



22 August 2006

The Committee Manager  
Standing Committee on Public Works  
Legislative Assembly  
Parliament of New South Wales  
Macquarie Street  
Sydney NSW 2000

**RE: INQUIRY INTO SPORTSGROUND MANAGEMENT IN NSW**

Dear Sir/Madam

Thank-you for inviting Randwick City Council to respond to your call for submissions in relation to the Standing Committee's Inquiry into sportsground management in NSW. I note also my appreciation over the extended date for submissions.

Randwick City Council welcomes this Inquiry and is pleased to provide the attached submission covering Randwick City's experiences and suggestions for improving sportsground management.

Randwick City is one of the largest inner Sydney Councils, with significant open spaces that cater not only to local residents, but also to Sydney, New South Wales, Australian and International visitors.

Given our large local area, Randwick City has almost 10 square km, in total, of parks and reserves, coastal areas and beaches that cater for large numbers of people participating in active and passive recreational activities. Council recognises the value of these areas for sports, leisure, cultural and social interests and for the health and wellbeing of our local residents and visitors. This is reflected in Council's 20 year strategy, the Randwick City Plan (Appendix 1) and our ongoing commitment to substantial capital and recurrent costs for establishing, maintaining and upgrading these sporting and leisure facilities.

While Council is keen to encourage and support healthy lifestyles, we are also increasingly concerned at the escalating costs of meeting the community expectations, while there are limited opportunities for sufficient and sustainable funding. Similarly, the demand for sporting facilities crosses local government boundaries and greater recognition should be given from the State Government in these instances.

I look forward to the Inquiry's recognition of the importance of encouraging participation in active and passive recreation while providing Councils and other relevant organisations with broader and more substantial funding sources and encouraging partnership approaches that will enable us to realistically meet today's and future sporting needs and demands. If you have would like to discuss any matters raised, please do not hesitate to contact me on 9399 0803 or Karen Armstrong, Manager of Strategic Planning, on 9399 0895.

Yours sincerely

Ray Brownlee  
**General Manager**

## **Submission to the Inquiry into Sportsground Management in NSW from Randwick City Council.**

### **Randwick City Council context.**

Randwick City has an area of 37.42 square kilometres and is located in the Eastern suburbs of the Sydney Metropolitan area, within 5 km of the CBD. Open space in the City comprises a range of privately owned, National Park, State parks and Council owned facilities and comprises the second largest land use in the City of Randwick. Along with local and regional sporting grounds, Randwick City has 29.3 Kilometres of coastline, catering for local residents, Sydneysiders and tourist. Significant open spaces in Randwick City include:-

Botany Bay National Park  
The Eastern Suburbs Coastal Walkway  
Centennial Park  
Randwick Race Course  
Various golf clubs  
103 local parks  
Regional sporting facilities, including Heffron Park and Coogee Oval  
Nine beaches and a number of coastal pools.

Local and regional sportsgrounds are located within the City (Attached, Appendix 2) catering to a multitude of sports, including:-

- AFL
- Baseball/Softball
- Bowling, both indoor and outdoor
- Cricket
- Cycling
- Football, Oz Tag and touch football
- Golf
- Gymnastics
- Hockey
- Netball
- Rugby League
- Rugby union
- Soccer
- Swimming
- Tennis
- Triathlon
- Walking/Jogging

Randwick's' population in 2001 (ASB Census) was 121,497, representing an increase of 5.3% over a 10 year period. Compared to the rest of Sydney, we have higher proportion of younger people, (20-29 years old) and older people (over 75 years), with ageing of the population expected to be the most significant trend. The State Government's Metropolitan Strategy estimates another 20,000 residents will reside in Randwick City over the next 25 years. With growth across Sydney estimated at over 1 million, and with the popular sporting and recreation destinations in Randwick City, we are expecting significant increasing pressures on our facilities in future. Randwick City's beaches, for example, attract over 8 Million people per year, while the population supporting these facilities is only around 125,000. Our planning thus needs to cater to demographic changes locally and throughout Sydney.

## **KEY ISSUES**

A key issue for Randwick City Council is community health and wellbeing, for which sports and leisure are important. Council recognises the increasing community needs and expectations for quality sporting facilities and is currently in the process of undertaking a Recreational Needs Study to isolate key issues within the community and plan for the future of facilities provision and improvements.

While pressure is increasing for Councils to meet community expectations, the sporting groups and associations along with community and school groups have limited resources to commit to these facilities. Council, in turn, subsidises these facilities to ensure that they remain accessible to all groups in the community. In Randwick City's case, the facilities often provide for the adjoining council and the regional demands for the sports and recreation, further subsidising access to sports and leisure beyond our local residents.

