

Have your say!



Northern Sydney Regional Sportsground Strategy - Discussion Paper



Foreword from the Chair of NSROC

No More Room to Play?

Northern Sydney is a dynamic place with great opportunities for its residents. However like all of Sydney, the Northern Sydney region is experiencing population growth that will see increased pressure on all our facilities and the environment.

This Discussion Paper looks at one aspect of that growth – increased demand and participation in community sport in our region.

Over the last few years, the member Councils of NSROC have identified an acute shortage of sportsgrounds and rising community demand. This strategy is about how to address the gap between sports demand with the limited space for sportsgrounds. It looks at how a regional approach may provide a better system for addressing future needs.

I believe that community sport is a cornerstone to a healthy, vibrant community.

I encourage you to consider the issues in this discussion paper and provide feedback in the development of this regional strategy to improve the management of our sportsground facilities.



Nick Berman, NSROC President and Mayor of Hornsby

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About this document

This document is the draft Discussion Paper for NSROC. It has been prepared by @leisure on behalf of, and in conjunction with staff from member Councils.

Acknowledgements

This project was conducted by @leisure for the NSROC.

@leisure wishes to acknowledge the support and assistance provided by Council staff that provided information, time to be interviewed and attended a workshop.

In particular, we would like to thank Carolynne James NSROC Executive Director.

Definitions

What is NSROC?

Northern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils (NSROC) is a voluntary organisation of local government established to: provide strong local government leadership; work co-operatively for the benefit of the Northern Sydney region; and, effectively advocate on agreed regional positions and priorities.

There are seven NSROC member Councils: Hornsby, Hunter's Hill, Ku-ring-gai, Lane Cove, North Sydney, Ryde and Willoughby.

What is sport?

The Australian Sports Commission defines sport as: 'A human activity capable of achieving a result requiring physical exertion and/or physical skill which, by its nature and organisation, is competitive and is generally accepted as being a sport'.

For the purposes of this project, sportsgrounds are public outdoor: grass playing fields, sport courts or greens used for sports competitions.

It is acknowledged that there is a wide range of other indoor and outdoor sports facilities in the region. These include: court based, water based, surf based, motor, or track or trail based, sports that provide important opportunities for residents. However, these other types of sports facilities are not considered in this document.

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1. Introduction and context

What is this Strategy about?

NSROC Councils recognise that organised community sport has an important role to play in sustaining the health and social cohesion of its communities.

This Regional Sportsground Management Strategy is about improving coordination of sportsground management across the region, to deliver greater community benefits.

NSROC Councils have identified an acute shortage of community sports facilities, particularly sportsgrounds. This is set to worsen with continued population growth, and increasing demand for organised community sport.

Funding constraints limit each Council's capacity to meet current and future needs. However, together, through regional planning, co-operation and management of sportsgrounds more can be achieved.

How will this Strategy be developed?

This document is a preliminary discussion paper. It is the first product from this project- to stimulate discussion and dialogue about the known issues. The basis of information in this paper is data: projected from participation rates; collected from participating Councils and from site inspections; and @leisure's experience from other places and projects.

Public submissions and feedback will be sought on regional sportsground issues, and further interviews and a forum for sports users will be held.

Following the analysis of all data collected our consultants will prepare a draft NSROC Regional Sportsground Strategy, by the end of 2010.

What will be the outcomes of the Strategy?

There are two key outcomes of the Strategy:

- ▶ the development of principles for future community sportsground development across the region; and
- ▶ the development of a regional sportsground upgrade and infrastructure development program.



Have your say

Please consider the issues in this paper and respond to any questions that are raised. Additional comments, suggestions or information about what should be considered, are welcomed.

Have your say on this Discussion Paper by commenting on-line at: www.nsroc.org or mail comments to:

NSROC
P O Box 20, Lane Cove, NSW, 1595

Further copies of this Discussion Paper can be downloaded from the NSROC website (as above) and are also available from the **NSROC Office: Lane Cove Council, 48 Longueville Road, Lane Cove NSW 2066**

Submissions close on Thursday 30 September 2010.

More information

For more information about this project please call NSROC on 02 9911 3651.



Context

The benefits of sport

Sport provides a wide range of personal and community benefits through physical and social activity.

Community level sport promotes physical activity, which can reduce obesity and health-care costs. 69% of adult males, 53.2% of adult females and 23.9% of children are currently classified as being overweight or obese in NSW.¹

In Australia, health costs could be reduced in gross terms, by \$1.49 billion per year; and productivity gains by making the workforce healthier through increased physical activity, could be as much as \$12 billion per year².

¹ National Health Survey 2007 – 2008. Published 2010

¹ The Economic Contribution of Sport to Australia, Frontier Economics, 2010

² The Economic Contribution of Sport to Australia. Frontier Economics January 2010.

