



## Submission

# Parliamentary Inquiry into Sportsground Management in New South Wales

## CONTENTS

Terms of Reference	page 2
Appendix A - Hire of Playing Fields Policy	page 14
Appendix B - Sports Ground User Guide	page 17
Appendix C - Fees and Charges	page 41

## PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY SPORTSGROUND MANAGEMENT IN NEW SOUTH WALES

### INTRODUCTION

Campbelltown City Council welcomes the opportunity to submit a formal submission to the Legislative Assembly inquiry conducted by the NSW Standing Committee on Public Works on Sportsground Management in New South Wales.

This submission responds to the five terms of reference for the inquiry into Sportsground Management in NSW.

### TERMS OF REFERENCE

**1. Adequacy of provision of sportsgrounds in key demand areas:**  
*Increasing urban development and changing demographics shift the demand for community based sporting facilities in different regions. The Committee will examine how state and local government planning mechanisms are dealing with these changes. The Committee is interested in what criteria should determine the provision of sports facilities and how the viability of sportsgrounds should be evaluated in terms of broader policy objectives such as health outcomes, open space and community cohesion.*

- ***How Campbelltown City Council is coping with increasing urban development and changing demographics and the shift for demand for community based sporting facilities***

Key dynamics operating in the Macarthur region that set the basis for enhancing opportunities for engaging in recreational activities that are addressed in Council's 2004-2009 Social Plan include:

#### 1. POPULATION AND POPULATION CHANGE

- Campbelltown's population will continue to grow
- Migration in and out of Campbelltown is affecting the social structure
- Changes in population movements and demographics in Campbelltown is affecting the population structure

Despite enormous population growth in Campbelltown in the 1970s and 1980s, population growth has slowed considerably since the mid-1990s as the bulk of the new estate development has been completed. However, Campbelltown's population will continue to increase over the coming years as a result of new estate developments and proposed increased densities in the Campbelltown CBD.

Edmondson Park and Menangle Park will add approximately 20,000 people and the proposed future release of Gilead will increase Campbelltown's population further.

Campbelltown was developed as a city with large numbers of young families and continues to have a high proportion of young people under 18. As a result, Council

owns and maintains a large number of assets that were built for a young community, including sportsgrounds and amenities. As the population ages, Council will need to address greater physical activity opportunities for people eg. walking tracks.

Council is developing Section 94 Plans of these areas, as well as a new Section 94 Plan for Campbelltown City. These plans will identify the possible need for additional sportsgrounds or other recreational facilities. The latter plan will also address the maintenance of existing facilities.

As the population of Campbelltown ages over time and the demand for active sporting grounds and facilities reduces, Council will need to plan strategically to meet changing community needs. A key component of this strategic planning will be ensuring that Council is able to maintain high quality active and passive recreational facilities for diverse community needs.

## 2. SOCIAL AND HEALTH INDICATORS

- There are areas of Campbelltown that are below the national benchmark in key social and health indicators
- Some members of the Campbelltown community have expressed concern about a lack of affordable activities, especially for young people, families with young children and older people
- Cost of formal sport is too high for some people

The Campbelltown demographics feature marked socio-economic diversity, and health issues such as obesity, heart disease and diabetes have an important link to the community's ability and desire to engage in active recreational opportunities. The issue of affordability of recreation facilities and services was a common theme in Council's Social Plan community consultation, particularly for low-income earners. Council works closely with the community to investigate and implement options to provide affordable access for key target groups, including families, young people and older people.

## 3. QUALITY OF LIFE

- Community information and awareness is a factor in improving lifestyle in Campbelltown.
- Participation in recreation, culture and events are significant contributors to quality of life in Campbelltown
- Crime rates are falling in Campbelltown and local policy should prioritise community safety.
- People want to see parks and facilities maintained and facilities reviewed to ensure maximum use and benefit for the community

Council is addressing means of improving the sporting facility and event information provided to the community, particularly through the website and the development of a calendar of events. The amenities at sporting grounds are being enhanced to increase the safety of the facilities and of the community utilising the facilities.

Council is seen by the community to have a leadership and coordination role in developing recreation opportunities.

