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Teens' pipe dream turns into reality despite opposition



Benny Griffiths, 12, spoke at a council meeting in support of a skatepark in Bayside.

Picture: JASON SAMMON N52SB204

Skate park kickstart

MATTHEW BURGESS

A CONTROVERSIAL junior skate park will be created at Donald MacDonald Reserve in Beaumaris, marking the end of a decade-long campaign.

Bayside Council voted 6-1 in favour of turning a small section of the park's conservation zone into a 20m by 12m skate facility - designed for eight to 14-year-olds - at a meeting last week.

The skate facility could be built as early as December, subject to a planning permit. But the go-ahead

for the \$70,000 project has sparked accusations of councillors riding "rough shod" over residents' concerns, including graffiti and vegetation removal.

But Sandringham's Benny Griffiths, 12, said the park would promote skill building. "Young people who skate are always stereotyped as adolescents who break the law and graffiti," he said.

"For some kids who don't want to do footy and contact sports, there's not really that much they can get to at that age."

A 159-strong petition against the plan is expected to be tabled tonight.

Surf Ave's Tony Manning said the facility would be a "magnet" for anti-social activity.

"The message is very clear, no one wants this skate park facility near residential areas," he said.

Of the 11 public speakers at the meeting, six were against the plan.

Friends of Donald MacDonald Reserve co-ordinator Alison Johnston said the group held serious concerns for interference with vegetation.

But Mayor John Knight said while the site was probably not perfect, it was the best on balance.

"I think (the skate park) will be quite well used and in time people will realise it isn't a threat," Cr Knight said.

Donald MacDonald Reserve was earmarked as the preferred site last month and was the seventh considered since 2004.

Previous suggestions, including Beaumaris Concourse and Beaumaris, Banksia and Illaroo reserves, were dumped after public pressure.