

Q.E. II Park 'could have been had for \$1½m less'

Christchurch could have had Queen Elizabeth II Park for \$½m less than the \$5.1m quoted by the Mayor of Christchurch (Mr H. G. Hay), according to the two men most closely associated with the building of the park.

Mr Bill Lovell-Smith, structural engineer for the project, and Mr F. W. Shipston, the quantity surveyor, said yesterday that Mr Hay was confusing the issue when he attempted to compare his "final cost" with original estimates, because the figures did not relate to the same amount of work.

If only the scheduled work on the park was considered, and if subsequent council decisions had not interfered with the conditions on which estimates had been made, the park would have cost a little over \$4.59m — about \$40,000 more than the March, 1973, estimate on which work had proceeded, they said.

But even this apparent excess on the estimate could be reduced to a saving if it had not been for late decisions to spend more than \$222,000 on a restaurant,

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landscaping, and a bus access road not included in the work schedule when the estimates were prepared.

Messrs Lovell-Smith and Shipston were commenting on a statement by Mr Hay in "The Press" on Monday which, they said, contained several flaws in his comparison of a "final cost" of \$5.1m with the "original estimate," which Mr Hay gave as \$3.5m.

INFLATION

The first estimate given to the council for the building of the park was \$3.892m in August, 1971, which was pared back to \$3.886m in November of that year, they said.

But after that, the council and the Commonwealth Games Organising Committee made alterations to specifications, and natural inflation took its toll. (An example here was that the Games committee changed its specifications for scoreboard and timing equipment costing \$70,000 to equipment costing \$186,000.)

Although building costs increased by almost 27 per cent during the 18 months from the first estimate, a 5 per cent increase had been allowed in a new estimate given to the council in March, 1973. This estimate — the one on which work had proceeded — was \$4.558m.

Even today, the cost of building the complex as outlined in the schedules was, according to the City Treasurer (Mr L. A. G. Rich), only \$4.661m, not \$5.1m.

The difference came from later additions to the scheme, Messrs Lovell-Smith and Shipston said. These included a park manager's house, the sail sculpture, and additional facilities at the squash courts and creche.

Yet another change to the conditions on which the estimate had been based was the council's decision not to dismantle the temporary stands, they said. In the estimates, \$67,900 had been allowed as a credit from the sale of the temporary stands and associated timber in the fortnight after the Commonwealth Games.

But by a council decision, the temporary stands (less the top 11 rows which were held to be unsafe) were still there, and the \$67,900 would never be credited.

'EXTRANEIOUS WORK'

"On the work which was outlined to us, the estimate of March, 1973, would have resulted in a saving. It was extraneous and additional work which absorbed this saving and increased the cost to \$5.1m," said Messrs Lovell-Smith and Shipston.

"It is as hard to justify any comparison of Mr Hay's 'final capital cost' with 'original estimates' as it would be to argue that any future additional work at Queen Elizabeth II Park should be a charge against the 'original estimate'," they said.