Other benefits of sport include socialisation and social cohesion. Sport accounts for some 33% of all volunteers in Australia and 26.5% of all volunteer hours. The estimated value of volunteer input to sport in 2006 was \$3.9 billion.³

Demographics and demand

The region will be home to 608,000 people by 2021. The total population is expected to increase by 18.6% between 2011 and 2036, at an annual rate of 0.7%.

There is expected to be:

- ▶ a 12% increase in the number of people aged between 5 and 19 years
- ▶ a 15% increase in the number of people aged between 25 and 34 years
- ▶ a 37.8% increase in the number of people aged 65 years and above

The NSW Metropolitan Strategy identified that the population increase in the region will be provided principally through higher density living.

The change in the mix of housing options will increase diversity in the community in terms of age, household type and socio-economic status.

The principal implications for sport of projected population growth and change up until 2030 are:

- ▶ There will be a greater number of people in each age group, than there are now
- ▶ There will be sustained demand for junior team sports (12% growth or 114,500 children in this highest participation age group). This excludes the high number of private school students from outside the region, going to school in NSROC
- ▶ An increasing demand by middle aged and older adults (who are increasing in proportion and staying active longer) for social, casual “pay as you play” (PAYP), masters sports, and for alternative fitness activities that use playing fields
- ▶ there are likely to be approximately 39,000 volunteers assisting sport in the region⁴.

⁴ This is based on 19% of people over 18 yrs in capital cities are likely to be volunteers. 52% of those men and 26% of females are likely to be in sport. Source ABS 4102.0 - Australian Social Trends, 2008.

Physical context

The Northern Sydney Region is bounded to the north by National and State Parks and to the south by Sydney Harbour. However, a very small proportion of available open space in the region is dedicated to sportsgrounds.

The NSW Metropolitan Strategy indicates that the region will grow by at least 72,000 dwellings and 150,000 residents by 2036. By that time, the daily population including visiting workers is expected to be around 750,000. An increased building and population density will put further pressure on existing sports grounds, open space and sporting infrastructure, much of which is now ageing.

Population growth will also generate an increased demand for other physical and social activity out of doors, dog and fitness training, corporate sports, and trail activities. These, coupled with a major shortage in indoor sports facilities across the region, and limited available open space, will exacerbate pressure on sports grounds.

The region's unique attributes

The region has a number of attributes that make it unique for sportsground management:

The region has high rainfall compared to the rest of Sydney. This impacts on the ability of grounds to withstand winter use- and potentially assists turf growth in other seasons. It is common practice in NSROC, but not elsewhere, to returf goal mouths at the end of the winter season, for example.

The region is relatively economically advantaged. This means a high proportion of people know the (health and social) benefits of sport, are willing to travel, and are able to participate. There is little focus on (or perhaps the need to) developing participation amongst target groups, the ageing population, (except perhaps for people with a disability).

The regional has relatively limited available flat land due to topography and established urban development. The demand for outdoor playing fields cannot be met, nor can the demand for social and family recreation parkland.

A number of playing fields are single grounds with play, shared paths and recreation facilities on the boundary lines.

Topography has been used effectively in many cases to provide for spectators; separate activities; and provide high visual quality. In other places, size compromises club viability and the field of play. In relation to other regions, there is limited green field residential growth, and therefore limited opportunities to provide additional fields to meet the existing or future demand.

Sports grounds in the region commonly contain bushland or native vegetation, spectacular physical features such as sand stone rock formations, and views of water.

These characteristics provide: a level of amenity and visual character typically absent from sports grounds; enhanced experiences for users, as well as an opportunity to screen sports lights and noise from adjacent residents and a challenge to ensure that sportsground maintenance activities do not compromise bushland values.

Most Councils have relatively few sports grounds. This tends to influence the range of sports played in each and across the region.

The tendency is for each Council to cater to the high participation sports, and those that have been played at the same site for a long time.

This impacts on the diversity of opportunities available in terms of different sports, and different type of teams ie masters, females, and people with a disability.

Council's role in sport

Local government subsidises sports due to the range of benefits it delivers to individuals who see it, follow it, play it, and are involved in clubs, **as well as the community** who benefit from the social, economic and health outputs of sport.

The primary benefits of sport include:

- ▶ health and wellbeing benefits associated with the physical activity and the social connectedness that sport provides,
- ▶ productivity benefits for the workforce who participate, and
- ▶ social capital benefits of clubs and volunteers in sport.

Councils need clubs and volunteers to deliver sports competitions, hence it makes sense that Councils support club development and assist them to remain viable.

Councils focus on foundation and participation levels of sport development, rather than elite performance. However, it has several key roles in sport.