- **Criteria that should determine the provision of sports facilities**

Council is in the process of developing a Recreational Facilities Needs Analysis to address community needs and to determine the direction of future capital works projects and plans for the provision of active and passive recreational areas.

The criteria that should determine the provision of sports facilities include:

- Population / demographics
- Transport / access
- Social disadvantage / activity cost
- Sporting trends
- New housing developments
- Community needs
- Construction and ongoing maintenance costs for buildings and amenities
- Neighbouring facilities
- Special groups
- Dual use of playing fields
- Funding opportunities
- Vandalism / anti-social behaviour

Council is currently investigating the establishment of a relief playing field and accompanying amenities to use as a seasonal relief playing field. Sporting organisations would move to this facility whilst renovation is undertaken on facilities regularly used by the sporting organisations.

- **How the viability of sportsgrounds should be evaluated in terms of broader policy objectives such as health outcomes, open space and community cohesion**

Council's 2004-2009 Social Plan identifies the following desired outcomes for Campbelltown:

- A city where all residents are able to access sport and recreation opportunities that develop community well being, local identity, sense of place and social connections,
- A city where physical activity is valued and leads to improved health outcomes,
- A city in which community needs are addressed through developing new and existing recreational facilities and programs.

These statements point to a future where Campbelltown residents enjoy improved health through participation in physical activity, and a greater sense of wellbeing through connection to their community. Council's sportsgrounds provide a large proportion of physical activity opportunities for the community.

Participation in recreation was identified as being an important contributor to quality of life in Campbelltown, playing important roles in health, wellbeing and social connectedness of residents.

Considering the role that exercise and stress have as determinants of health, it follows that enhancing opportunities for and participation by the community in recreational activities will result in improved health. Recreation also enhances vitality, sense of place, local identity and social networks in the area. The sporting

organisations that utilise the sportsgrounds play a very important role in helping to develop community cohesion.

Some members of the community have identified cost and community awareness about sporting facilities and opportunities have been identified as barriers to participation in recreation activities in Campbelltown. Local sporting organisations are aware of these inhibitors and are generally quite successful in canvassing local businesses for important sponsorship dollars.

The World Health Organisation has identified a direct link between social disadvantage and poor health. As mentioned previously, there are areas of Campbelltown that are below the national benchmark in key social and health indicators, including coronary heart disease, obesity and diabetes. Research by South West Sydney Area Health Services showed that many people exercise very little or not at all and many people are overweight and obese. Therefore, the availability of open space and sportsgrounds is vital in providing opportunities for free active recreation for people under 18 and passive recreation for the whole community.

Council plans to develop and implement strategies to combat obesity and increase healthy living. Council's Healthy Lifestyles section has been involved in round table discussions and community forums to address childhood obesity in the Macarthur region.

Recommendations from these discussions include; a greater focus on developing programs and partnerships to address physical activity, development of exercise programs for overweight and obese children, strategies to address cost of transport to facilities, planning of good placement of facilities for better community access, opportunities for non competitive and unstructured activity, and schools maintaining strong links with other service organisations to promote physical activity.

Council's sportsgrounds will play a role in providing the venue for some of the activities resulting from these discussions.

## **2. Current requirement for updating and refurbishment of sportsgrounds and supporting infrastructure:**

*Improvement and maintenance costs of sportsgrounds infrastructure such as lighting, amenities blocks and car parks are increasing and replacement of items can be a large capital cost. Capital improvements are funded by councils and through capital assistance programs from the state government such as the Department of Sport and Recreation. The Committee will examine the provision of funding for facilities in addressing priority community concerns.*

### **• Increasing improvement and maintenance costs of sportsgrounds**

#### Playing Fields

Council allocates funds for the refurbishment of playing fields. Council does not currently have the resources to refurbish all fields at the end of each summer and winter seasons. Instead, the resources are generally distributed amongst the fields of most need. Maintenance generally includes top dressing, aerating, fertilising and turfing small areas.

More research is required from a state level for the development of hardier varieties of turf. The drought and overuse of playing fields are factors that have negative effects on the playing surface. These environmental and usage factors are not expected to change in the near future.