Randwick City Council is continually seeking innovative ways to viably meet the sporting and recreation demands. The State Government needs to play a greater role, particularly with increased funding sources and strong guidance for private/public partnerships.

## **INQUIRY CONSIDERATIONS**

### **1. Adequacy of provision of quality sportsgrounds to meet community needs across NSW.**

The Sydney Metropolitan Strategy identifies the expected growth in the population across our City over the next 25 years. These growth targets need to be sufficiently matched with access to open space provision. While the inner city areas such as Randwick City will have larger populations, the areas of open space are largely fixed. To encourage the population to continue to play sport, exercise and enjoy recreation, intensity of use of the existing spaces will be needed. The Metro Strategy recognises this and focuses on quality of spaces, and also notes that appropriate funding and governance options will be investigated. These should be undertaken as a priority.

The State Government is preparing Sub-regional strategies to provide further details on the implementation of the Metropolitan Strategy. For the eastern region of Sydney, this is expected to be released for comment in September. Council will use the sub-regional strategy to plan among other things for its future sporting and recreational facilities.

Sporting groups and the community have increasingly high expectations on the quality and services provided and with many regional sportsgrounds within close proximity, Council endeavours to ensure that these are of a regional standard.

Sporting groups are continually expanding their competitions to meet demand including summer sports such as soccer, Oztag and Kanga Cricket. These new and expanded competitions are placing additional wear on sports field surfaces, which requires higher costs. To minimise conflict between different sporting codes, extending use of grounds through additional costs such as lighting is also required.

### **2. Cost and revenue arrangements including capital upgrades.**

This is the key issue for councils for sportsgrounds provision, upgrades and maintenance, particularly given the expanding range of sports and specialities within sports and the demand for quality facilities to match, along with the need to intensify the use of limited open space.

Providing adequate sporting facilities for the community places extreme financial pressure on Council in terms of funding capital improvements and ongoing maintenance. At the same time, council revenue sources are limited and restrictions via rate pegging limits the main source of revenue for councils. These costs are a significant amount of the annual. In 2006/2007, Randwick City's budget of approximately \$85M includes funding of approx \$9M for the following:

- Open space capital improvements and embellishments – approx \$4.5M
- Des Renford aquatic centre (net cost of administration) – approx \$700,000
- Parks, playground and facilities maintenance – approx \$3.25M
- Maintenance of sports fields surfaces – approx \$530,000

While these are significant amounts, the funds provide for limited improvements and maintenance only, and they are used throughout the City on numerous parks and sports fields. Council also separately costs improvements and maintenance of beach facilities (approx \$2.8M for services and inspectors). Other costs may also arise that are not measured above, such as bush regeneration and noxious weeds spraying.

Council retains low fees and charges for use of its sporting facilities, to promote active and healthy lifestyles. Extracts from Councils' 2006/07 fees and charges are provided at Attachment 4.

Randwick City has a large, both domestic and international tourist influx, especially during the summer months, due the beaches located in the city and other privately owned sporting destinations (eg Racecourse). With this comes extra need for maintenance and upgrade to provide services and facilities for not only the local communities but the tourists visiting the area. Council, in effect, heavily subsidises the use by these visitors.

Randwick City has many open space areas used for regional sporting activities including Centennial Park and Royal Randwick Race Course. Although Council is not directly responsible for these, the facilities place additional pressure on Council financially as other infrastructure facilities such as roads need to meet the demands associated with the high volume of people utilising these facilities. Section 94 legislative changes will go a small way to assisting in the escalating costs, however cannot be used for maintenance, and grant funding is limited for sportsgrounds, with most of the key sources providing no more than \$250,000 at one time, and only with 50/50 funding from Council. State Government recognition of the importance of sports and leisure should be focused on substantial grant funding for this purpose. This may lead to reductions in costs to the State for health, given the preventative benefits of sport.

A recent Council initiative in sportsground improvement is the planning for Heffron Park at Matraville, the City's largest sportsground. This is a centrally located park of approximately 44 ha, which provides for a wide range of indoor and outdoor sporting and leisure activities. Council is in the process of preparing a new Plan of Management directing a long term and sustainable future of the park. As part of the planning, Council is also currently exploring options to fund the upgrade and long term maintenance of new and improved sporting facilities to cater for local residents and regional sporting groups.

The Heffron Park Concept plan (see Appendix 3) proposes a substantial upgrade of the park, for national and international standard facilities now being demanded by the community. It includes improvements for all sports using the park, for additional sports via multi-use of fields and to expand and enhance the leisure areas.

