

Submission  
No 37



11 August 2006

The Committee Manager  
Standing Committee on Public Works  
Parliament House  
Macquarie Street  
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Mr Greene MP,

Please accept the following Submission from Soccer NSW on Sportsground Management throughout the state of New South Wales.

The Submission outlines a series of key factors based on our organisations interest in the provision of sportsgrounds, and the interest Local Government has in dealing with residential amenity issues.

We would very much value your feedback, advice and ways forward on being able to improve on the demand for sportsground facilities throughout New South Wales for this ever-increasing sport.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Quarmby', written in a cursive style.

**MICHAEL QUARMBY,**  
Chief Executive Officer,  
Soccer NSW Ltd.

*Encl. Sportsground Management in New South Wales – Soccer NSW Submission to the Standing Committee on Public Works, Parliament House*

**Soccer NSW Limited**

PO Box 6146, Baulkham Hills BC NSW 2153 | 235 – 257 Meurants Lane, Glenwood NSW 2768  
Phone: 8814 4400 | Fax: 96293770 | [www.soccernsw.com.au](http://www.soccernsw.com.au) | ABN 25 003 215 923

SUBMISSION TO NSW LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY STANDING  
COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS BY SOCCER NSW

INQUIRY INTO SPORTS GROUND MANAGEMENT IN NEW  
SOUTH WALES

By **Dr Jim Forrest**, Vice-President of Soccer NSW and Chair of the Board's  
Grounds Development Committee; and **Ms Angela MacGuinness**, Grounds  
Development Officer.

1. **INTRODUCTION:** This submission by Soccer NSW focuses principally on two main terms of reference before the Committee.
  - 1.1. Adequacy of provision of quality sports grounds to meet community needs across NSW for non-professional soccer football; and
  - 1.2. Effectiveness of current administration of sportsgrounds by various providers including councils and state governments (including schools).

We also comment on other aspects within the terms of reference in the context of the above main concerns.

2. **SUBMISSION SUMMARY.**

- 2.1 Participation in soccer football in the soccer 'state' of NSW (the Northern NSW Football Federation is historically a separate soccer 'state') has been growing at a compound rate of 6-8 per cent per annum since the late 1980s. Female participation has been growing over recent years at up to three times that rate.
- 2.2 This is everywhere placing strain on councils to keep up with providing grounds, in spite of various initiatives, including scheduling of games on both Saturdays and Sundays, and in some cases on weekday evenings.
- 2.3 The impact of initiatives to maximise ground usage, however, imposes its own problems relating to over use of grounds, and in some cases such greater usage of grounds is not permitted by councils for that reason.
- 2.4 Land in many in inner city and middle suburban council areas is largely taken up, resulting in competition between the use of scarce resources to achieve a balance between active and passive recreation development.
- 2.5 In the ACT, the ACT government owns the grounds attached to schools. Planning provision was made to separate playing fields from school facilities to allow each to be used separately at weekends and for training purposes on weekday evenings. In NSW, this is not the case, yet the use of school grounds provides the only prospect for helping to meet the growing demand among those wishing to play any sport in many council areas. Following substantiation of growth patterns, this submission expands on the potential for new forms of school-council cooperation in the provision of sports fields to help alleviate a growing problem of grounds availability.

**2.6 Although we focus on the needs and concerns of soccer football, we emphasise that our proposals for school-council cooperation would benefit all sports on a demonstrated needs basis.**