### Supporting Infrastructure

There is some pressure applied from sporting organisations for the upgrade of facilities to meet new standards, for example, the Little Athletics Association of NSW recently introduced regulations that all discus circles had to have a cage surrounding them to increase the safety of participants and officials. There is little consideration given to the funding implications of these upgrades, the cost of which typically falls on Council and is usually not planned in the budget cycle.

### **Assets Management Program**

The following objectives need to be met as part of Council's Asset maintenance and management plan with regard to Sportsground Facilities and Car Parks:

- Determine the short term and long term financial requirement to maintain the existing infrastructure assets to adequate standards.
- Determine strategies to improve Council's sustainability in maintaining and enhancing Council's infrastructure assets.
- Review maintenance and rehabilitation strategies to improve the economic life of the infrastructure assets.
- Review and improve the asset management systems used to manage the Council's assets.
- Determine strategies that will reduce exposure to public risk and satisfy legislative requirements.

The broad aims to be achieved for Council's assets are:

- To effectively manage a level of service and condition for Council's infrastructure assets.
- To minimise ongoing replacement and maintenance costs.
- To provide comprehensive forward planning concept and design for infrastructure assets.
- To establish and maintain adequate database to meet AAS27.
- To determine future cash flows requirements for replacement and rehabilitation of infrastructure assets.
- To adopt appropriate renewal and maintenance programs to maintain low life cycle costs for the communities.
- To operate and maintain infrastructure assets at all times in accordance with adopted maintenance rules and procedures to maximise Council's maintenance dollars.
- To ensure effective quality control of maintenance and construction works.
- To provide high quality community facilities.
- To develop rational and realistic strategy for community assets to achieve maximum value from the infrastructure assets
- To continuously improve inventory information including data on conditions and performance of Council's infrastructure assets.

- To raise awareness in the community of the condition and performance of the infrastructure assets.
- To continuously improve the quality of the plan.

### Sportsground Buildings

The maintenance costs of amenity buildings increase over time, particularly as the buildings age. Council does not have the resources to re-build the amenities. High instances of vandalism also increase the ongoing maintenance costs of the buildings and decrease their life expectancy.

With regard to Sportsgrounds Buildings, Council has undertaken a thorough condition assessment and identified maintenance items over and above general routine maintenance. This was done by reviewing current conditions and applying the necessary maintenance to meet the future needs. The review of all buildings and locations was done in conjunction with qualified Council and Consultancy staff. As a result a Maintenance plan for the next 10 years has been developed with costs for each of the buildings. All identified jobs have been classified in the following priority:

- OH&S (Priority 1)
- Operational High Risk Issues (Priority 2)
- Life Cycle Maintenance (Priority 3)
- Operational Low Risk (Priority 4)
- Low (Priority 5)

Five Year Projections on Expenditure are identified in the attached cost projections:

### **2004-2008**

Asset Type	Routine Maintenance	Program Maintenance					Total	Total Routine & Program
		Priority 1	Priority 2	Priority 3	Priority 4	Priority 5		
<b>Sporting Centres</b>	\$809,409	\$6,850	\$765,400	\$258,345	\$399,845	\$0	\$1,430,440	\$2,239,849
<b>Swimming Centres</b>	\$396,463	\$116,835	\$169,560	\$268,558	\$184,160	\$0	\$739,113	\$1,135,576
<b>Toilets &amp; Amenities</b>	\$446,272	\$17,837	21560	\$277,840	\$90	\$0	\$317,327	\$763,599
<b>Tennis Courts</b>	\$19,386	0	\$90	\$6,270	0	0	\$6,360	\$25,746
	\$1,671,530	\$141,523	\$956,612	\$811,016	\$584,099	0	\$2,493,240	\$4,164,770

### Funding of car parks

Funding of car parks is related to the rating of recreational facility, therefore Campbelltown Sportsground "AA" classification would have priority over a "C" open space reserve area.

With regard to the restoration of existing car parks, Council provides \$100K towards these works, which are completed in order of a priority system contained in the asset management system that is linked to agreed service levels of the community.

- ***The provision of grant funding for facilities to address priority community concerns***

Council does not have a self-funded community grants program for the development of facilities for sporting organisations, like some councils.

