

Council decision pleases

Bendigo Advertiser 6 March 2008

THE i2i Teaming Institute has welcomed the City of Greater Bendigo rescue package to save ice sports in the city.

Despite the Melbourne organisation having their proposal for a new rink rejected by council less than a month ago, secretary Dr Cosimo Chiera said he was thrilled ice would again return to Bendigo in the near future.

Ice skating, curling and ice hockey representatives have also shared their thoughts on how the latest development will influence their respective sports.

The council decided, at its meeting on Wednesday evening, to allocate the Bendigo Ice Sports Association an interest-free loan of \$100,000 to again make the Golden Square rink operational.

Dr Chiera praised the council's initiative, but also revealed that i2i had gained the backing of several local and international entities willing to support future bids for a new ice sports development.

"It's great that they're getting the ice back," Dr Chiera said.

"We're really glad we've been able to raise the profile of ice sports in that community and get the council involved." He said the US-based A Powell University for Commercialization had committed to providing \$8 million in student scholarships throughout an Australian ice sports network and to building an ice sports academy at each new i2i facility.

The University of Kansas has also announced their support for i2i ice sport projects, while Cartridge World and Champions Supa IGA Kangaroo Flat have been enlisted to provide local sponsorship.

"One way or another we'll get the city a new facility, all we want is good, safe ice for the people of Bendigo," Dr Chiera said.

Spokesperson for the Ice Skating Club of Bendigo Jenny Closey said the group was "overjoyed" with the council's decision.

"We are humbled by the council's confidence in both the proposal and the volunteer resource base and are appreciative of the opportunity to maintain an ice sports identity in Bendigo," she said.

Australian Curling Federation president Peter Cobden said Bendigo had the potential to again host the sport's National championships if the rink was properly mended.

“It’s great to see curling back in Victoria again, it’s really the only place in Australia that curls,” Mr Cobden said.

Bendigo Raiders Ice Hockey Club president Brien Baxter expressed relief that the 2008 season could now go ahead.

“We’re very pleased as members of BISA that we’ve been given the opportunity to keep the rink open, (but) I’m hoping with this that we can work towards a new facility,” Mr Baxter said.

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