The plan contained three funding options for the estimated \$34M of works. These included the traditional methods (rates revenue, S94, rates levy). It also contained

an option that would fully fund the park upgrade in a short period (within 6 years) rather than long term (at least 20 to 50 years) and the high costs of ongoing maintenance, at no cost to the local community. This option involved a residential development contained solely in the airspace above the proposed indoor sporting facility, thus ensuring that the area of the park available for sport was not compromised. While the funding proposal received 62% support through submissions; the nature of the funding proposal raised public controversy and was rejected. However, at the same time, the majority of submissions supported the park proposal (without the residential development option). Council is now exploring a broader range of funding options to realise a quality regional facility.

Further investigation and promotion of innovative funding options by the State Government would be welcome; to assist councils and to provide examples/models that would assure the community that such approaches can be feasible and appropriate. These could include public private partnerships, grants, development options or borrowing/loans. There seems to be growing community concerns over public private partnerships (PPPs), often media driven, suggesting a need and benefit for the State Government to actively promote a variety of options and to provide sound guidance for accountability and managing how they should be applied.

Issues relating to utilisation of sports grounds are varied and for maximum use and financial viability they need to be resolved. Many of these issues can be small in nature; however have inherited problems associated in rectification. For example Council has insufficient sportsgrounds with floodlighting due partly to the strong objection and resistance from neighbouring residents. The costs associated with the installation of floodlighting are also a constraining factor. Council has allocated an amount of \$240,000.00 within the Capital Improvements Program 2006/2007 for floodlighting improvements following consultation with Council's Sports Committee and will only provide training floodlights for four sports fields.

### **3. Environmental concerns associated with sportsground management.**

There are a number of key issues surrounding environmental impacts arising from sportsgrounds, and with this, Council is working on innovative ideas to reduce these effects.

Open space facilities have often been provided on 'left-over' sites such as wetlands and land fill sites. The cost of ensuring their suitability for recreation, particularly should a site require remediation, is an issue of concern. Many of the lands requiring remediation and used for sporting facilities are former Federal or State owned land. However, funding sources for remediation are limited.

Council is active in water saving measures and endeavours to provide the best environmental solutions. Council's indoor pool at Heffron Park has been upgraded for these savings, such as solar blankets on the outdoor pools.

Various soil types provide efficient drainage for sports fields but require additional organic nutrients and water to sustain adequate grass cover. Native plant species are maximised in all parks. Pesticides are often used and Randwick recognises the effects they can have on the environment and thus endeavours to utilise organic and natural products where possible.

Again, while Council is working towards best practice in environmental measures for sportsgrounds this further increases capital costs.

**4. Effectiveness of current administration of sportsgrounds by various providers including councils, state government (including schools) and private operators.**

Traditionally sportsgrounds have been managed by Council with minimal external funding. Sporting groups often provide very limited facilities such as club houses again with minimal external funding sources, thus reflecting the generally poor state of facilities as they try to keep costs low for the benefit of their members.

Often regional facilities are the sole responsibility for one council, however neighbouring Council residents benefit from the facilities as well. For example Heffron Park's funding is the responsibility of Randwick City Council and while it will benefit our residents significantly, one side of the park borders on the residents of Botany Council who enjoy the same benefits without the additional costs associated. Further, the park is used by many sporting groups associated with Metropolitan competition and training.

The coordination and management between neighbouring councils, especially for regional sportsgrounds should be a priority, to essentially eliminate inequities of costs versus use between neighbouring council residents. This coordination would see that the community as a whole, benefit from larger and superior sportsgrounds, rather than numerous small, poor quality sporting facilities. This coordination would not only benefit the residents, it could benefit the whole of Sydney, by attracting sporting groups from outside the area to utilise these facilities for their major events.

**5. Impact on health outcomes and social cohesion, particularly in disadvantaged communities.**

The health benefits of sports are significant not just for increase/maintenance of a person's health and well being but for social interaction. Aside from genetic factors, overweight and obesity is caused by a lack of physical activity. With overweight and obesity amongst Australians increasing significantly between 1997 (38%) and 1999/2000 (43%), Randwick City appreciates the importance of physical activity within the community and providing safe, quality facilities to encourage this.

**Aged/Disability**

With people living longer, the period after retirement is becoming longer, and for many people, more active. They have more time for recreation and cultural pursuits. People will expect more from retirement and will be looking to have quality lifestyles, wherever possible.

The design of recreational facilities, sporting grounds and venues must be adapted accessible to ensure equality of access across the whole community. Again this requires additional funding for facilities.

While participation for older persons in sports leisure is increasing, across the community volunteer work is declining. Hence a traditional means of keeping sporting costs low through volunteers is also expected to decline. Measures to encourage the ageing population to assist with sports should be investigated by all levels of Government.