These include:

1. Providing sporting infrastructure
2. Supporting club and sports development and facilitating a child moving from the skill development and school competition environment, to regular competition, and from clubs to representative sport and sport careers
3. Facilitating and encouraging participation in sports by residents and visitors, and ensuring that facilities generate the greatest benefits, given resources available

Therefore, considering these roles in sport, Councils need to be conscious of the availability of:

- ▶ A hierarchy of facilities to suit potential users and the sports played (field sizes, surfaces and the standard of support facilities); to support foundation and participation, as well as performance levels of sport;
- ▶ A range of sports, equitably distributed across each municipality that mean people are likely to be able to participate in a sport of their choice regardless of age, gender, income, ability and cultural background; and
- ▶ Information to assist in matching the availability of sports clubs, opportunities and facilities, with people who would like to play or be involved in sport.
- ▶ Resources for planning, sports and club development, fund raising, marketing and communicating with sports, that are beyond the traditional administrative role Councils have played.

Key discussion points

- 1.1 What should Council's role in sport be in the future?**
- 1.2 Should there be a shift from the traditional administrative roles to one focusing more on sports development, benefits, and marketing?**
- 1.3 How should an expanded role for Council in sport, be funded?**

For each theme: key issues and challenges are described; proposed principles that may be adopted by NSROC are identified, and key discussion points are posed.

Key sports ground issues

There are four key themes in this paper:

- 1. Managing fluctuations in demand**
- 2. Planning and managing infrastructure to respond to demand and carrying capacity of grounds**
- 3. Pricing and occupancy of facilities**
- 4. Funding works and major projects**

2. Managing fluctuations in demand

Challenges and opportunities

There are more sports than ever before.

Increased numbers of younger and older people are playing sport. Sports are being played in different formats and in both seasons, often over a longer season. These trends are increasing the demands on sportsgrounds.

There are 14 main field sports played in the region that have a considerable number of players. The sport with the highest projected number of participants ⁵ is soccer, followed by tennis and golf.

With the existing number of facilities, the total number of participants across a number of sports cannot all be accommodated in the region.

⁵ These participant numbers have been projected based on 2009 participation rates and the projected population for 2021. See Appendix 1.

Based on average participation rates for NSW, the likely number of players per sport for 2021 is shown in the table below.

Sport	Likely participants in region
Soccer	52,652
Tennis	49,755
Golf	48,460
Cricket	21,563
Netball	19,966
Rugby League	14,540
Lawn bowls	12,923
Rugby Union	10,231
Hockey	8,770
Athletics	5,837
Aust. Rules football	5,216
Touch football	4,462
Softball	4,308
Baseball	1,616

Most sports grounds in the region are at capacity. However, more people want to use sports grounds for more activities. **Dogs, family games and trail-based activities⁶ are competing for time at many sports grounds.**

It is increasingly common for sports to have longer seasons, or multiple seasons, have modified game formats for juniors, provide social, indoor or masters competitions, and want some night games.

Soccer is one such sport played in both seasons, played as small sided games for young children, played indoors and five aside as Futsal, and played by masters. There is limited opportunity to cater for all these formats except small-sided games in the region.

Currently the major demand for playing fields that cannot be met across the region is for weeknight training, and preseason competition and training.

⁶ Due to the increase in demand for trails, some Councils have constructed perimeter paths around sports grounds that have meant the sports field sizes have had to be reduced.

The main sports are likely to dominate at the expense of smaller sports. The larger sports such as soccer are growing. They are well organised, often have paid staff, can contribute to facility developments and compete with the smaller sports for players and grounds. As people have to travel further for the smaller sports and the depth of competition reduces small clubs and sports become less viable.

Ultimately if each municipality is able to just provide for the larger sports, then there is likely to be a relatively narrow band of field sports played in the region (16 from about 40 field sports⁷).

There is a significant demand for sports grounds from schools, as many have lost grounds to Federal Stimulus building development.

The demand for soccer, junior cricket, Australian rules football, hockey, outstrips supply. This will be exacerbated by the further loss of hockey fields at Ryde.

Whilst sport will continue to be dominated by clubs, **there is a trend away from routine club based competition in adult years,** toward more programs, midweek, night, social and mixed competition and events based activities. A decline in the club-based forms of some sports is evident in the region. For example tennis (the greater proportion of the players are now social night players) lawn bowls and rugby league.

There is growth evident in the region for some sports where this demand has been able to be accommodated. These include:

- ▶ some social 'pay as you play' team sports such as touch football, oz tag / league tag (participation is not as high as other areas, where more fields are available);
- ▶ trail and track based sports such as (mountain biking, trail running, BMX etc)
- ▶ personal training / boot camp style fitness, and dog use of sports grounds

Where an outdoor field sport declines, it is generally relatively easy for the field to absorb other field sports, if the original field is a cricket or rugby league ground.