### **3. GROWTH PATTERNS in RECENT YEARS**

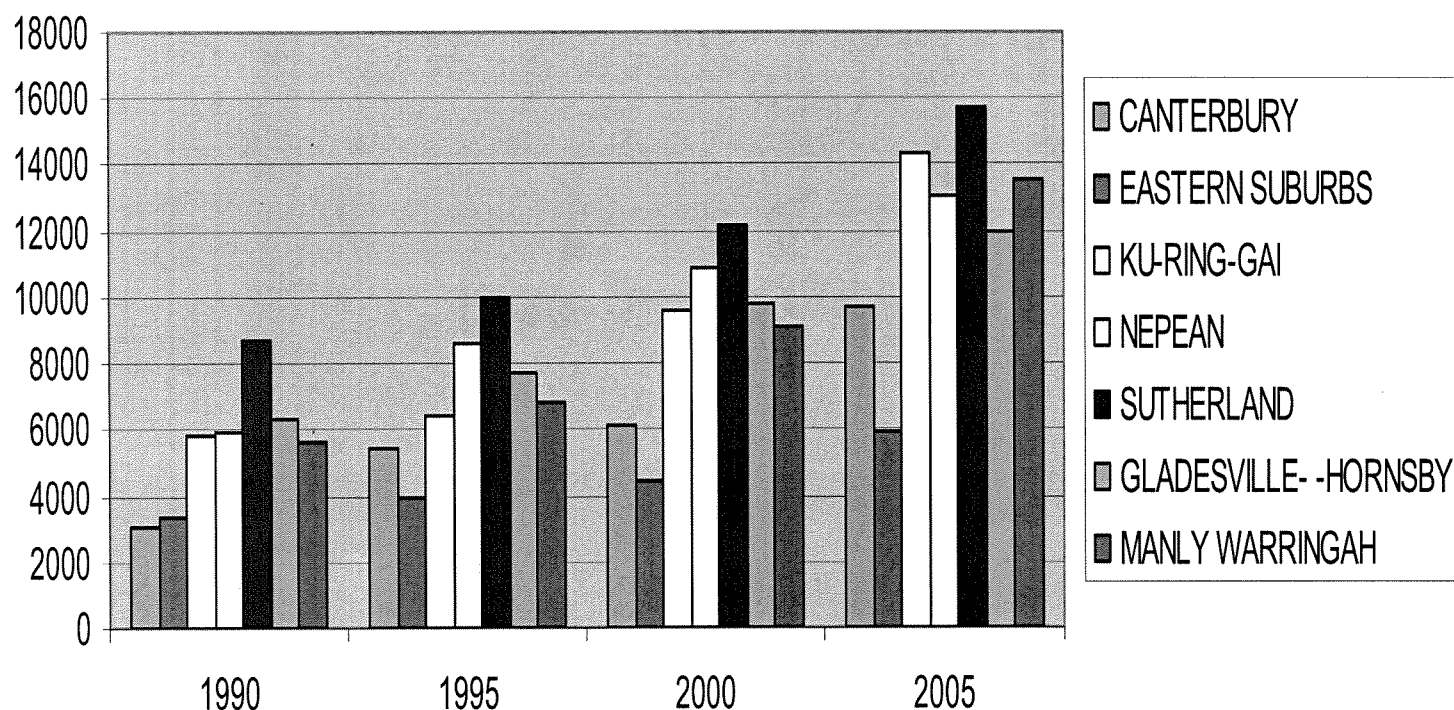
3.1 The pattern of steady growth over the past 25 years has been as consistent from year to year as it has been widespread. In particular, recent growth rates for soccer football are not limited to general population growth areas of Sydney and elsewhere in NSW. Although there are annual variations, Table 1 shows, for example, that inner Sydney has been experiencing as much growth as other parts of the city, indeed more in the past 2-3 years, yet this is a district most under pressure for more grounds. Country NSW is presently experiencing the same annual growth as the city.

**Table 1. Average growth of city and country regions, 2002-2005**

Association	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05
<b>INNER CITY</b>			
St George			
Canterbury	6 -7 %	21 %	14 – 15 %
Eastern suburbs			
<b>WESTERN CITY</b>			
Granville			
Blacktown	8 %	4 %	10 %
Nepean			
<b>SWn SUBURBS</b>			
Fairfield - Liverpool	15 %	11 %	10 %
<b>Nn SUBURBS</b>			
Manly-Warringah	15 %	7 %	7 %
Ku-ring-gai	9 %	5 %	11 %
Gladesville-Hornsby	12 %	12 %	12 %
<b>COUNTRY NSW</b>			
	5 %	15 %	12 %

3.2 The same growth patterns are evident in the graphic of example Association across most areas of Sydney over the longer term, as demonstrated for the last 15 years on the next graph (below).

