



Canberra Dragway Frequently Asked Questions

Preface

While a detailed proposal is yet to be developed, and will be affected by the work and assessment processes still to be undertaken referred to in the Discussion Paper, based on investigations undertaken to date it is possible to respond to many expected and frequently asked questions about an ACT dragway proposal. The responses provided below are intended to inform the reader on the principal elements of the proposal and the next steps, and will be expanded upon as necessary as further stages of the planning process are undertaken. (This paper, the Discussion Paper and other background papers are available electronically at <http://www.cmd.act.gov.au/actdragway>)

Proponent

1. Who is the proponent and what is the company's background and track record?

A: Canberra International Dragway Management Pty Ltd (CIDM) is the principal proponent behind the dragway proposal, however it is supported by the other main dragway bodies. CIDM was founded in 1992 for the purpose of developing and managing the previous facility. CIDM is the only local entity with proven experience and expertise in operating a dragway. CIDM is a member of the Australian Drag Racing Promoters Association, and is endorsed by the Canberra Drag Racers Club (CDRC) and the Australian National Drag Racing Association (ANDRA) as the preferred operator of the new facility.

2. Why is the Government doing all the legwork for the private sector proponent?

A: The Territory has committed \$8 million of capital funding, subject to environmental, planning and financial requirements being

met. In addition to this substantial financial commitment, the Territory recognises that there is a substantial public interest in ensuring that all environmental and planning issues are properly considered, and that there is thorough and transparent community consultation. Accordingly, the Government has undertaken to facilitate the project to the point where all major environmental policies and assessments have been completed and a detailed financial evaluation completed. If the ACT Government decides to continue its support for the project, at that stage, CIDM will be required to prepare and lodge a Development Application for the project.

Benefits

3. Why does Canberra need a dragway?

A: The Government acknowledges that there is strong community support for motorsport in Canberra and that drag racing is a recognised part of the motor sports scene. Drag racing commenced in Canberra in 1976 and continued through to the closure of the old facility until 1998 (there was a break between 1988 and 1992). The support from both competitors and spectators over this period of time is evidence of a desire within the community for such a facility.

4. How many dragway enthusiasts live in the Canberra / Queanbeyan / Capital Region?

A: This is difficult to precisely ascertain, however motorsport is ranked the 3rd most popular sporting activity in Australia. Previous attendance levels at dragway events confirmed a high level of interest in the sport.

5. What are the real benefits to Canberra of a dragway?

A: There will be economic stimulation through increased tourism and drag racing and related activities. Local drag racing competitors and spectators will not need to travel to Sydney to enjoy their chosen sport. In addition, a dragway will provide an alternative outlet for people wanting to test the speed of their vehicles in a much safer and more appropriate environment.

6. Will the presence of a dragway remove the practice of unsafe and illegal street racing (eg along Anzac Parade)?

A: The dragway will not completely remove this activity but it will provide an alternative outlet for people wanting to test the speed of their vehicles in a much safer and more appropriate environment.

7. Why does the Government plan to finance a dragway?

A: See also responses to questions 2 and 3 above. Funding, however, is dependent on a range of clearances following further examination relating to budget and planning and environmental requirements. The Government has committed \$8 million towards the construction of a facility, should it prove viable. The Government does not intend to provide recurrent funding to support the operation of a dragway.

8. Is the dragway going to be just another election promise?

A: The Government has committed to developing a dragway in the ACT subject to finding a suitable site, and environmental, planning and financial requirements being met. \$8m has been appropriated for this purpose. The detailed processes of assessment and consultation are outlined in the Discussion Paper.

9. Is this a case of a vocal minority getting its way?

A: As noted in responses to question 3 and question 4 above, there is a substantial level of support for, and interest in, having dragway events resumed in the ACT. However, as noted in the response to question 8 above, a number of planning and environmental assessments must be satisfactorily met before a dragway can be developed and operate on Block 51 Majura.

Costs/Financial

10. How much will it cost the government to establish and operate?

A: The ACT Government has committed an \$8m contribution towards the capital costs of the project. There is no commitment by Government towards the ongoing cost of operation of the facility.

