

## Tennis campus misses the mark

Over the past 20 years, the strip of land on the north side of the Yarra, between Olympic Park and the city, has been developed with care and vision. The latest addition — Birrarung Marr, the park adjoining Federation Square — provides a link between the square, the river, the Centre and the MCG. The string of sporting venues and trees forms a precinct that combines what Melbourne loves about their city: its abundant parkland and its love of sport.

The loss of access to the precinct is the reason alarm bells have been rung about recent suggestions to change it. The Melbourne City Council and landscape architects have expressed concern about Victorian Government plans to build a \$28 million pedestrian bridge linking the MCG and Birrarung Marr. The planned bridge appears to be incompatible with a long-term scheme to redevelop what remains of the Jolimont railyards. And it has been criticised for the impact it will have on the award-winning park. Less intrusive solutions ought to be investigated; any structure additions to the area ought to be aesthetically pleasing as well as useful.

Even greater concern are plans to build a campus and accommodation next to Vodafone Arena. The idea — of a campus specialising in sports-related studies — is a good one; Melbourne would be a natural home for a multi-disciplinary institute of this sort. LaTrobe University has already developed a blueprint for such a facility, including a six-storey, 400-room accommodation block for foreign students. What is not clear, however, is why the campus needs to be situated within the precinct itself. John Cain has joined forces with an old fellow former premier, Jeff Kennett, in opposing the plan. Both believe the proposed siting is inappropriate and highly invasive.

Another concern is the role of Melbourne and Olympic Park Trust chairman Graeme Samuel, who is also chairman of the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission. Mr Samuel is a supporter of the campus proposal, which may include a gym, pool, spas, restaurants and shops. Mr Samuel's appointment to the ACCC was opposed in some quarters because it was believed his business background made him unsuitable for the post. To take on the job, he stepped down as chairman of the National Competition Council, relinquished his chairmanship of the Docklands Authority and resigned as an ambassador. His Olympic Parks Trust job must also go; his special deal-making and his ACCC responsibilities should be kept together.