

# Bowl decision back on table

William Jackson

LOCAL skaters and BMX riders are expected to pack out tonight's Knox Council meeting to learn the fate of the Lewis Park skate bowl.

The council is to consider a report on whether the facility should be demolished.

Community pressure forced the council to reconsider its behind-closed-doors decision to close the Wantirna South skate park, following the completion of the new Gilbert Park skate bowl in Knoxfield.

Crowds attended the last council meeting to see a 573-signature petition handed to council calling for the facility to be saved.

A "fun day" rally at Lewis Park in the lead-up to the last meeting drew more than 300 people. A second rally with skate and BMX demonstrations, a free barbecue and music on February 17 attracted more than 400 people, including representatives from Knox Police, who showed their support for the old skate bowl.

Sgt Bruce Kent said, while he didn't want to get involved in the politics of the issue, the local police were supportive of "any sort of youth activities".

State Sport Minister, James Merlino, said he had spoken to representatives from Save Knox Bowl and would be seeking a meeting with the council.

"I welcome the council's decision to again consider its assessment of the skate park," he said.

Save Knox Bowl organiser David Lalama said he had received emails from various local councillors and Mayor Jim Penna about the issue.

Mr Lalama said he hoped common sense prevailed tonight and that the council listened to the community.



Adian, Brendon, Luke and David show their support at a Save Knox Bowl event earlier this month.

## Backflip on park verdict

KNOX COUNCIL staff have done a 180-degree turn on the Lewis Park skate bowl issue and recommended the facility be retained.

A report due to go to council tonight says, based on the level of feedback on the issue and the petition, "it is apparent that the existing Lewis Park facility continues to enjoy a level of use".

It recommends a committee including skate bowl users, be appointed to monitor the skate park's usage, condition and costs and another review of the facility take place after two years.

The council has already allocated about \$20,000 to maintain the park this year.

The council had previously said the bowl needed about \$25,000 to bring it up to an "acceptable standard".

However, the report says these works now only need to be undertaken on an ongoing "needs basis".