Cook thinks he can win over Burswood racetrack critics as consultation opens

By Hamish Hastie
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The Cook government believes it can convert critics of its Burswood Park street motorsport circuit as it goes to lengths to highlight the cycling and arts aspects of the $217 million project.

Residents haven't been won over, however, with conveners of the Save Burswood Park group more fired up over a newly opened consultation period they've labelled a "whitewash".

Roger Cook announcing more details of the Burswood street circuit on Thursday.

On Thursday, Premier Roger Cook unveiled the Burswood Entertainment and Sporting Precinct plan, which includes a 15,000 to 20,000-seat amphitheatre and street circuit used for supercars events one weekend of the year and cycling events.

The project has faced significant opposition from residents as well as the Liberals and Greens after its announcements in January, but sports minister Rita Saffioti said she believed residents would come around.

“What we’ve already seen is when people understand the breadth of the project and the fact this builds on this area being a sporting and entertainment precinct, most residents will understand that this will be a major positive to the community,” she said.

The government does not seem willing to entertain responses during the public consultation period that suggest removing the racetrack portion of the project entirely.

Saffioti said they were keen to get feedback on vegetation and what to do with ponds dotted throughout the park.

Not a rebrand

In January, Cook announced the election commitment in Burswood in front of a V8 supercar and alongside Supercars Australia representatives.

Subsequent election material on social media placed emphasis on the street circuit promise, but that has been tempered in the Perth Entertainment and Sporting Precinct plan now out for public comment.

Saffioti denied there had been any rebadging or reworking on the marketing of the project.

“Of course, some people then tried to portray it, and I’d say that in the campaign there were some people who wanted to call it a motorplex,” she said.

What the new street circuit will look like.

“It’s not a motorplex. It’s not a motorplex at all. It’s a sports and entertainment precinct that will help drive activity and create new opportunities to host events into the future.

“The other key point we want to make is that when it’s not used for that one weekend of the year, it will not be accessible to cars, and we’ll make sure that cyclists, pedestrians, and also the community, have access to that part of that track. So this is really a community venue.”

In the vanguard

Cook’s former chief of staff-turned-cabinet secretary, Daniel Pastorelli, has been tasked with charming stakeholders for the project.

Saffioti revealed Pastorelli had already met with staunch critics of the project from the Save Burswood Park group and Town of Victoria Park Mayor Karen Vernon.

Saffioti took aim at Vernon for campaigning against the project during the election campaign.

“She’s opposed pretty much anything we’ve done,” she said.

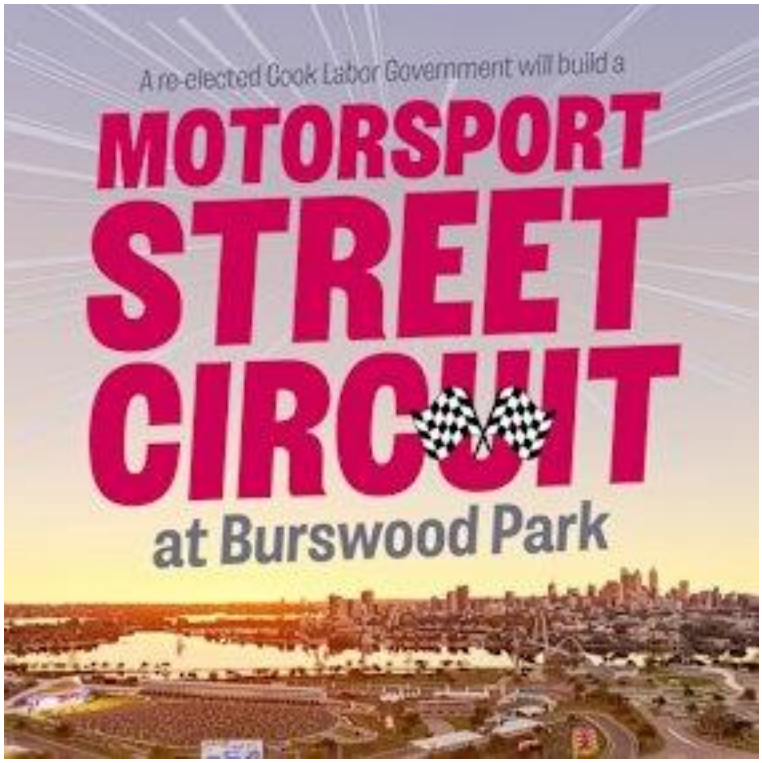
Vernon was approached for comment.

Pastorelli, who said he was “over the moon” to be given this role, said early talks had been positive.

“I think what people have really appreciated is putting the facts on the table and getting the information out there,” he said.

“What we’ve seen in the past has been a lot of misinformation. So again, the facts on the table has helped.”

Not convinced



Premier Roger Cook highlighted the street circuit on his Facebook page in January.

Save Burswood Park group co-convenor Robyn Harvey rubbished suggestions that the government was winning over residents, pointing to a 12000-signature online petition in opposition to the park and another 2450-signature petition set to be tabled in parliament.

“When they talk about this is a great entertainment and sporting precinct; nobody is denying they could do the entertainment music bowl and even a cycle track, what people don’t want is a 12-metre wide racing track around a park that is passive green space for all the people that live there,” she said.

“The community is so very distressed that the consultation process is as we thought it was going to be, they’re not listening to the views about the racing track, they are just suggesting that we can suggest where there are picnic areas or where we would like more trees.

“It’s a whole done deal. What this process is of community consultation is a whitewash really.”

Opposition leader Basil Zempilas was equally critical and accused the government of trying to “reverse” a bad decision by rebranding the project an entertainment and sporting precinct.

“It is all spin. They did not announce with microphones singing. They did not announce on push-bikes. They announced in a V8 supercar,” he said.

“Now they are trying to retrofit this announcement to get out of the embarrassment and humiliation that they are feeling for announcing something that is so out of step with the West Australian public that they now have to try and save face.”

The government will include $217 million in next month’s budget while construction was expected to begin in 2026.

The Greens have called for an upper house inquiry into the racetrack.