

## **AFL: Geelong Cats chief executive Brian Cook supports GWS Giants' Manuka Green proposal**

The Canberra Times April 8 2016 April 8 2016 [Lee Gaskin](#)

The GWS Giants' \$800 million Manuka Green proposal has received the support of Geelong Cats chief executive Brian Cook after over-seeing a similar redevelopment of his club's facilities.

[The Manuka Green proposal has created plenty of discussion](#) throughout the community since it was announced in February.

Residents and community groups have voiced their concerns about how the construction of more than 1000 apartments, a 160-room four-star hotel, retail and office space and 450 car parks would impact the inner-south suburb.

In response, Giants officials have criticised what they believe is a small minority for hijacking the media and want their supporters to get behind the plan.

Cook, who was in Canberra last weekend for his side's 13-point loss to the Giants, supported the plan, having gone through something similar in Geelong.

The Cats are in stage four of a redevelopment worth \$250 million, which has transformed Simonds Stadium and its surroundings into a world-class facility.

"It's absolutely positive for a lot of reasons," Cook said.

"One, it provides an economic engine for the club and your profit per game dramatically improves commercially.

"That's pretty important. So the sustainability of the football club and having a financial model works.

"It basically becomes a coliseum from an attitude point of view, a holy grail and it also becomes a community hub."

Manuka Oval would also receive an upgrade under the proposal, which would include 4750 new permanent seats to replace temporary seating and standing areas at the ground.

New roofing would cover 80 per cent of seating and the development would include new hospitality, media and change room facilities.

The current capacity at Manuka Oval is around 14,500, but that was reduced to 13,600 for last Sunday's game.

Marquee tents erected on the far side of the ground took up space previously used for seating.

Geelong's plans were first raised in 2001 and they have acquired the necessary funding to progress to stage four in the past 15 years.

"I would assume that's what might happen in Canberra," Cook said.

"It's really important that people remain resilient and they try and get stage one over the line.

"They have to work with their stakeholders really well to make sure whatever they do is in line with what their stakeholders want as well.

"It is a real game changer."

Cook said since the redevelopment of Simonds Stadium occurred, each AFL game at the ground generates \$4 million of economic impact – \$2 million is from the game itself and another \$2 million is through external sources such as restaurants, cafes and taxis.

Cook said there were "a few assassins" when the plans were announced.

"Not too many locally, but we had a few around the place," he said.

"Our ground was dilapidated, it was nothing like (Manuka Oval) and this master plan was a quarter of a billion dollars that we were looking for.

"People just laughed at it. Over the 15-year period we have stuck at it."