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Mr Bjarne Nordin
Parliament of NSW
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

8 August 2006

Our ref: D06/13654 (COR2006/868)

Dear Mr Nordin

Sportsground Management in New South Wales

I refer to Mr Kevin Greene MP's request for submissions to the inquiry into Sportsground Management in New South Wales.

Please find enclosed a draft strategic document on Parks in Ryde entitled "Parks on Track for People 2025", a schedule of fees and charges for 2006/2007 as contained in the Management Plan and comments on the Key Issues by myself. My comments on the key issues are not those of Council. However, I have some twenty – five (25) years of experience in managing a wide range of elite and community sportsgrounds in the public domain including Central Coast Stadium and the University of NSW, local government areas of Sydney, Sutherland, Gosford, Canberra and Cowra.

If you require further information on this project please contact me on 9952 8250.

Yours sincerely



Peter Hickman
Manager – Parks

SPORTSGROUND MANAGEMENT IN NSW

This submission is from professional Council staff. It is not necessarily the opinion of elected representatives and should not be treated as the position of the City of Ryde.

Adequacy of provision of sportsgrounds in key demand areas

Major issues

Size and shape of the area

Areas available for use as playing fields are generally filled areas. Although they may be sufficient in size they may not be able to provide an efficient lay out of the playing fields. Ideally there should be sufficient room for cricket pitches not to conflict with football fields. There also needs to be a minimum of two football fields per park so that seniors and juniors can proceed at the same time at the same venue.

Cricket pitches are north/south oriented.

There are traditionally few areas available for the growing Australian Rules Code in NSW.

Substrata on which it is constructed

Old tip site

Invariably, undulations develop as the foundations rust/decompose/collapse. There is also capping material that stops percolation of water. Subsidence causes problems with drainage and in-ground irrigation systems.

Poor capping can lead to leachate problems in nearby waterways.

Old filled area

There is generally poor drainage that limits the quality of this type of playing field. There may be subsidence.

In coastal areas there may be issues with sodic soils that do not drain or tidal effects.

There may be problems with drainage caused by blockage of natural drainage. For example water may be forced the wrong way back up a natural drainage system. An example is Rogers Park at Woy Woy.

Rock

Percolation and drainage issues are found here as well. There will be difficulties with trenching for irrigation and

drainage. Turf will be susceptible because of the limited capacity of the shallow soil profile to hold water.

Construction material

Capital availability for construction limits the materials able to be used to lower than optimum quality.

Changing use patterns (seasons)

Football codes want earlier starts to the seasons. This clashes with summer uses. Eg Summer soccer

Department of Sport and Recreation role

There is virtually no assistance for the funding of playing fields from the Department. Grant funding is microscopic in terms of the total construction costs of playing fields (approx \$200/m² for a Motz construction). The major grant (\$200,000) is directed towards the development of Regional Facilities.

- *What is the role of the Department?*
- *Why does the Department own and run holiday camps?*

The Department of Sport and Recreation is responsible for and runs areas such as the Broken Bay Recreation Facility for example. The resources used to maintain and operate facilities such as this would be far better used distributed to communities through Councils for delivery to meet identified and genuine need.

An alternative would be to introduce a grant program to enable the delivery of Leisure Centres, combined wet/dry facilities, as in Victoria.

Practice and training

Winter codes want earlier and earlier access to fields. This provides additional wear and tear on the turf surface as well as conflict with summer sports.

What criteria should determine the provision of sports facilities?

- Demographics, the age structure of the population, the cultural make up of the population etc (as analysed in the appended document "Parks on Track for People 2025")
- Trends in the uptake of sports as analysed by the Australian Sports Commission
- Health outcomes. Funding for health comes down from the Federal Government to the State Government. The main well-being interventions are from local government (leisure centres,

beaches, playing fields) that receive no funding from higher levels of government. Local government has very little funding available, and limited funding sources, to meet construction and the following maintenance costs.

