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John Gordon 9710 0605  
File Ref: GR/10/899511

14 August 2006

Mr Kevin Greene MP  
Committee Manager  
Standing Committee on Public Works  
Parliament House  
Macquarie Street  
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Mr Greene

**Inquiry into Sportsground Management in NSW**  
[In response, please quote File Ref: GR/10/899511]

Please find attached a submission from Sutherland Shire Council to the Standing Committee on Public Works in relation to an inquiry into Sportsground Management in NSW.

Participation in organised community sport in the Sutherland Shire has been increasing at a rate far greater than that of population for a number of years, placing enormous pressure on the capacity of our sporting field infrastructure to sustain this increase in participation.

Council has been proactive in seeking solutions to this matter, engaging the sporting community through the development of a Playing Field Taskforce, creating strategic partnerships with the Department of Education and Training and allocating significant funds for sportsground upgrades and refurbishment.

As governments continue to promote the health and social benefits of participation in sport and active leisure, demand for sportsgrounds will only increase. Based on current trends this is not sustainable.

Council welcomes the opportunity to place a submission before your inquiry. Please contact Council's Manager – Sport and Recreation Development, Mr John Gordon on 9710 0605 or 0414 193 631 if you wish to discuss any aspect of our submission. Mr Gordon would also be available to participate in any hearings if required.

Yours sincerely

J W Rayner  
General Manager

# **INQUIRY INTO SPORTSGROUND MANAGEMENT IN NSW**



**Submitted by Sutherland Shire Council  
August 2006**

# **Inquiry Into Sportgrounds Management in NSW**

## **Introduction**

Participation in community sport and active leisure provides many tangible and intangible health and social benefits to the community. Given population and participation pressure, the capacity of Council's to supply sporting grounds that meet community needs and expectations, whilst at the same time being sustainable, is becoming an increasingly difficult scenario to manage. As one of the largest local government areas in NSW and being home to many of the largest sporting associations in the state, these pressures are presenting many challenges for the sporting community and Sutherland Shire Council to meet.

The challenges facing the Sutherland Shire community in meeting current and future demand for sportsgrounds include –

- Increasing demand
- Undersupply of facilities
- Overuse of facilities
- Limited space for additional facility development
- Facility standards
- Arbitrarily formulated and applied water restrictions
- Changes in sports delivery

## **Sutherland Shire Overview.**

The Sutherland Shire is one of the largest local government areas in NSW, servicing a population of 215,053. Sutherland Shire is located on the coast in the southern metropolitan region of Sydney. Bordered entirely by bushlands and waterways, it covers a region of 370sq km, about half of which is National Park, including the Royal National Park which is the second oldest in the world.

Council's strategic plan identifies the 'building of safe, healthy and active lifestyles' as a key strategic direction for the organisation and the community. Council's management plan supports the maintenance of a healthy, active community, recognising that physical activity is directly linked to health outcomes. Council aims to increase participation in recreation and active leisure to improve the health of residents and the community generally.

The Sutherland Shire has a 'sporting ethos', which manifests itself in high levels of sports participation in all age groups and at all levels. The 'Shire' is home to many Olympians, national and state champions, in a variety of sports, many of whom have had their introduction to sport on the playing fields of the Sutherland Shire.

The Sutherland Shire has the largest soccer association in NSW, the largest netball association in NSW and the largest Oztag Association in NSW and an available range of sports that meet the diverse and varied needs of the sporting community.

As population increases and the health benefits of an active lifestyle are promoted, people are encouraged to participate for the whole of life, placing additional pressure on the facilities that support these activities. In particular, sportsgrounds are the first to show the signs of overuse, with the current level of usage exceeding the ideal horticultural capacity by over 80%. This use is compounded by the construction standard of many grounds and the current regime of water restrictions that significantly limits the capacity of grounds to regenerate.