Australian rules football can typically be played on a senior cricket ground, and soccer on a rugby ground. A decline in diamond sports has been absorbed by football and cricket codes. As hockey has moved to synthetic fields, there has been a reduction in the number of hockey fields used in the region.

Some bowls and tennis clubs have closed.

Lawn bowls greens that are no longer required may be used for petanque, croquet, bocce, futsal, and training activities. There has been some provision for bocce, and futsal created by the closure of bowling clubs (Willoughby) and likely provision for netball by changing the use of tennis courts (Hornsby).

There is a major tension in being able to meet the increased demand identified, and the capacity of existing turf fields and court facilities, to meet this demand.

⁷ excluding water based sports, snows sport, air sports, motor sports, coursing sports and surf sports

There are significant benefits of ensuring that sports clubs that are no longer viable for the sport played are retained for sport and physical activity. Where clubs are opting out (some bowls clubs), or participation is dropping (some tennis clubs) some Councils are turning facilities back into parks (others are becoming residential developments) and some cater for other sports eg futsal, bocce, etc.

Some sports codes such as tennis, have initiated their own strategies to arrest declining numbers, support club development and upgrade facilities that will remain viable and support player development pathways to elite competition.

Key discussion points

Key questions raised when clubs fold or sports decline are:

2.1 Should there just be a natural attrition of these clubs? or:

Should there be intervention to keep a good range of sports, and a good depth of competition in the region or:

Are the growth sports the greater priority?

2.2 Should declining clubs be encouraged to merge, sell, or be taken over by another sport, when they can't continue?

(Or used for a recreation opportunity with greater demand)

2.3 Should Councils or sports seek to support declining clubs and bring them back to life?

(When in some cases, the decline may be in part due to the condition of the facility being poor or functionally obsolete or the nature of the club, rather than an indicator that the sport is in decline).

2.4 What if few bowling clubs remain? When there is considerable demand for barefoot and social bowling, and other bowls clubs have shown that strong well run clubs, with a diversity of offerings and links with schools, can remain viable?

2.5 Is there a possibility of reducing the footprint of golf courses in the region to provide for sports fields (ie less holes or less golf courses overall)?

2.6 Is there a possibility of providing some space on golf courses that can be used for sports field training at night, when golf courses are not being used?

2.7 Are there any sports missing from any Council area or the region that should be provided for in the long term?

Proposed key principles

■ Priority use of sportsgrounds

Priority users of sportsgrounds are organised community sports with informal sport and other recreation and dog users as secondary users.

■ Diversity of opportunities

Ensure that a range of sports continue to be offered in the region, to protect choice for an increasingly diverse population.

■ No Net Loss

There are significant benefits of ensuring that the land on which sports clubs are located (that are no longer viable for the sport played) is retained for sport and physical activity purposes.

■ Do more with less

The carrying capacity of existing grounds should be increased, or additional facilities found to accommodate demand.

■ Club viability

Support the provision of facilities that will assist the development of viable clubs (who deliver sports competitions).

■ Market available sports

Ensure existing sports opportunities in the region are well marketed to residents by Councils.



3. Planning & managing infrastructure to respond to demand, and carrying capacity of grounds

Challenges and opportunities

There will be more people wanting to play sport with the increase in population, even though there may be a decline in the proportion of people playing sport, and club members.

There has been an overall decline in the availability of playing fields due to urban development, and less school grounds, although some Councils have some new fields in planning (Ku-ring-gai and Hornsby).

The lack of supply of playing fields is compounded by the lack of indoor sporting facilities. Only two new indoor facilities are likely to come online in the region in the medium term. Joint use of indoor school facilities for sport is compromised by scheduling conflicts, exams use etc.

Realistically indoor school venues tend to only be able to provide for one-off and overflow training.

The condition of amenity blocks is generally only average. Most Councils identified that in the context of demand and very limited funds, funds are being spent as a priority on upgrading fields that are critical to competition be played, rather than on amenity blocks that also need upgrading.

Few new grounds are likely to be provided in future – even brownfield sites. Several new fields are being planned as a result of land swaps or redevelopments: Bedlam Bay – in Hunters Hill from National Parks, North Turramurra Recreation Area and St Ives Showground precinct lands in Ku-ring-gai and Old Mans Valley Berowra and Old Dairy site in Hornsby Shire.

The carrying capacity of existing fields will need to be increased. If the carrying capacity of existing fields cannot be increased, additional grounds and training venues are required to sustain demand.

There are some opportunities to increase carrying capacity of existing sports grounds.