## Region Growths 1990 - 2005



#### 4. ISSUES AFFECTING PARTICIPATION GROWTH

- 4.1 Federal government initiatives laying emphasis on the need for participation in active sport as part of anti-obesity programmes.
- 4.2 Lack of lighting for evening training at some grounds, and also for night competition games to meet life style needs especially of teenagers who undertake casual work at weekends. Shoalhaven Council has moved to meet these needs by providing competition-level lit grounds at 4-5 different venues, but they do not have the ground shortage problems experienced elsewhere.
- 4.3 We recognise, however, that lighting is a significant planning issue, and in Appendix 1 of this submission, we summarise our own experience and that of example councils in this area.
- 4.4 The prevalent growth of our sport, among juniors (especially for 5-7 mini-soccer – or Rooball – with its special half ground requirements and portable goal post safety concerns) and womens' soccer football (for the past 3 years growing at 25-30 per cent p.a.)
- 4.5 The special requirements of mini-soccer – half field size and smaller goals – really require separate fields, but this is often difficult to achieve. Rather, existing full sized fields are often temporarily reconfigured to play across

each of two halves of the length of the field, with portable goal posts which are removed for older age groups later in the day. The very real problem with this approach, however, is the inherent danger in using any form of non-permanently fixed goal posts, but shortage of sports fields in many council areas inhibits the setting aside of special fields for the 5-7 year age groups. This is where, for example, council development of primary school grounds for modified rules games for all sports would be a major benefit.

**5. THE CONCEPT of SCHOOL – COUNCIL COOPERATION in GROUND DEVELOPMENT and USAGE.**

5.1 There are major advantages to both schools and councils in a cooperative approach to the development and usage of appropriate school grounds for combined school-community use:

5.1.1 Grounds already developed by schools would be made available through local councils and under council control as to usage, for weekend use and for weekday (after school) training purposes, as appropriate. Alternatively, whatever is required to upgrade a field to the standard of a satisfactory playing surface can be undertaken by a council, again as a significant saving to the council over development of a green-fields site.

5.1.2 Required community facilities would be developed by a council, separate from school facilities – toilets, change rooms, canteens etc. – to guarantee security and non-access to school buildings.

5.1.3 Councils would maintain the fields, which continue to be used by the school during school hours for training and playing purposes. This would result in significant savings to the school in annual maintenance.

5.1.4 Thus there is a major capital saving for a council in the initial capital cost of ground development, and a major saving for schools in annual maintenance.

5.1.5 In the Sutherland LGA, it costs approximately \$1.25m to develop a soccer (or any sports) field from scratch.

6. The following scope of WORKS and INDICATIVE COSTINGS have been provided to Soccer NSW by Mr J. Gordon, Manager, Sport and Recreation Development, Sutherland Shire Council, based on the development of school grounds into facilities that can meet the training and competition requirements of at least junior sport. These indicative figures are based on the development or upgrading of a single field, 100m x 70m.

6.1. Ground development:

Irrigation (generally including installation of 3 phase power):	\$60,000
Drainage	\$50,000
Fertilizer etc. at 200ml	\$70,000
Turf (couch)	<u>\$35,000</u>
	<u>\$215,000</u>

6.2 Amenities:	Floodlighting (4 poles, 16x2000w lights)	\$69,200 <sup>1</sup>
	Basic amenities (toilets incl. disabled, store)	\$130,000
	Appropriate car parking	\$75,000 <sup>2</sup>
	Fencing (segregate school facilities etc.)	<u>\$40,000</u>
	Total	<u>\$314,200</u>

<sup>1</sup> Where appropriate, i.e. subject to town planning requirements

<sup>2</sup> Important to avoid street congestion

6.3 Total cost of ground development or upgrading \$529,200

6.4 Annual maintenance costs incurred by council \$10,000

## 7. BENEFITS

7.1. The gain to the school is the managed development, the cost of annual maintenance of grounds and facilities, and council control over the use made of school grounds outside school hours.