**Youth & Children**

From primary to tertiary, sport and exercise fits a large percentage of children and young people. Whilst organised sport such as rugby, cricket, football and athletics suit a percentage that have a focus on personal health, fitness, well being and competition. The provisions of quality sports grounds are essential for safe participation in a range of organised activities and the building of friendships and relationships. These experiences are a natural progression from school. As

mentioned, for areas that are deemed disadvantaged, the sports ground is a place where you can excel, enjoy, have fun, form friendships and spend time with family. In Randwick City participation levels in sporting activities are strong and are rapidly increasing for growth sports, for example female soccer. We are keen to further promote and encourage these trends, to overcome the overweight and obesity trends, especially given that patterns established in youth are likely to extend into adulthood.

### **Aboriginal**

In relation to Randwick City's Aboriginal community of La Perouse, sporting fields are very important especially during the winter months (football season) hence the re-development of Yarra Reserve has been a priority for the La Perouse Aboriginal Football Club and in which Council has been providing support.

In this particular resident group and area, it is essential in bringing families and children together, assists in fostering good relationships with each other, other families, friends, community services and the Police. This is also a good way that the latter can participate in the community.

### **Multicultural/access**

Playing fields in high demand are often used by existing, well established and organised groups/associations. Children and young people will have good access to sport through schooling which then leads into weekend leisure activities with friends from school. These links diminish as a person gets older and focuses on family commitments and responsibilities.

Emerging CALD communities may lack the understanding of the processes to organise and access playing fields for their sporting activities.

Affordability in accessing and using such facilities can be a barrier especially for this target group when coupled with low or fixed incomes.

## **6. Traffic, noise and other direct impacts on residential amenity.**

The importance and necessity of sports grounds in our community is generally understood by neighbouring residents, and although traffic and noise can exceed normal patterns especially at weekends, most neighbouring residents of sportsgrounds understand that the negative effects usually outweigh the positive effects of these sports grounds. Nevertheless, large sporting facilities need to be proactive in funding solutions to traffic issues. For example, the major sporting facilities along Anzac Parade (Sydney Football Stadium, Cricket Ground and Randwick Race course) often share facilities in terms of traffic and parking measures.

These joint approaches to major events should be further encouraged and indeed, required. The State Government could be significantly more pro-active in these measures. For example in relation to Randwick Racecourse, part of the site has been used for many years for overflow event parking (including for the nearby major facilities), yet this was recently sold by the State Rail Authority (STA) in 2003 to a private developer. This need to better focus on strategic and integrated land use and transport planning for open space needs to be reviewed as a priority.

## **7. Affect of litigation and insurance costs on financial viability**

Although the perception is that insurance costs are on the rise, for many, especially larger organisations, provided proof of managing risk is shown, insurance costs are reducing. However, most local and small sporting groups pay high insurance costs, which are inevitably passed onto the player. While Council covers some of the insurance, the sporting clubs are the ones paying the majority of user insurance

costs. Often the clubs are ill informed and pay insurance costs well above the norm due to scare campaigns. Council is aware of this risk exposure and the potential for increases as incidents can occur at any time. As such, Randwick Council has a risk management strategic plan that includes the following elements:

- Public Liability Insurance Cover
- Signage to Australian Standards
- Formal Use Agreements
- Ground Maintenance Program
- Risk Inspection Program
- Claims Management Procedures

#### **8. Access to open space for active and passive recreational users.**

Council has undertaken an analysis of the likely future demand for open space, sporting and recreation facilities and recreational trends for our City as part of the preparation of the Heffron Park Plan of Management. In summary, the following points were identified based on a review of the demographic changes in Randwick City (1991-2001), population forecasts and general recreational trends:

- strong sport participation rates for youth, and generally less organised sports for an ageing population;
- increasing demand for informal activities such as walking for exercise, cycling, running and indoor activities (such as aerobics and fitness);
- trend towards apartment living, with resulting demand for both more, and improved, public recreational facilities;
- demand for sports areas and facilities will continue in areas attracting young families; and
- organised sport will continue to be important, although it is anticipated that there will be significant growth in the demand for passive and less organised recreation activities.

It all points to greater and more varied use of our open spaces and sportsgrounds.

#### **CONCLUSION**

The above issues have highlighted the issues and some of the anticipated future demands for open space in Randwick City. Nevertheless, the analysis showed a need for improved opportunities for informal recreation (such as walking, picnics and children's playgrounds) and better facilities (such as BBQ areas and indoor sporting facilities) in combination with sportsgrounds/facilities.

With Randwick City's population expected to grow by approximately 500 people per year, our open space provisions will not significantly change. Thus, in conjunction with population growth in Sydney and tourist visitation, our open Space will see continual pressures for higher use. While greater use can be accommodated it requires significant resources and innovative approaches for which State, Federal and private sector support will be critical.