Council applies for NSW Department of Sport and Recreation Capital Assistance and Regional Sports Facility funding each year.

Council has identified a grant process for sporting organisations:

- Prior to each State Government grant funding program opening, Council sends expression of interest forms to all sporting organisations in the LGA and advertises the programs in the two local newspapers. As a guide, Council generally requests a grant of 50% of the total project costs, whilst the club funds 25% and Council the remaining 25%. This guide is subject to change with some projects depending on the financial capabilities of the sporting organisation.
- Council assesses all applications and prioritises projects. The Recreational Facilities Needs Analysis, when completed, will assist with the prioritisation of projects. Council funds are allocated the following financial year.
- Council completes and submits the applications on behalf of the sporting organisations.
- Upon grant approval, Council notifies the sporting organisations. The projects start in the following financial year, with Council managing the construction of all projects.

Shortfalls with State Government grant process:

1. This year both programs were brought forward by two months without any prior notice, which altered Council's programmed timeline for the above process to take place.
2. Council must approve all grant project applications and the budgeted expenditure, via the monthly Council report system. Council meetings are held once a month, with reports due at least two weeks prior to scheduled Council meetings. Therefore, the two-month timeframe between the grant applications being made available and the closing date is often difficult to adhere to. It takes considerable time to organise site meetings, draft plans, obtain development applications, obtain quotes for the Council report and grant application process. It is unknown if the funding program will remain the same from year to year, so only limited planning can be completed in advance.
3. Council allocates funding for successful grant projects in the following financial year. Therefore, quotes obtained in July one year are inaccurate the following July when the project is due to start. This generally results in a lack of funding for the project, which needs to be covered by either the sporting organisation and/or Council. Alternatively, the project must be modified to suit the funds available, which can often result in the sporting organisation receiving a less than suitable facility.
4. The lack of funding for car-parking facilities in both funding programs is an issue. This is one of the areas where Council does not have large resources and is often a concern for some sporting organisations, particularly with the development of new facilities.



### **3. Appropriateness and fairness of council pricing principles for facilities:**

*Councils have to balance the recovery of some costs from sporting organisations using sporting facilities against the objective of providing equitable and accessible facilities for the community as a whole, including groups with special needs. In addition, consideration should be given to the efficient allocation of access between groups to preserve time for sportsground rehabilitation and to provide additional capacity for ad hoc requirements. As the policies and administrative practices for usage charging vary between councils, state government and private providers, the Committee will review different access and pricing policies.*

#### **• Recovery of some costs**

Council does not charge schools or juniors (children under 18) for the use of Council's playing fields and amenities. These groups only pay for the use of the facilities at Campbelltown Sports Stadium - Athletic Centre and Sportsground and Council's Leisure Centres. Therefore, when fees and charges are discussed in this report, it refers to people aged 18 and over.

Council spends \$1.4 million annually on maintaining playing fields and supporting amenities. Council receives \$65,000 (4.64%) in annual income from sporting organisations and casual users for the hire of playing fields. Therefore, Council subsidises the overall cost to maintain playing fields and supporting amenities by \$1.335 million annually.

Council's fees and charges generally increase by CPI each year. This year Council has developed a categorisation of playing fields and amenities to ensure equitable restructuring of fees and charges for sporting organisations with senior teams. Some sporting organisations will receive an increase in seasonal fees and charges, whilst some will receive a decrease.

Sportsgrounds have been classified in the following categories:

<b>VENUE CATEGORIES</b>	<b>Category A</b>	<b>Category B</b>	<b>Category C</b>
<b>Playing surface</b>	High standard	Good standard	Basic standard
<b>Playing field numbers</b>	Generally more than 4	Generally 2-4	Generally 1-2
<b>Facility provision</b>	High level	Good level	Basic level
<b>Sporting activity</b>	High level of competitive sport	Possibly a variety of sports	Local level sporting activity
	Generally single sport use with potential to generate income	Training and competition venue (district level)	Limited facilities

Further information on the categorisation process is contained in the Sports Ground User Guide (APPENDIX B).

The recently revised fees and charges are included in this document (APPENDIX C).

