

PUBWORKS - Inquiry into sportsground management in NSW

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To: <pubworks@parliament.nsw.gov.au>
Date: 10/08/2006 8:53 AM
Subject: Inquiry into sportsground management in NSW

Dear Sir/Madam,
Please find attached the Bega Valley Shire Councils' comments regarding the Standing Committees - Inquiry into sportsground management in NSW. Please do not to hesitate in contacting me should you require any further information.

Kindest Regards

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Inquiry into Sportsground Management in NSW

1. Adequacy of Provision of Quality Sportsgrounds to meet Community Needs across NSW:

The Bega Valley Shire is located at the South-eastern extremity of New South Wales approximately half way between Sydney and Melbourne. At 6.279 square kilometres our Shire is the largest coastal Council in NSW. Despite this size the population is relatively small (Pop. 30,524 *census 2001*) and dispersed amongst several population centres. Only 25% of our Shires area is rateable. The remaining 75% comprises National Park and State Forest.

The Shire has six main towns/residential areas all of which are supported with a sporting ground or complex.

Township	Population	Number of Playing Fields
Bega	5960	9
Merimbula & Tura Beach	6988	5
Eden	3157	4
Pambula & Pambula Beach	1651	3
Tathra	1646	1
Bermagui	1320	1

All of these towns have Australian Rules, Rugby League, Soccer and Cricket clubs with Bega also having Softball, Hockey and Rugby Union.

The Bega Valley Shire Council cannot maintain this number of sportsground facilities to meet the needs of the community. The Communities growth rate is at a far greater rate than other Council areas and the need for additional sporting facilities has been requested by various sporting organisations. Council recently received a submission from the Far South Coast Cricket Association raising concerns based on their increased participation rate and lack of playing fields in the South of the Shire.

The expectations of the sporting clubs and groups regarding the maintenance and capital improvements are currently not achievable. Council does not have the financial capacity to meet the demands of maintenance and upkeep of these facilities. To assist Council in reducing operational costs Council has allocated the operational functions to Community groups that operate as Committees of Council under section 355 of the local government Act.

Although there would appear to be sufficient sportsgrounds in these areas, Council has been required to deal with issues such as overuse of facilities and the need for individual sporting clubs to have a specific sportsground allocated to their particular discipline. Examples - Merimbula Netball and Basketball clubs dispute regarding the dual marking of Netball courts for the use of Basketball, provision of synthetic Hockey fields – which are currently not viable as the fields are located in flood prone area, and the previously mentioned Far South Coast Cricket Association have indicated that there are not enough cricket fields for the number of teams.

The Local schools particularly in Bega and Pambula rely heavily on the use of the sportsground facilities as their main recreational facilities. The Schools have over developed their sites with no open spaces remaining for sportsgrounds. Council does not receive any contributions from local schools. The exception is a relatively new Catholic high school located at Pambula Beach. This School was constructed adjacent to the sportsgrounds although the current assets at this sports ground are minimal. It will require a joint community effort from the school and volunteers to improve the assets at this facility.

2. Cost Revenue arrangements with Sportsground management

Council provides Sportsground committees with an annual contribution to assist in the maintenance of these facilities. This contribution does not allow the Committee to use a paid labour force rather labour is provided by community volunteers. To date this is working to maintain the facilities at a minimum standard. Facilities that were built more than 10 years ago are now requiring significant capital improvements however only urgent and necessary maintenance activities are undertaken.

Most Sportsground Committees impose usage fees and charges on the sporting clubs and groups to assist in the maintenance and minor improvements. The recent high cost of fuel has also exacerbated the operational costs of the facilities. Council acknowledges the contribution NSW Sport and Recreation offer through their various grant programs. However, this requires matching dollar for dollar contributions and in most cases, Council does not have sufficient funding to meet 50% of these project costs.

3. Environmental concerns associated with sportsground management

A number of the sportsground facilities including Bega, Merimbula and Eden are within flood prone areas and the future expansion / development of these facilities are restricted based on the location. At the other end of the pendulum the recent dry weather has resulted in these facilities to deteriorate during this time and with the continued overuse by sporting and school groups, the end result being a facility that has a very poor playing surface for users of these facilities.

The Bega Valley receives extreme weather conditions in the colder months when there is significant rainfall and frosts, the playing surfaces of the Bega Sportsgrounds suffer significantly, as they do not have a suitable surface for winter growth and the playing fields become quite bare and have very little to no grass cover. It is not until warmer months that sportsgrounds recover.

4. Effectiveness of current administration of sportsgrounds by various providers including Councils, state government (including Schools) and private operators;

The Bega Valley Shire Council utilises Committees of Council under Section 355 of the local government Act to undertake the care, control and management of

sportsgrounds within the Shire. These Committees are made up of representatives of the various sporting clubs affiliated with the sportsgrounds as well as dedicated community volunteers.

The effectiveness of the administration is only as good as the representatives of those Committees. However, Council provides assistance through the establishment of guidelines for the Committee to operate too and Council has appointed staff to assist with the strategic planning of these facilities.

Currently there are no adopted plans of management by Council for any of the sporting facilities operated with the Bega Valley Shire Council. The establishment of the Plans of Management are the responsibility of Council and are currently being developed. The development of the plans of management are hampered by operational issues that distract Council and Committees from the planning tasks.

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

The Bega Valley has below average wage for regional NSW, no public rail or bus transport infrastructure, limited public health facilities and a very diverse community. These factors may contribute to the Shire being a disadvantaged Community as a whole.

At the time of the 2001 census there were 617 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (2% of the population) in the Bega Valley Shire. The increase in fuel prices has added to the financial strain placed on individuals participating in organised sport outside of their townships.

6. Traffic, noise and other impacts on residential amenity

There is becoming an increasing impact on residential amenity with some of our sportsgrounds, particularly at Eden and Merimbula where these facilities are located adjacent to residential properties.

7. Affect of litigation and insurance costs on financial viability; and

The affect of litigation has impacted on the future upgrades of the sportsgrounds. The equipment previously installed at these facilities was purchased and constructed by volunteer funds and labour. The equipment supplied achieved the outcome however it may not have complied with necessary codes and practices. An example is that lighting for playing fields must meet Australian Standards. Council is regularly reviewing proposals by Community groups to ensure that improvements comply.

Council's OHS policy has restricted the activities of volunteers to ensure they comply with current legislation. As a result the labour in specialised areas can no longer be carried out by volunteers and this has added to the financial strains on operating these facilities.

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

The Bega Valley Shire Council encourages the passive recreational use of these sportsgrounds when they are not been utilised by organised groups. The open spaces are not restricted and can be accessed by the public. Restrictions on the types of activities such as horse riding, golf practice, archery and companion animals activities vary at the different venues.