

DEVELOPMENT OF NSROC REGIONAL SPORTSGROUNDS MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

BACKGROUND INFORMATION May 2010

PROJECT AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

This project has been developed by the Northern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils through the NSROC Sports Officers Group. The aim of the project is to develop a Regional Sportsground Strategy to improve coordination of community sportsground management across the northern Sydney region to maximize participation opportunities and deliver community health and amenity benefits.

There are two key outcomes from the Strategy:

- a) the establishment of principles for future community sportsground development across the region; and
- b) the determination of a regional upgrade and infrastructure development program – to facilitate regional bids for funding for sportsgrounds and negotiation with other sportsground providers;

A discussion paper will be released in mid 2010 followed by consultation. Public submissions to the discussion paper will be sought from sports associations and other interested parties. A report and proposed Regional Strategy is anticipated to be completed by end of 2010.

CONTEXT

Shortage of community sport facilities to meet demand

NSROC Councils have identified an acute shortage of community sports facilities, particularly sportsgrounds, in the northern Sydney Region which is set to worsen with continued population growth and higher participation in organized community sport. Councils are challenged with funding constraints which impede sports infrastructure development and maintenance. These constraints are limiting each Council's capacity to meet current and future needs.

The "Crawford" report into the Future of Sport in Australia

The Independent Sport Panel report commissioned by the Australian Government was released in November 2009. The report's findings confirmed key problems with community sports infrastructure that have long been identified by NSROC councils (Findings 32-37):

- *Facilities for sport are not meeting demand and in the case of field sports, the drought is making this problem worse.*
- *In general, local governments do not have sufficient resources to address sporting needs.*
- *Existing facilities in schools, universities and defence installations are underutilized.*
- *There is insufficient data on supply of and demand for facilities to make informed decisions and local planning is patchy.*
- *Australian Government funding for sports facilities has been ad hoc and not based on a strategic assessment of competing community needs.*
- *Community sports facility funding is not co-ordinated across Australian Governments.*

A regional approach

Each NSROC council has land and facility constraints which limit the capacity to meet each sport's growing demand in their LGA. However, through a regional strategic approach, it is suggested that better regional provisioning and management of sportsgrounds could be achieved. Existing funding systems emphasize that community sports management should undertaken comprehensively and at

an economy of scale which provides the maximum benefit. Given that many community sports are regionally managed and funded, regional provision of facilities should be considered in parallel.

SOME KEY ISSUES TO BE EXAMINED IN DISCUSSION PAPER

- **Managing legacy and emerging sports**

How can Councils balance the needs of those established sports with declining membership and popularity against new high demand sports? What obligations or roles do councils have in preserving historic or local connections with certain sports and allowing for growth of new ones? How do Council address the issue of legacy sports' financial contributions to certain ground development? What recognition should be given to new sports that wish to contribute to new or existing facilities?

- **Common pricing and hiring policies**

Should NSROC councils be applying common pricing policies for sportsground hire across the region? What should be the criteria for pricing- cost recovery, cost neutral, ability to pay, per head costings? To what extent do hiring policies differ and should these differences be reconciled?

- **Accessing schools and other third party providers**

What have been the main impediments for school access. Have NSROC councils been successful in accessing school facilities? What scope is there for NSROC councils to further develop Community Partnerships with School Playing Fields?

- **Multi-use facilities and complementary facilities**

Should Councils encourage multi-use facilities as the first preference for upgrade and new developments? What is the evidence that multi-use facilities maximise usage against cost? What agreement types and management arrangement options are suitable for multi-use facilities?

- **Sport development and game modification**

Various sports are developing modified competition timetables, game formats and alternative training regimes. To what extent can these modifications ease sportsground demand? What can councils do to support these options?

- **New technologies and environmental management**

New technologies, particularly synthetic playing surfaces, provide a fourfold increase in usage of fields. To what extent can these surfaces be used in the region? What are the impacts on the environment from these alternatives with respect to water use etc? What innovative energy efficient options are available for lighting?

- **Funding and management structures**

What are the patterns for funding for sports across the region? Can collective, aggregated funding improve sportsground utilisation and bring benefits to the community? What scope is there for trusts, corporate sponsorship, special rates and developer levies to be used to fund regional sportsground facilities? How do Sports Councils operate and to what extent have Sports Accords been made between NSW councils and sporting associations?

- **Development planning and private providers**

What planning controls could be considered by councils to encourage provision of sportsgrounds or alternative training facilities in new developments? Should councils or the region consider facility provision ratios (as in UK) as part of their development requirements? What criteria should be used to evaluate the impacts on amenity and surrounds from new or expanding facilities?

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