While final development cost estimates are being further investigated, recently completed feasibility investigations into the cost of developing a facility (see question 11 below) indicate that the estimated development costs for a dragway will exceed \$8 million. The costs, however, are dependent on the standard of the facility and the extent of infrastructure to be built. Further investigation and consultation with the proponent is being undertaken to confirm the standard of facility sought and the contribution that the proponent will make towards the project.

11. What are the specific cost elements included in the budget prepared by consultants and does the estimated budget include cost of land and an intersection with Majura Road?

A: The GHD feasibility report on cost (see Discussion paper) outlines the specific cost estimates including cost estimates for intersection works. Estimated land withdrawal costs are not included in the GHD report but are being assessed by the Territory and will be considered in a final financial viability assessment for the project.

12. What financial contribution will the proponent make?

A: As noted at question 10 above, this is still a matter for discussion between the ACT Government and the proponent.

13. What is the allocation of public funding to other sporting ventures?

A: The ACT Government provides capital and operations funding to a very wide range of sporting, community and recreational activities and interests.

14. Where will the money come from if the dragway costs more than the allocated \$8m?

A: As noted in the responses to question 10 and question 12 above, final cost estimates and discussions with the proponent are yet to be completed. It is, however, expected that a level of funding and other support will come from the proponent and will be necessary if a higher cost is confirmed

15. Why isn't the Government allocating \$8m to more important things such as health or education?

A: The ACT Government takes a balanced approach to funding for a wide range of community needs, and funds a range of community programs and facilities. Funding decisions also consider the amount of funding provided for different purposes over short and longer timeframes. Drag racing has not received any Government support for many years.

16. Will taxpayers be financing the dragway's ongoing maintenance?

A: No. This will be a responsibility of the operator of the dragway.

Viability

17. How can the dragway be viable if there is already one in Sydney?

A: The old Canberra dragway facility operated while there was a facility in operation at Eastern Creek Raceway in Sydney. The former Canberra dragway facility operated successfully without Government subsidy. ANDRA has on several occasions provided written advice to Government about how the Sydney and Canberra tracks will complement each other.

Site selection

18. Why have you decided on the Majura site?

A: There have been a number of studies examining possible sites for a dragway facility, and motor sports generally, over a number of years. These indicate that the Majura Valley is the most likely to provide a suitable site. Based on current available information Block 51 is considered to provide the best likely site. However, a final decision will only be made following further extensive assessment and consultation as outlined in the Discussion Paper.

19. Why is Block 51 Majura the preferred location for a dragway?

A: Of all sites considered and within the Territory's control, Block 51 provides the best potential for acceptably meeting all pre-requisites for the siting of a dragway facility. The reasons include:

- The size of the site is suitable;
- It has good access;
- The orientation of the track upon the site is suitable;
- The topography is suitable;
- It is removed from the suburban areas and separated by a mountain range; and
- It falls within the noise umbrella from the airport.

20. Why have you not chosen a site further away from residential dwellings?

A: See also response to questions 18 and 19. There are no other suitable or available sites in other locations that meet all the selection criteria.

21. What other site options were considered?
- A: Further details of the options considered, including the various studies undertaken, can be found in the Discussion Paper and in the 2004 Report (Canberra International Dragway A summary of options for a dragway in the ACT region April 2004) referenced in the Discussion Paper.
22. What else is the site zoned for?
- A. The Majura Valley generally, and Block 51 in particular, is zoned as Broadacre under both the National Capital plan and Territory Plans. Broadacre land is generally envisaged as providing sites for uses which require large land areas or those that benefit from being best located within a non urban setting. A dragway is a consistent / permitted use.
23. What about the former dragway site near the airport?
- A: This is National land under Commonwealth control. The Commonwealth has not indicated any interest in either reissuing or agreeing to a new lease for the former dragway site. The previous lease expired in 1998.
24. Where would access to the track be placed (which road)?
- A: Off Majura Road
25. Will car parking be made available on-site or will parking be possible along Majura Road?
- A: All car parking will be provided on site. There will be no provision for parking along Majura Road.
26. What will the dragway look like from the road?
- A: Refer to responses below.
27. Will the dragway be screened from Majura Road?
- A: The track itself will be mostly excavated into the ground and will not be readily visible from Majura Road. The pit areas may be seen from Majura Road however these will be landscaped and be expected to feature a significantly greater number of trees than currently exist on the property.