7.2. The gain to council, compared with the development of a green-field site, is a cost comparison of some \$1.25m in initial costs for the green-field site, even assuming one is available.

7.3. Soccer NSW recognises that not all school sites will lend themselves to this cooperative approach. Perhaps, for various reasons, only a minority will. But given the lack of green-field sites and competing demands on all open spaces, any gains would help: help councils meet demands on sports fields and to maintain them; help schools in both the development and relief from annual maintenance costs; without any direct cost to the state government.

## 8. REQUIREMENTS by COUNCILS.

8.1. School-council cooperation in the area of sports field development as outlined here is seen as a whole-of -government approach involving the Departments of both Education and Sport and Recreation. We submit that, if accepted, the carriage of such major cooperative initiatives and investment by councils should not be left to individual school principals (though they must always remain an important part of the process).

8.2. For a council to undertake the required level of investment into community infrastructure, a minimum period of lease or licence would be required, certainly a 21 year period, although a 30 year period would provide added incentive to councils to embark on such initiatives with greater confidence.

## 9. INSURANCE

9.1. Under the Soccer NSW insurance scheme, public liability coverage of up to \$25m is provided for any one incident at any each and every venue, and this equally applies to use of school grounds.

## APPENDIX 1: RESIDENTIAL AMENITY

1. At **Valentine Sports Park** in Glenwood – the state HQ for Soccer NSW – complex manager Gabriel Lopez tries to ensure that local residents are content with the lighting used to facilitate training and competition. There is a curfew for the lighting, with the lights being turned off at 9.30pm on weekdays and 9.30pm – 10.00pm on weekends.
2. Another important strategy employed by Valentine Sports Park is the positioning of the lights. The usual degree of gradient is between 42 and 43 degrees. However, the lights at Valentines Sports Park are positioned at a 40 degree gradient towards the ground, thereby limiting any unnecessary light spillage into neighbouring properties.. The complex manager has had no complains regarding the lighting the Park uses from the neighbouring properties and their residents.
3. **Local councils** similarly implement such initiatives to ensure that their residents are considered throughout competition and training periods of all codes. Residents c lose by these sports grounds have felt the impact of these player increases and are being closely consulted by local councils to alleviate some amenity issues that these large player numbers are imposing.
4. For example, when the residents from the **City of Ryde** raise concerns about planning aspects of sport and recreation, their views and concerns are taken into account by the Parks Booking Officer at Ryde Council through the monitoring of lighting at local fields as well as the monitoring of traffic at and surrounding these venues. The council also notifies residents of additional games that may need to be played at certain locations and takes their reactions into account in whether or not to permit the additional games.
5. According to **Leichhardt council's** Community Recreation Officer, through good communication and remaining pro-active with all residents concerned, Leichhardt Council maintains a positive and constructive relationship with their local residents whose views are seen as an important priority.
6. **Penrith council** has implemented similar initiatives to ensure that the concerns of local communities are dealt with and managed to preserve amenity values. According to the Parks Manager at Penrith council, local residents at locations where night competition and training are played are made aware when noise and traffic within that area will intensify through the addition of further competition of all sporting codes. Having put this initiative into practice, Penrith council and local residents have been successful in creating and encouraging a constructive model which emphasizes them and local sport as recreation teams working simultaneously to produce outcomes which incorporate the views and concerns of all parties.
7. The Parks Facilities Officer at **Hornsby Shire Council** and local residents have identified an increase in traffic and illegal parking associated with the increased use of sporting facilities in certain areas throughout the LGA. The council is implementing initiatives to endeavour to uphold resident concerns.