

# A war of words erupts

## Deputy Premier accuses Victoria Park of lying about new Burswood precinct

CLAIRE SADLER

Rita Saffioti has accused the Town of Victoria Park of lying to its ratepayers about the Burswood racetrack and entertainment precinct, as the mayor doubled down on claims the plans would turn the park into asphalt.

A business case summary was released on Sunday as the \$217.5 million project was re-badged as Perth Park in a bid to win over vocal critics.

Supercars champion Craig Lowndes, professional cyclist Mackenzie Coupland, and West Australian Music boss Owen Whittle were wheeled out alongside the Deputy Premier to highlight the outdoor amphitheatre, bike tracks and function centre, as well as the multi-sport street circuit that has been the focus of debate.

Premier Roger Cook announced the business case, conducted by independent advisory firm ACIL Allen, would be referred to Infrastructure WA for assessment ahead of construction, which is slated to start early next year.

"Perth Park will bring Optus

Stadium and the State tennis centre together with exciting new field facilities to create a truly iconic destination for people visiting and living in Western Australia," he said.

Ms Saffioti, left, said the announcement would provide clarification to residents, who she said had been fed "lies" by local government.

The town has been chief among critics of the proposed \$23 million racetrack, most recently posting a video claiming Burswood Park would become asphalt with native plants and trees "gone".

"The Town of Vic Park said the whole 28ha would be asphalt. Now, of course, people are concerned when they hear those lies," Ms Saffioti said on Sunday.

"The Town of Vic Park is spreading mistruths and lies to ratepayers."

Victoria Park mayor Karen Vernon, right, said the town stood by its video.

"There has to be a complete razing to the ground of Burswood Park as it currently stands," she said.

"Everything that is there will basically be destroyed in order to put a large 3.4km racetrack all

over the parkland, and you cannot do that without erasing the parkland.

"We stand by the video by saying that in order to put this racetrack in there, you're going to literally cover the majority of that parkland, that is all green spaces, trees and bushland and ponds, with asphalt."

She called for the full business case to be released to the public.

The Cook Government claims up to 150,000 trees will be planted, and has promised 85 per cent of the 28ha at Burswood Park will remain as green space.

"Everything will be done to keep the disruption to the current landscape as minimal as possible," Mr Cook said.

A lone protester held a sign stating "Hands off Burswood Park" in the faces of the politicians as they left the press conference, but did not interrupt it.

Opposition Leader Basil Zempilas questioned the fine print of the business case summary, which confirmed ACIL Allen relied on information supplied by the State Government and "has not sought to verify the accuracy" of it.



Pictures: Carwyn Monk