These include: increasing quality of turf through more intensive management and replacement programs; ensuring all grounds are used in both seasons; providing all facilities with lights; negotiating access to school sites; enabling flexible use through design (provision of fields at the same grade, (ie removal of boundary fences, position of lights); seeking additional use of netball courts (these are only used 40% of the time).

Ku-ring-gai has provided trainers to clubs to assist them in using gym facilities instead of fields for training.

The possibility of changing netball surfaces to synthetic grass should be investigated so other sports can use them, especially for training and Futsal.

The demand for midweek night social sport, night competitions and training is increasing. However, a number of fields and courts in the region, do not have lights.

Competition lights are advantageous for sports for training and catch up games etc. Use of sportsgrounds at night can be monitored and restricted by controlling lights - unlike during the day.

Sports lighting standards have increased in recent years and many existing lights would not be compliant.

There is demand from dog walkers to put sportsground lights on (Willoughby), when sport isn't training.

Lights and night activity on sports grounds – especially night competition, in some instances, may impact on adjacent residents.

The carrying capacity of many grounds will be exceeded if night use is in addition to existing use.

The provision of multiple, single field sports facilities is expensive for Councils to provide and service, and logistically inefficient for users and sports to operate. The design of any future facilities should increase economies of scale and the convenience for users, as well as enhance club viability. Where possible the focus should be on achieving several large complexes possibly from brownfield developments, for growth sports such as soccer.

Synthetic fields are a priority for Hockey. They are a requirement of the sport, and the sport is likely to decline due to lack of places to play. Schools may be good sites for synthetic pitches as they can be used during the day by schools, and afterhours by clubs. Synthetic hockey grounds can also accommodate training for other sports.

Some synthetic fields are required especially for training and preseason games, to sustain the demand for soccer. The lack of funds for infrastructure in the region will curtail the provision of synthetic surfaces.

Considerable planning will be required to ensure they are sited so as to allow high use, especially at night, and to minimize: impact on visual quality, and residential amenity through lights and traffic; to budget for the costs of resurfacing, cleaning and grooming, address the affect on players of heat and glare, and provide booking services.

Select sites for synthetic fields should be identified across the region, for both hockey and soccer.

Natural turf is sometimes more flexible and cost effective than synthetic fields.

A quarter of a soccer ground can be returfed each year for ten years, for the same cost as providing one synthetic football ground.

Synthetic fields don't need to be sited in parks. Some times necessary fencing and associated infrastructure can alienate remaining parkland.

Synthetic fields are typically provided on sealed bases, and hence can be put on brownfields sites, car parks and in urban settings etc.

Synthetic fields can turn around poor image and use of low quality and remote grounds in marginal locations by bringing life, night activity and focus to such areas.

Hunters Hill Council indicated it has a ground that is under utilised due to its remoteness and lack of facilities.

Most Councils in the region are harvesting water, installing bores, and trialing new turf species or spreading recycled organics on turf to increase turf growth and decrease water requirements. Systems to turn off irrigation and lights are also being installed when funds become available. Water harvesting and subsurface irrigation works have been partly funded by Section 94 funds across the region. However, due to capping, and constraints on how these funds can be used, funding for such works is likely to be scarcer in the future.

Some sports have introduced modifications that make it is easier for Council to deliver infrastructure and manage carrying capacity. Sports have introduced new formats like small-sided games that use smaller fields. Adjustments to schedules such as playing at night can also spread the load.

Some sports have, or are moving from an Association (large complex) based format, to a home and away competition, that require a smaller number of grounds (eg diamond sports).

Some sports such as Rugby League have capped teams elsewhere, to better match availability of facilities and prevent some clubs getting larger and more successful, at the expense of other clubs. This may need to be considered for soccer.

A regional approach to tennis may be needed in line with the desire by the sport to strategically provide better facilities, ITF approved surfaces, and pathways to elite performance.

Where new facilities are possible, there will be considerable gains for sport and Council if they are designed so that:

- ▶ there are a large number of fields for the one code provided at the one location, and preferably at the same grade
- ▶ the design ensures a good relationship between amenity blocks and the ground
- ▶ playing fields are laid out to: minimise the cost of lighting and the need for fencing; so as to maximise sharing; and to comply with codes and Australian Standards

- ▶ a basic amenity block can serve two to four playing fields. They should include adequate storage for two codes as well as a shared canteen, accessible toilets and change facilities (suitable for males and females and summer and winter tenants) as well as umpires and first aid rooms,)
- ▶ car parks should be provided on the perimeter or outside the reserve, rather than taking up valuable parkland.

