local sports clubs for community welfare has never been more important than during the pandemic. The loss of these opportunities for communities to engage safely with each other will further undermine community morale and mental health, as well as physical health.*

We understand that up to the end of October there has been no reaction to the sports clubs media release from the state government or its agency, the Australian Grand Prix Corporation.



A heritage listing for this strip of bitumen and concrete?

### **Adelaide Parkland heritage bid buried in political concrete.**

Last year, the South Australian Liberal government moved the Supercars event in Adelaide's parklands to a new permanent circuit called "The Bend", at Tailem Bend. The temporary circuit infrastructure used for the event is being disposed of, but around 1,200 metres of bitumen and concrete remains at the site of the temporary pit buildings.

The Adelaide Parklands Association has been lobbying since 2009 to have the city's magnificent parklands declared a 'State Heritage Area' and in 2018 a positive recommendation was given by the State Heritage Council.

However, the Adelaide City Council has now put forward the extraordinary proposal to have the strip of bitumen and concrete listed as a "heritage" site, **not the entire parklands**. This proposal appears to be aligned with the promise by the ALP opposition leader, Peter Malinauskas, to bring motor racing back to the park if his government is elected in March 2022.

If Supercar racing returns to Adelaide parklands there will be substantial financial losses accompanied by government secrecy on the real costs, together with renewed alienation of parkland. As Patrick White said in relation to protecting Centennial Park in Sydney, *"Your parks are your breathing spaces. Guard them, cherish them. Parkland is valuable and greedy eyes see the money in it....protect your parks from the pressure of political concrete."*

**Dodgy ticket counting by the AGPC** The State Government's agency the Australian Grand Prix Corporation (AGPC) estimated the attendance at the 2019 grand prix to be **324,100**, 'across the four days'. SAP didn't believe this figure could represent anything like the number of ticket-buying patrons, and on September 16, 2019 a freedom-of-information request was lodged with the AGPC seeking the **actual number of tickets sold**. On June 4, 2021, after an appeal by SAP to the Office of the Victorian Information Commissioner, the AGPC advised that the number of tickets sold was **260,100**, comprising 30,453 corporate tickets, 85,104 grandstand tickets and 144, 543 general admissions. Apparently, 'accreditations' (ie passes for event competitors and staff plus 40-50,000 free tickets issued, whether used or not) comprised the rest of the estimated attendance of 324,100,

SAP didn't believe these numbers, and on September 19, asked the AGPC for further clarification. On October 8, the AGPC provided the following revised number of tickets sold: 13,589 corporate tickets, 30,805 grandstand tickets and 88,044 general admissions, a total of **132,438**. Finally SAP could believe the AGPC was getting closer to the mark. The AGPC's audited ticket sales revenue for the 2019 event was \$38.7 million and it is possible to match that figure with ticket numbers and prices. So SAP might now have the real number of tickets sold for the 2019 event. Possibly not! We will keep you posted.

**Contract for temporary circuit goes to Queensland company** The AGPC has announced that, after a competitive tendered process, the contract for recent \$20 million changes to the grand prix circuit and the \$34 million , and the building of the temporary circuit has been awarded to the Queensland based company, 'iEDM'. We thought a major function of the grand prix was to benefit the Victorian economy. These contracts are very substantial and the profits will apparently go north, not stay here.





The Zandvoort circuit where the 2021 Dutch F1 Grand Prix was staged on September 3. During the event, the 'Extinction Rebellion' group, with the support of F1 driver Sebastian Vettel, mounted a protest against Formula 1 racing. The Albert Park temporary circuit does not compare with this impressive permanent circuit.

### **'Extinction Rebellion' targets Formula 1**

Last September, the Extinction Rebellion group made the headlines in Europe when it staged a protest against Formula 1 car racing at the Dutch Grand Prix, with the support of the F1 driver Sebastian Vettel. According to Wikipedia, 'Extinction Rebellion is *'a global environmental movement with the stated aim of using nonviolent civil disobedience to compel government action to avoid tipping points in the climate system, with biodiversity loss and the risk of social and ecological collapse'*. The group regards F1 car racing as an example of the unnecessary emissions and nature disturbance and favouritism that threaten our future. ('Favouritism' might mean that the benefits from the sport are restricted to a few.)

The former F1 world champion driver Sebastian Vettel has become an ardent environmentalist. He believes that while F1 is planning to reduce its emissions, not enough is actually being done. Current leading driver Lewis Hamilton has also been outspoken on the need to combat climate change, but has not declared support for the protesters.

At least the Dutch Grand Prix was staged in a properly located permanent circuit, unlike the Melbourne temporary circuit which is an environmental outrage, involving 4-5 months of set-up and take-down and thousands of kilometres of heavy truck travel.



Local Extinction Rebellion activists staged an action in Melbourne on October 27, gluing themselves to the road across Princes Bridge to draw attention to the lack of action on the climate change crisis.

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