- With the realisation that physical activity has health benefits, there is growth in demand for leisure and recreation facilities. However in the established areas there is no significant Section 94 funding to meet this new demand.
- There is a need to identify and meet demand for regional facilities. Ryde, for example, should be able to claim funding for providing facilities for, and meeting the demands of Netball. Ryde provides Netball facilities for the whole of Parramatta, Ryde and Hunters Hill LGA's and the lower half of the Hornsby LGA. There is a similar position for Baseball.

Current requirement for updating and refurbishment of sportsgrounds and supporting infrastructure

Major issues

Construction

Ideal construction has use implications. Good sand profile construction, such as Motz construction, limits use as once the turf cover is worn, there is no cohesion in the sand.

A profile that does not have good drainage becomes compacted and will not grow grass.

Amenities

Many amenities buildings were completed when there were men-only users. Greater female participation in sports such as soccer mean that amenities are inadequate.

Recent changes to Disability Discrimination Legislation means that Amenities facilities no longer comply.

Higher levels of Government are always too willing to change the existing environment with legislation, but are never there to assist with funding and capital to undertake the change. Worse, they limit the ability of Local Government to comply, because of the 'Rate Pegging' restriction..

Changes in sport popularity

Growth in new sports leads to expenses such as new goals, different seasons etc. Summer sports such as

summer soccer and touch football wear fields that are unable to recover over summer from winter overuse.

Perceived ownership

There is difficulty in reallocation of fields away from declining sports to increasing ones.

Turf species

There are insufficient funds to utilise winter species oversowing as a management strategy, and use is too high to use the strategy in any case. Therefore there is no grass actively growing in the winter.

Lighting

Australian standards for playing field lighting have been revised in recent years. There is no local government authority that is compliant with the new standards because they can't afford it.

The statement that "Capital improvements are funded by council's and through capital assistance programs from the state government such as the Department of Sport and Recreation." is misleading. The State Government supply a microscopic amount of funding. The pitiful \$200,000 max grant from the DSR is directed for Regional Facilities not neighbourhood or local facilities.

Appropriateness and fairness of council pricing principles for facilities

Major issues

Use by residents of other LGA's

This is a major issue in Ryde as is explained in the appended "Parks on Track for People 2025" strategy.

School use

Schools make 10,000 hrs of playing field use every year at Ryde. There is no contribution from other levels of Government to Local Government for the provision of facilities.

Schools from out of the area

Schools from outside the LGA, utilising playing fields are charged.

Department of Education and Training failure to share grounds.

The Department has areas of land that could be utilised but does not make them available at its Smalls Road (Ryde) site.

Environmental issues, including water conservation and grounds maintenance

Major issues

Water Conservation

The use of alternative water sources must be investigated and resolved. There are restrictions on collection methods through the requirement to leave overland flows unobstructed.

Financial assistance for implementing strategies for water harvesting and reuse needs to be introduced.

Water, however, must be of suitable quality for turfgrass. Saline water needs to be followed up by applications of lime.

Fertiliser misconceptions

Sensible application of fertilisers based on soil analysis and plant requirement will not allow the escape of nutrients through the soil. Nutrients are held as chelates in soils.

Residential amenity, public liability and security issues

Major issues

Parking is an issue where playing fields are concentrated in location and positioned in residential areas. The parking demand for sports such as netball is high because the length of the game is short, many games are played at one site, and there are 14 to 22 players/umpires per game.

There need to be systems in place and maintained for monitoring ground conditions, weather monitoring and use. Wet weather closures need to be promulgated to the users. Feral animals can make surfaces unsafe where there are boundaries on large spaces, such as cemeteries or wildlife refuges, where rabbits, for example, can live.

Rate pegging

The Independent Inquiry into the Financial Sustainability of NSW Local Government confirms Rate Pegging to be a major constraint on the provision of appropriate infrastructure for communities in New South Wales.