Where fields and courts can withstand additional use, utilisation may be increased through the following means:

- ▶ **Ensure all facilities are used in both seasons**
- ▶ **Use transportable goal posts for soccer,** (those complying to Australian Standards (e.g. AS 4866.1 2007). This provides more flexibility to deal with preseason, competition for juniors and seniors and sharing with other sports
- ▶ **Provide lights** on all fields and courts

- ▶ **Program use during the day.** With an ageing population, and an increasing number of people working flexible hours or not in the workforce, it is likely there are more people that could play social sports in nonpeak times
- ▶ Provide incentives such as price to encourage clubs to reschedule competitions away from peak times, and to share more
- ▶ **Target social and lunch time competitions for workers and tertiary students.** Some Councils in the region already provide corporate competitions in business centres ie North Sydney and Willoughby
- ▶ **Communicate with users** to better identify trends in demand and supply and plan facilities to respond to these.
- ▶ **Develop and manage school sites for community use (and other partners).** However there are few schools in some areas, and many have lost their grounds to building development. Schools may work best for training, social sports and some sports e.g. hockey and small footprint sports e.g. small sided games – soccer.

- ▶ Major funds are required to provide lights and access to toilets, and upgrade grounds on schools for community use.

Key discussion points

3.1 Can better use be made of facilities if a better hierarchy of facilities is provided for each sport, and across the region?

I.e. would fewer grounds be needed if more were synthetic?

3.2 Are there too many or too few facilities at the correct hierarchy for the region as a whole?

I.e. 9 or 18 hole golf courses or regional synthetic athletics tracks compared with grass tracks. Two regional synthetic athletics tracks are provided just outside the region – at Narrabeen and Sydney Olympic Park.

3.3 Are there any opportunities to provide one or two new large sporting complexes in the region in the long term?

3.4 Could NSROC approach and negotiate the development of select school sites for sport, as a group?

3.5 How can sporting groups modify their game formats, structures, training programs or specific playing surface requirements, to allow greater sharing, or reduce the impact of sport on grounds in the region?

3.6 Should sports (such as cricket) be able to develop home grounds?

3.7 What variations to field requirements could be made that would enable greater sharing?

Proposed key principles

- **New facilities designed for maximum viability, sustainability and use**
- **Maximise use of grounds**
Install lights, use in both seasons, develop and manage selected schools sites, using transportable goals, encourage social and lunch time competitions for workers and students
- **Increase carrying capacity of grounds through** improved turf management, well designed support facilities, and the selective introduction of synthetic surfaces where funds become available

- **Increase carrying capacity of grounds** through improved turf management, well designed support facilities, and the selective introduction of synthetic surfaces where funds become available. For low level cricket competitions, synthetic cricket wickets may be more cost effective than turf, and they have a higher carrying capacity and allow more games per day.
- **Synthetic fields are not suited to all sports, and all sites** ensure any development is preceded by feasibility, detailed planning and design
- **Adopt a regional checklist to identify suitable school sites for community use**
- **Involve sports associations in devising strategies to work together to increase participation, whilst addressing over use, and maintaining infrastructure in good condition**



4. Pricing and occupancy of facilities

Challenges and opportunities

There are as many similarities as differences in the pricing and allocation of grounds by Councils in the region.

Unlike in many areas, clubs in the NSROC region are being charged by the hour, due to high demand and limited supply of facilities

An increasing number of informal users are using grounds ie fitness and dog trainers, and clubs notice that these groups don't always have to pay!

In most cases, fees distinguish between major grounds with turf cricket fields from those without turf wickets. Most fee structures separate fees for individual codes and for different seasons.

Most fee structures have rates for users from outside the LGA, casual users, seasonal users, personal trainers and schools. Day use and night use is typically separated.

School use is generally not charged (except Carnivals / private schools) however North Sydney Council charge schools a fee.

Discounts are offered for upfront payments and in some cases for juniors.

Local context tends to determine the nature of permit and licence arrangements. As some Councils have few facilities, agreements are often relatively informal and reflect local conditions.

Some conditions of use are very detailed and other Councils do not have these documented.

More Councils are accepting club contributions to development and maintenance works. Councils expect these will increase to significant amounts. At present there isn't any consistency in how these are dealt with, except that clubs typically assume once they have contributed that they have additional rights.

Club contributions to maintenance or capital improvements should be encouraged to elevate facilities to an agreed standard, or to maintain them to a level above what is possible for Council (but within that acceptable for the grade of ground).

In most cases, there is no identifiable basis for fees charged. Councils have just added CPI over the years, and there is some benchmarking so fees are relatively similar. However, in most cases fees charged work out to be approximately 20-25% of the marginal cost of maintenance.

In most Councils, hirers wouldn't know that they are being subsidised by 80+ %. (Ryde's management plan does outline the subsidy for each association and club).

Price can be used as an incentive to increase occupancy at nonpeak periods, divert demand away from high quality facilities, share facilities, and increase participation among certain groups etc.