Council is responsible for the general maintenance of sportsgrounds and amenity buildings. Some sporting organisations complement Council's playing field

maintenance schedule by conducting tasks such as spreading topdressing, turfing, mowing and fertilising.

Sporting organisations are responsible for line marking of the sportsgrounds, except for netball courts. Council supplies two line marking dioxide bags free of charge to all sporting organisations each season. After the allocated number of bags is issued, sporting organisations can apply for additional dioxide bags at cost.

The Sports Ground User Guide (APPENDIX B) details the current tasks that sporting organisation volunteers can conduct on the sportsgrounds.

Council has seven turf cricket wickets that it maintains each summer season. This is a large number of pitches compared to most other councils and is a considerable cost to Council every summer season.

- ***Equitable and accessible facilities for the community, including groups with special needs***

Council allocates playing fields and their supporting amenities to sporting organisations on a seasonal basis. The majority of fields in the Campbelltown LGA are allocated each summer and winter season to sporting organisations known as preferred hirers. Preferred hirers refers to existing sporting organisations that have an established usage pattern of playing fields on a seasonal basis from year to year with the majority of organisations contributing substantially in monetary terms to upgrading and/or improving the playing fields and/or amenities.

On occasions, Council receives requests from community groups, including church, pre-school, disability, youth, social, and corporate groups for use of sportsgrounds for social gatherings and community events. Council also conducts a large number of annual community events on the sportsgrounds.

Some of these community groups request the waiver of Council's fees and charges for the use of the sportsgrounds. Council assesses each request on its merit and on occasion these requests are granted.

- ***Efficient allocation of access between groups to preserve time for sportsground rehabilitation and to provide additional capacity for ad hoc requirements***

Historically, the sporting organisations in the Campbelltown LGA tend to increase the length of their seasons each year, so that there is limited time between seasons. There is also greater demand for pre-season training and competition, additional weeks for "wash-out" matches and extended finals competitions.

The City of Campbelltown has a high proportion of children and youth. This results in high membership numbers for a lot of sporting organisations. To cater for the training and competition needs for these members, sporting organisations extend their request for the use of the playing fields. Most playing fields experience a high usage pattern by sporting organisations; five-hour training sessions, three to five nights per week and two days on the weekend for competition. Some facilities are utilised by more than one sport in a season and a lot are used by schools on a regular basis. Most playing fields experience approximately 30 hours of use per week.

Council has never sought to limit the amount of use on the playing fields, although some large sporting organisations have considered capping their membership to ensure that the facilities can cope with the high use.

Council rarely closes grounds for training and competition, instead leaving the decision to the sporting organisations.

Casual hirers, including church, social, corporate and other community groups utilise Council's facilities when not in use by sporting organisations. Council also conducts a number of annual community events on the sportsgrounds. Council does not generally experience problems with allocating sportsgrounds to ad-hoc groups.

In the recently adopted Sports Ground User Guide (APPENDIX B), Council allocates a two-week period between seasons. This small timeframe is to enable the conduct of season changeover tasks, including goal post installation / removal, cricket pitch covering / uncovering, in addition to any other playing field maintenance works including topdressing, turfing, fertilising and aerating. A period of at least four weeks between seasons would be preferred to thoroughly complete these works.

Council is currently investigating the feasibility of the development of a regional relief playing field that will provide an opportunity to rest regular sportsgrounds on a seasonal basis for refurbishment works to take place. The resident sporting organisation will be moved to the relief field for a period of time for the refurbishment to occur. Council will need to investigate the allocation of refurbishment funds for this purpose.

#### **4. Environmental issues, including water conservation and grounds maintenance:**

*A recent concern raised in the media is the progressive deterioration of sportsgrounds caused by lack of water and reduced maintenance and exacerbated by overuse. The Committee will examine how these issues can be addressed through environmental management and engineering strategies such as improved drainage and stormwater systems.*

- ***Progressive deterioration of sportsgrounds caused by lack of water and reduced maintenance and exacerbated by overuse***

The drought has had a negative effect on Council's playing fields, particularly fields without an automated irrigation system. This winter season, large proportions of sportsgrounds have lost grass coverage.