28. How close will it be to existing houses?

A: Figure 1 in the Discussion Paper provides a locality plan for Block 51 Majura and indicates its relationship to existing suburban areas. There are, however, a small number of houses on rural properties adjoining Block 51 or located nearby across Maura Road.

Environmental impacts

29. What environmental implications will the dragway have in both the short term and long term?

A: The biggest issue is noise and this will be subject to further review through both the draft Environmental Protection Policy (EPP) processes and preliminary assessment investigations. (Also see response to questions 30 and 32 below.) All other environmental issues (water, vegetation, fauna etc) will be subject to examination in the preliminary assessment process.

30. What are the noise implications?

A: Initial noise studies indicate that noise levels are likely not to be intrusive for North Canberra although further investigation is required especially around adverse weather events. Impacts are likely to be more significant in the immediate vicinity of the track, which will be exposed to short periods of high noise levels. A draft EPP on noise is currently being prepared for public comment. As indicated at question 29 above, further detailed evaluation of noise impacts will be assessed in the preliminary assessment (PA) process. (See also question 32 below.) Noise mitigation requirements and options will be considered in this process.

31. What were the results from the feasibility studies?

A: A summary of the findings of the feasibility reports is contained in the Discussion Paper. The Discussion Paper also includes a web-link to a full copy of these reports.

32. Will an environmental impact study be carried out? If not, why not?
- A: There is a range of planning and environmental assessment processes which will need to be undertaken in accordance with relevant ACT laws, including a preliminary assessment under the *Land (Planning and Environment) Act*. Further environmental impact assessment may be required by the relevant regulatory authorities.
33. How will noise levels compare to aircraft noise in terms of frequency and loudness?
- A: This issue is addressed in the Dragway Noise Policy Advice of Marshall Day Acoustics (page 7), referred to in the Discussion Paper. That advice indicated that aircraft noise is, and would continue to be the dominant noise source in the Majura Valley, with over 12,000 aircraft noise events of over 70 dBA per year. By comparison, "based on one international / national event and seven regional events annually, this would give a total of 170 noise events over 70 dBA for drag racing" (ie individual races or burnouts). However it should be noted that aircraft noise events are more widely dispersed as the noise source (aircraft) moves through the sky, whereas dragway noise events will be generated only within the dragway property.
34. How will the noise levels compare to the loudest noise generated by Summernats?
- A: It is not possible to directly compare these two events as they have many different features, including types of activity and noise profiles, duration of events and proximity to residential areas. In assessing the proposed facility, the regulatory authorities will consider several noise measures to ascertain the overall noise impacts. By its nature a dragway produces short bursts of high noise with lower levels of noise between events. Different categories of events however produce greater or lesser amounts of noise.
35. What noise guidelines will the ACT Government apply to the facility?
- A: As outlined in the Discussion Paper, a draft EPP for the dragway is being developed and will be circulated for public comment at the end of February 2006 for a two-month period of consultation. When utilised the EPP will provide the noise guidelines specific to the operation of a dragway facility.
36. How will noise levels be monitored and by whom?
- A: It is expected that these details will be developed and provided for in the EPP.

37. What happens if there is a breach of the noise guidelines?

A: There are a range of enforcement and penalty provisions which could be utilised under relevant ACT planning and environmental legislation.

38. How much dust/dirt would come from the track?

A: This issue will be considered during the detailed assessment processes. However, it is expected that there should be minimal dust/dirt because most roads will be sealed. Some of the car park roads may be gravel similar to Bruce Stadium parking lot. At a large event the dust would be controlled by use of a water truck for the gravel surfaces.

39. What is the risk of pollution spill associated with the dragway?

A: While this issue will be addressed during the detailed planning and environment assessment processes, it is expected to be low as there is a range of measures which would be applied to the design and management of the facility. For example, storm water exit points from the facility will have gross pollution traps installed. Additionally, the development will be required to prepare and maintain a risk management plan and environmental management plan, approved by regulatory authorities, that will address these issues.

Operation

40. How often will the dragway events occur throughout the year?

A: The following indicative schedule of events has been proposed by CIDM:

- 1 international standard event (2 to 3 day event);
- 7 regional standard events (1 to 2 day event); and
- 26 local events for street registered vehicles (1 day event).

The international and regional events would be undertaken during the summer season (October to April).

