

Council opposes sculptures plan

By KATE UEBERGANG

THEY may honour Aussie sporting legends, but the Melbourne Cricket Club's Parade of Champions will not be welcome in the parkland surrounding the MCG.

Two completed bronze statues — Sir Donald Bradman and Betty Cuthbert — are situated on MCG ground.

But Melbourne City Council's environment committee chair, Kate Redwood, said the council would fight moves to place the remaining eight in Yarra Park, which it jointly controls with the State Government.

Melbourne Cricket Club would not rule out a push for parkland placement, saying it wanted the statues in "a regal position".

The *Herald Sun* has been given a sneak peak at the next statue to be unveiled — footy champ Ron Barassi.

On September 22 the larger than life bronze Barassi will be placed outside the MCG's gate 8 on the Great Southern Stand concourse.

Barassi, Bradman and Cuthbert will be joined by seven more legends — cricketer Keith Miller, footballers Haydn Bunton, Dick Reynolds and Leigh Matthews; cricketers Dennis Lillee and Bill Ponsford, and sprinter Shirley Strickland Delahunty.

The 10 statues will all be in place when the stadium redevelopment is completed for the 2006 Commonwealth Games.

Cr Redwood said the statues' placement was clearly a major issue.

"We are definitely concerned," Cr Redwood said. "In this particular instance we have a parkland which has a heritage significance so anything that either detracts or alters that is something which we would treat with seriousness."

"In my point of view the parkland should be maintained in a way which is green and uncluttered."



Larger than life: sculptor Louis Laumen with one of the legs for the Ron Barassi statue which is based on sketch studies (inset). Picture: JESSICA LEE

BARASSI'S STATUE NEARLY FINISHED

DESPITE admitting he isn't much of a sports fan, Louis Laumen is moulding some of Australia's most loved sporting champs — literally.

The Richmond-based artist is the sculptor behind the Melbourne Cricket Club's Parade of Champions.

Given the job last May, Laumen is putting the finishing touches on statue number three — Ron Barassi.

He said each statue took about four months to complete, with photographs and real life models providing the inspiration.

"There is a bit of negotiating between the MCC and myself as to how the person will be depicted," he said.

"There was a photo of Ron Barassi

flying through the air with a footy that the MCC liked.

"But as statues don't fly we had to look at an alternative.

"Ron did come into the studio where I measured him and also photographed his head from different angles.

"His face had changed a great deal over the years but it was still useful."

The statue was being bronzed in pieces, he said.

"Now we have a bench full of Ron Barassi body parts. The next stage is welding them together."

Laumen has begun initial modelling work on cricketer Keith Miller's statue.

- KATE UEBERGANG

Cr Redwood said while the council and the MCC had met a number of times to discuss the statues' placement, there was no final plan.

"(The MCC) do keep changing the plans," she said.

"We all love our footy but we do have to protect parkland."

"You've got to look at aesthetics and sporting issues."

Cr Redwood said she believed bronze statues were an outdated way to immortalise the sports champs.

"These people had extraordinary skill and grace of movement ... I think there are better ways of honouring that."

She said bronze statues had "a very static monumental quality, that we traditionally associate with the colonialism of the 19th century ... somehow it doesn't have that contemporary feel."

The Melbourne Cricket Club said it had not decided the final placement for the remaining statues.

MCC assistant secre-

tary Peter French said that the statues' initial placement would be reassessed when the MCG redevelopment was finished.

"Once the landscape is finished there may be a pocket or an area that really suits a statue," Mr French said.

"We want them to have a regal position."

"We are still in discussions with the City of Melbourne regarding the final resting place for our Parade of Champions."