This problem is exacerbated by the overuse of playing fields. The majority of fields are used three to five nights a week for training and usually two days on the weekend for competition. A large proportion of schools use Council's playing fields due to the lack or unsuitability of their own fields.

To date Council has never restricted use of a playing field on a seasonal basis.

The sport seasons seem to get longer each year, with summer and winter overlapping. There is limited time between sporting seasons for essential maintenance.

Sporting organisations expect maintenance work to be carried out on their playing fields, however each sport does not want it to occur during their season whilst they

are using the playing fields. This is difficult when the majority of playing fields are dual use and used for summer and winter sport. The demands by sporting organisations cannot always be maintained, due to a lack of human and financial resources and time constraints.

- ***How these issues can be addressed through environmental management and engineering strategies such as improved drainage and stormwater systems***

More research is required from a state level for the development of new technologies for the watering of playing fields.

Council has established a number of new technologies to combat the current drought conditions, including water recycling, stormwater harvesting and drip irrigation. There are a number of options available in the marketplace, but all come at a considerable cost. It is difficult to evaluate the best methods suitable for the LGA's playing fields. Council must also address playing field salinity issues.

**5. Residential amenity, public liability and security issues:**

*One of the consequences of increased use of sporting facilities is the associated noise, traffic and pedestrian activity generated. The Committee will examine how councils are attempting to balance community concerns about noise and amenity arising from sportsground use. Another concern is the increasing cost of public liability insurance for councils resulting from incidents occurring at sportsgrounds. There is a tendency to seek formal use agreements with organisations and groups to provide legal protection from claims or, alternatively, prohibit certain activities on council facilities. The Committee will examine these impacts and how they might be better managed in the future.*

- ***Community concerns about noise and amenity arising from sportsground use***

Council limits the hours of use of the floodlights at sportsgrounds. The location and directions of floodlights are also designed to have minimal impact on neighbouring properties.

Council does not receive many complaints due to noise at playing fields. However, Council does receive resident complaints regarding litter left on the grassed areas after sporting organisation use, cars parking on grassed areas and players urinating outside public amenities.

Council has recently developed a Sports Ground User Guide (APPENDIX B) that details the responsibilities of all sporting organisations when using Council facilities.

- ***Increasing cost of public liability insurance for councils resulting from incidents occurring at sportsgrounds***

Sporting organisations hiring Council playing fields for seasonal use are required to have a minimum level of liability indemnity cover, as a condition of hire. They must formally apply for the use of the field and adhere to Council's Hire of Playing Fields Policy (APPENDIX A) and accompanying Sports Ground User Guide (APPENDIX B). The Sports Ground User guide formally details their responsibilities when utilising Council's facilities.

Since the introduction of the Civil Liability Act 2002, Campbelltown City Council has not had any new litigated claims made against Council at this time. There have been a minimal number of reports of injuries / incidents due to the playing field surface compared to prior to 2002.

Council has complemented the allocated automatic irrigation times as detailed by Sydney Water, with periodic watering of playing fields from water trucks that are filled from the Georges River and then transported to individual playing fields. The intention is to limit the hardening of the playing surface resulting from the current drought.

There has been an increase in the amount of damage to amenity buildings arising from vandalism or forced entry to buildings in recent years.

There has been no specific evidence that an insurance premium increase is due to the above issues, however, they cannot be discounted.

- ***Prohibit certain activities on council facilities***

Council encourages all regular and casual users of Council's playing fields, to enter a formal hire agreement, to ensure the user group is covered by public liability insurance.

Each sportsground use request is assessed on its own merit. Council may prohibit some activities, including the use of mobile vending vehicles at sportsgrounds, large community events that don't address traffic, security and waste management issues, concerts, fireworks, and activities that charge entrance fees.

## **CONCLUSION**

Campbelltown City Council is facing the ongoing problem of balancing the maintenance costs of ageing sportsground amenity buildings and the deterioration of playing fields due to environmental factors, overuse and limited resources.

Council will continue to apply for state government grant funding for the upgrade of existing facilities and the development of new facilities. Council's Asset Management Plan will compliment the grant projects.