



New South Wales Cricket Association
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11 August 2006

The Committee Manager
Standing Committee on Public Works
Parliament House
Macquarie St
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Sir/Madam,

INQUIRY INTO SPORTSGROUND MANAGEMENT IN NSW

Thankyou for the opportunity to make a submission to the above Committee on this important matter.

Please consider this submission as a submission for and on behalf of the New South Wales Cricket Association (NSWCA).

The NSWCA further requests the opportunity to make a related oral presentation to the Committee, at the appropriate time.

The NSWCA is cricket's governing body in New South Wales. It represents approximately-

- 120,000 regular cricketers, of both sexes, and every age level and playing standard;
- 1,500 affiliated clubs;
- 250 affiliated associations;
- hirers of 2,000 playing fields; and
- 20,000 registered volunteers, who manage cricket clubs and associations.

During 2005/2006, the number of regular cricketers in New South Wales increased by approximately 20%. The NSWCA anticipates further increases in future seasons. Such increases make huge demands on existing cricket grounds, which in some cases cannot be met now, or in the future.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

The aim of the inquiry is to assess current and projected community demand for sportsground facilities and the adequacy of current measures to allow equitable access, to manage environmental pressures and to ensure maintenance and public safety.

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

There is a severe shortage of cricket grounds in some regions of major population growth, such as Sydney's north-west and south-west. Future population growth will exacerbate such shortages.

The quality of existing cricket grounds in some more-established regions is also a major concern. Ground overuse, and higher community expectations, will challenge ground authorities' capacity to continue to provide grounds of suitable quality.

Cricket bodies would support increased public access to playing fields within the public and private education systems. Many such playing fields, with and without cricket pitches, lie idle on weekends and during school and university holidays. Access by local cricket bodies to such fields would address ground shortages in many regions of NSW. However, parties would first have to resolve related issues such as security, parking, and playground and amenities use, especially by children and females. Such issues currently hinder access in many cases.

Cricket bodies are actively seeking to develop new match formats, to address the shortage of grounds. These might include playing shorter matches to increase the number of matches on a given ground during one day, and playing on weekday evenings rather than weekend days during daylight savings periods.

2 Cost and revenue arrangements including capital upgrades

Cricket bodies are willing to consider making financial contributions to the construction of new grounds, and the upgrading of existing grounds, in return for guaranteed ground tenure.

However, it is important that- ground authorities and other ground users, as the other beneficiaries of such improvements, also contribute to their cost; all authorities and users supplement such contributions with Federal and State government grant programs, at every opportunity; and authorities properly maintain such improvements, when completed.

It should be noted that affordability is a major factor in participation in sport, particularly at youth level. When ground authorities increase ground hire charges, cricket bodies are forced to in turn increase junior player registration fees, with a restrictive effect on player numbers. In addition, it is important that a talented young cricketer can afford to play on a region's best (and therefore most expensive) grounds, as well as on its most basic grounds. In other words, such a cricketer must not be priced out of elite sport.

It should be further noted that much of the expenditure related to cricket grounds is a direct result of their use by winter sporting codes. A ground's overuse during winter, or use during wet weather, may necessitate subsequent high expenditure on returfing, top-dressing, laser levelling, and other remedial works. In contrast, cricket is a low-impact sport, and not played during wet weather, and at the end of each summer cricket grounds are generally in very good condition. It is important that ground hire charges for cricket and other bodies reflect the causes of such expenditure.

3 Environmental concerns associated with sportsground management

As previously noted, cricket is a low-impact sport. In direct contrast with the various football codes, cricket matches do not take place during wet weather, and smaller numbers of persons participate in them, and damage to playing surfaces and related grass, soil and drainage is relatively minimal.

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

Cricket bodies would be happy with local ground authorities' general management of cricket grounds, including bookings and maintenance. Major areas of concern would be affordability, ground closures, security of tenure, and strategic planning. It is proposed that local government-

- has a responsibility to provide affordable sporting facilities using ratepayers' and other funds, just as it has a responsibility to provide free public libraries, playgrounds, toilets and other essential community services;
- is very pro-active in preventing long-term damage to grounds, in particular by closing them during periods of wet weather;
- acknowledges the strong and longstanding community links and benefits of established cricket clubs, when allocating grounds to users on a seasonal or longer-term basis; and
- ensures that cricket grounds, like all other community services, are provided in advance of known future population growth, rather than as an afterthought.

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

The benefits of organised sport are well-documented. They include a strong community identity, and increased fitness, health and self-esteem of participants, especially children.

Community cricket bodies, run by local volunteers, are a proven and cost-effective means of providing such benefits, and accordingly are worthy of the greatest support possible by ground authorities.

6 Traffic, noise and other direct impacts on residential amenity

As previously noted, cricket is a low-impact sport. In direct contrast with the various football codes, smaller numbers of persons participate in cricket matches, and smaller numbers of spectators attend them, and related practice sessions do not take place at night.

As a result, the impact of cricket on residential amenity of traffic, noise and lights is minimal. In addition, cricket grounds are generally available during most of each week for wider community use such as walking, running, cycling, casual sport, and passive recreation.

7 Effect of litigation and insurance costs on financial viability

The NSWCA acknowledges the increasingly important issue of litigation. As a result, in 2004 it introduced a State-wide insurance scheme for every registered cricket player and official, at an annual cost of more than \$500,000. The policy covers damage and injury, and public liability, and includes educational and risk assessment measures.

It is noted that ground authorities have an important role to play regarding damage and injury prevention, by providing grounds in safe condition, and maintaining them continuously to the appropriate standard.

8 Access to open space for active and passive recreational users

The benefits of organised sport are well-documented, and include increased fitness, health and self-esteem of participants, especially children. Community cricket bodies, run by local volunteers, are a proven and cost-effective means of providing such benefits, and accordingly are worthy of the greatest support possible by ground authorities.

By their nature, cricket grounds are generally available during most of each week for wider community use, including casual sport and passive recreation.

If you have any other queries or require any further information, please do not hesitate in contacting me.

Yours sincerely,

IAN J FIELD

Cricket Operations Manager

For and on behalf of the New South Wales Cricket Association