There is a trend away from leasing sport facilities, and toward providing licenses, where sharing can be better facilitated.

Conditions of hire or tenure can also be used as an incentive to ensure regional principles are met, and use is managed in keeping with the carrying capacity of grounds.

Commercial fitness trainers provide an important service to people who may not want to participate through a sports club.

However, their regular use of sports grounds may contribute to the carrying capacity of grounds being exceeded. Most Councils charge trainers and have, or are preparing policies about this.

If trainers were happy using other fit-for-purpose spaces off sportsgrounds that don't cost anything over and above parkland to maintain, Council could allow trainers to use these spaces for differential rates.

There are some issues around the consistency of policy to do with length of seasons, preseason training and competition and grading days, wet weather arrangements. These inconvenience associations that play across the whole region.

Some Councils don't allow sports to play in both seasons. Some others may have the capacity to do so. This could be co-ordinated across the region.

To ease the pressure on competition grounds, training could be diverted away from grounds to the following:

- ▶ pitch surrounds on multi-field grounds
- ▶ lower grade fields
- ▶ synthetic pitches and courts
- ▶ trail, beach and gym sessions, facilitated by instructors
- ▶ schools grounds
- ▶ hard court tennis courts (netball training)

Council could use their pricing and occupancy agreements to provide incentives for better management and distribution of resources, and encourage clubs to meet their sports objectives.

To reduce the pressure on grounds Councils could require clubs to produce an alternative training plan as part of the condition of occupancy. Such a plan would determine off-field training the club will provide once a week, or in wet weather, Activities might include use of pools, gym, trails, beaches, circuit training, spin classes etc.

Some Councils do not allocate grounds on Sundays. There is a tendency elsewhere for women and juniors to play on Sundays. This allows: private school students to play in community competitions; to allow female and emerging sports space they would not otherwise be given; to spread the load on grounds across two days; and allow consistency for sports associations who play across multiple Council areas.

In the context of current demand and the value of sport, grounds need to be used on Sunday; however there may be some value in retaining no Sunday use on select grounds. Especially in suburbs where open space is limited and sports demand is lower.

Key discussion points

- 4.1 Can allocation and hire conditions policies and procedures be made consistent across the region?
- 4.2 Should personal trainers and dog trainers be allowed to use sports grounds? Should they pay like clubs?
- 4.3 Should all sportsgrounds be used on Sundays? Or: Should some grounds be reserved on Sundays for social / family recreation where space is tight in the municipality?
- 4.4 Should club contributions to facility development or management be allowed and on what basis?
- 4.5 Should clubs and casual users pay the same fee for the same quality ground across the region?
- 4.6 A number of sportsground hire policies state residents outside the LGA should pay more. Should this be the case, or Could residents from the region be considered the same?

Proposed key principles

■ Collective acknowledgment of residents vs. non-residents use of grounds

Given that people will need to travel for access to regional facilities, and typically people pay at clubs where they have friends or allegiances - and thence these may be outside the municipality, residents of any Council in the region should not have to pay more to use facilities in another municipality beyond the different costs that may be associated with specific field quality and maintenance.

■ Regional policy on seasonal changeovers and schools, and standard conditions of hire

Core principles and conditions associated with these would be desirable across the region. However different policies about sports played in both seasons, and pre season training and competition may be advantageous, to assist in meeting the demand.

■ Create buy-in

Partner state sporting bodies, to endorse and implement agreements and policy decisions



■ **Pricing and allocation is about marketing**

The value of what clubs receive (80%+ subsidy) and the cost of maintenance must be communicated to clubs. Provide discounts for clubs who train off-field, and share.

Occupancy agreements should specify what both parties could do, to meet Councils sports objectives.

■ **Divert training off grounds**

Fields are primarily for competition. As the default position allow training once per week on sports grounds in winter and provide additional training off-pitch and in wet weather.

■ **Hire fees as a percentage of cost**

Councils should seek to recoup at least 20% of the marginal cost of maintenance of grounds, from users.

■ **Club contributions**

Contributions can be made on the basis that ownership remains with Council, use continues to be shared, and the contribution has a sunset clause. Contributions may be rewarded by a rental rebate or rent-free period, or a term of occupancy sufficient to amortize investment.

■ **One standard system to book and allocate grounds**

Council could consider using the same software product eg CLASS software (already used by Ryde Council), or similar, to include invoicing and web entry for sports grounds applications etc. and assist in recording demand for grounds.



5. Funding capital works as well as planning and management

Challenges and opportunities

The major sports ground issue facing Councils in the NSROC region is the lack of capital to: keep facilities in good order, increase sustainability and carrying capacity of existing grounds, and / or provide new facilities.