41. What time of day or night will events occur?
A: Race events would be undertaken intermittently during the summer and winter sessions as follows:
Summer from 10:00am - 10:00pm; and
Winter from 10:00am - 6:00pm.
42. How many people will attend meetings?
A: This will vary depending on the type of event, ranging from several hundred for local events through to 10,000 for a major championship event.
43. Would youths/young drivers be able to access the track day/night and use it without permission and hang around there? (Security issues)
A: No. The site would be supervised at all times and there would be a permanent caretaker on-site.
44. Would alcohol be sold at the track?
A: No alcohol will be sold in general public areas. Limited alcohol will be available in corporate areas.
45. What management structure is proposed for the ongoing use of the dragway?
A: This is yet to be determined.
46. Who will be able to use the dragway?
A: A wide range of authorised people and organisations.
47. How much will the dragway cost for users?
A: This is a management issue which would ultimately be determined by the operator.
48. Where does the money go for hire of the dragway?
A: The operator will use the revenue to meet operational costs and to reinvest in the facility.

49. What other commercial uses might be available as well as a dragway?
A: This will be determined in the context of the planning and environmental application processes but could be expected to include driver training, promotional events, and the like.

Safety

50. What safety provisions will be built into the design?
A: Under ANDRA standards, a wide range of safety features will be included in the track design and final construction. In addition, emergency & safety plans must be prepared by the operator, and approved (and monitored) by the various regulatory authorities.
51. What is the risk of bushfire caused by the dragway?
A: While this issue will be addressed during the detailed planning and environmental assessment processes, it is expected to be low as there are a range of measures which would be applied to the design and management of the facility. There will be a water ring main throughout the property allowing for strategically placed fire fighting hose reels. A bush fire assessment will be undertaken as part of the PA.
52. Will the dragway be required to have an emergency evacuation plan and incident plan?
A: Yes. The development will be required to submit detailed management plans for approval (and subsequent monitoring) by Regulatory Authorities prior to operation.
53. Will operation of the dragway affect the operation or safety of the airport?
A: While this issue will be fully addressed in the PA, information available to date indicates that there are no airport safety or operational issues. The old facility was 250m from the east-west runway and had full clearance from CASA and Airservices. The proposed facility is approximately 2 kilometres north of the northern end of the north-south runway.

Other

54. The Government said the dragway would be operational within 18 months of the election. What happened?

A: The Government's commitment was subject to finding a suitable site, and to environmental and planning requirements being satisfied. The issues are complex, and having regard to the large expenditure of public moneys and the high degree of public interest the Government has proceeded with considerable technical and professional care.

55. If the facility is closed because of noise, what other use can be made of the facility?

A: The planning and environmental processes, referred to in the Discussion Paper, are designed to determine whether a dragway can be developed and operate on Block 51 Majura. If these processes determine that a dragway can operate in accordance with appropriate noise regulations and policies, then a dragway facility should not be closed because of noise. However, alternative uses would depend on the provisions of the Territory Plan, the provisions in any lease over the property, and any applicable planning processes which would need to be satisfied before the property could be used for other purposes.

56. Does Majura Road have the capacity to handle traffic at a major dragway event as well as service the new discount retail outlet and other traffic using the road?

A: While this is also a matter which will be addressed during the assessment phases, it is expected that the existing road can adequately accommodate the proposal, although specific arrangements would be required. Previous studies for Block 52 confirmed that Majura Road would have the capacity to handle major and minor events.

Consultation

57. What sort of consultation has taken place with nearby residents?

A: Initial discussions have been held with the lessee of Block 51. In addition, a nearby resident is a member of the Dragway Advisory Committee.

58. To what extent has community consultation been considered in the decision-making?

A: The general issue of a dragway in Majura Valley has been the subject of considerable public interest and debate over many years. The ACT Government is committed to a thorough and transparent consultation process commencing now to ensure that all issues are discussed. A Dragway Advisory Committee (DAC) was established during 2005 to provide input to consideration of the project, and there will be briefings of community organisations and other opportunities for public comment to be made and considered in the final decision making process by the ACT Government.

For further information, including references to the consultation process, the reader should refer to the accompanying ACT Dragway Community Discussion Paper at <http://www.cmd.act.gov.au/actdragway>.

The Discussion Paper includes relevant details regarding making submissions and general enquiries contacts.