NSW does not have the grant programs for sports related capital works or planning that other states have. A number of sport and government funding partnerships are evident in other states to develop facilities (eg Victorian football / netball grants, Strengthening the World Game grants for synthetic football pitches etc.)

There has been a reliance on Section 94 funds in the region for sport, collected over a long period. These have enabled some of the current major works occurring on Council grounds to occur (eg water harvesting and ground redevelopments). **The current capping of these to \$20,000 per lot, and constraints as to what these can be used for, will significantly influence the nature of future sports ground infrastructure improvement works.**

Capital contributions by clubs may now be required to provide the considerable funds required especially for the improvement of amenities. Clubs have contributed in a very small way in the past. Clear policies about management of club capital and recurrent funding will be required to overcome perceptions about ownership and exclusive use, and to introduce sunset clauses to agreements.

Several Councils in the region have, or are seeking to introduce a rate levy for sport / recreation infrastructure works. Approval by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal is now required for this to occur, due to rate capping.

The main sources of funds for capital projects available to Local Government for sport are as follows:

- ▶ Council capital works and asset management programs
- ▶ Philanthropic Trusts / Foundations etc
- ▶ Development contributions (s94 plans)
- ▶ Naming rights, or sponsorship funds
- ▶ Government grants
- ▶ Lease fees, such as from telecommunication towers
- ▶ Special rates levied by Council
- ▶ A recreation reserves fund set up using hire charges and lease fees
- ▶ Local clubs may channel considerable CDSE funds into sport
- ▶ Partnerships /joint ventures with service clubs and users
- ▶ Peak sporting body funds

The seeking of funds from these various projects can be a considerable task, involving multiple parties.

In NSW, recreation and sports planning roles in Local Government are not as well resourced as in other states such as Western Australia and Victoria.

If Councils accept the shift in sports roles to include additional planning, marketing, and sports development additional resources may be required. Increased planning and management time to increase performance of facilities as well as seeking funds for infrastructure will necessitate additional human resources for sport. These roles could be partly met through provision of regional resources for specific projects, or the procurement of funds or they could be delivered or co-ordinated regionally.

The possibility of establishing a NSROC Sports Foundation should be investigated that would look at opportunities to work with licensed clubs in the region to channel funds into regional initiatives or the development of infrastructure in the region.

Key discussion points

- 5.1 Are there other opportunities to fund improvements to sportsgrounds?
- 5.2 What will the fallout be from less s94 funds being available?
- 5.2 What can sports bring to the table to provide leverage for state or local funds to be directed into regional infrastructure projects?
- 5.3 What are the priority sports infrastructure projects for the region? How could they be funded?

Proposed key principles

- **Creatively package funds from multiple sources**
- **Resource Regional Funding Co-ordination**

Collectively NSROC should seek partnerships with sports (such as soccer and hockey) and the state government, to develop infrastructure across the region.

- **State contributions**

Councils are not able to secure sufficient funds to provide for necessary sportsground infrastructure without state government assistance.

- **Contributions from Clubs**

Contributions will be required from sports clubs and associations to meet their support facility needs. Clear policy will set out expectations of clubs and Council to manage such contributions.

Appendix 1. Projected numbers of participants for each sport, by Municipality, 2021⁸

Sport	Hornsby	Hunters Hill	Ku-ring-gai	Lane Cove	North Sydney	Ryde	Willoughby	TOTAL
Soccer	14,948	1,405	10,973	2,971	5,688	10,268	6,399	52,652
Tennis	13,912	1,325	9,981	2,788	5,823	9,864	6,062	49,755
Golf	13,399	1,289	9,449	2,701	5,986	9,720	5,916	48,460
Cricket	6,061	575	4,384	1,211	2,456	4,251	2,625	21,563
Netball	5,686	533	4,192	1,128	2,121	3,881	2,425	19,966
Rugby League	4,168	388	3,103	824	1,487	2,806	1,764	14,540
Lawn bowls	3,573	344	2,520	720	1,596	2,592	1,578	12,923
Rugby Union	2,829	272	1,995	570	1,264	2,052	1,249	10,231
Hockey	2,462	234	1,778	492	1,005	1,731	1,068	8,770
Athletics	1,693	156	1,282	333	555	1,111	707	5,837
Aust. rules football	1,486	139	1,097	295	552	1,013	634	5,216
Touch football	1,271	119	938	252	473	867	542	4,462
Softball	1,191	115	840	240	532	864	526	4,308
Baseball	447	43	315	90	200	324	197	1,616

These figures were calculated by multiplying the projected populations for 2021 for each municipality by the latest participation rates for NSW available for each sport.

⁸ Exercise Recreation and Sports Survey, SCORS, 2009
Children’s Participation in Cultural and Leisure Activities, ABS, 2010