## **Adequacy of Provision of Sportsgrounds in Key Demand Areas**

Increasing populations, higher density housing, government campaigns aimed at increasing physical activity, the introduction of new sports, changing participation patterns, drought and increased sport registrations are all impacting on the sustainability of sporting grounds across the Sutherland Shire. In much of the Sutherland Shire, and indeed across NSW we are now faced with an undersupply of sports ground that receive too much use. Ground conditions deteriorate as the carrying capacity is exceeded. Opportunities for grounds to recover are limited as summer and winter seasons merge into one. Teams and individuals are being turned away from activity and competition as there is simply no more space available. Traditionally the provision of sportgrounds has been based on the allocation of open space per head of population. As will be demonstrated, sport participation in the Sutherland Shire is increasing at a far greater rate than population. With little land available to provide for the increase in demand the relative usability of the existing provision is declining. Provision of open space needs to be determined on a demand based model rather than some notional allocation based on population size.

### **Sutherland Shire Demographics**

The Sutherland Shire has a population of 215,053. (ABS Estimated and Projected Resident Populations) In the period 1996 – 2005, the total population of the Shire has increased by an estimated 11,300 or 5.5%.

### **Participation Numbers and Trends**

In the past ten years the Sutherland Shire has seen growth in organised sport significantly outstrip population growth. This increase in growth can be attributed to the ongoing promotion of the benefits of being active for the whole of life, introduction and growth of new sports, specific population groups participating in non traditional areas, such as female participation in soccer.

The most significant increases have been in the sports of soccer and oztag.

Soccer in particular has seen total participation increase from 10, 214 registrations in 1996 to 16,485 in 2006. This represents an increase of 61.3%. The 2006 season saw an increase in team numbers on the previous season by 49 teams, which is the equivalent of an additional club. These increases have occurred before the success of the Australian team at the 2006 World Cup in Germany. It is anticipated that this positive result will see a corresponding escalation in demand for the 2007 season.

The greatest areas of growth for soccer in the Sutherland Shire are in female participation and in over 35's competitions. This growth has been significant, with over 3500 females now participating in soccer. There are now more females playing soccer in the Sutherland Shire than there are males playing rugby league. The trend towards females participating in what has been seen as traditionally male sports has created a number of unexpected challenges including the provision of female only dressing rooms and additional female toilet facilities. The capital costs associated in meeting this demand is significant.

The Sutherland Shire Junior Soccer Association have recognised the strong level of growth in their sport and have attempted to predict the future demand and requirements for their sport, by undertaking a detailed analysis of current player numbers and demographic data available. Based on this analysis the Association believe that their registration numbers will increase to 20,000 in 2013, requiring the provision of an additional 13 grounds to meet this demand.

The sport of Oztag has exploded in the Shire over the past ten years. In 1996 the sport had 1657 participants, growing to 9156 participants in 2006. This represents a growth of 452%. This growth has been limited by the availability of grounds, particularly in the winter months, when demand for floodlit facilities is at a premium. Oztag regularly turn away in excess of 50 teams per competition due to a lack of available space to accommodate their teams.

The other major sporting codes in the Sutherland Shire are experiencing growth or at worst maintaining their current level of registrations. Rugby League has seen numbers increase from 2855 registered players in 2002 to 3253 players in 2006, representing an increase of 13.9%.

Netball has seen registrations increase from 5034 registered players in 1995 to 7100 registered players in 2006, representing an increase of 41%. While Netball has no impact on sportgrounds as it is played on a hard court surface, it none the less illustrates the increase in participation that is occurring.

Participation in Australian Rules has increased from 700 participants in 1995 to 996 participants in 2006, representing an increase of 42%. While this increase represents a significant percentage increase it is off a small base and as such the increase has been quite easily absorbed within existing facilities. Given the stated strategic objective of the NSW AFL of increasing participation from 59,000 to 100,000 by 2010 across NSW it is anticipated that some pressure will soon be felt to accommodate the expected increase in participation.

### **Changing Nature of Sport and Leisure Participation**

Seasons are extending, with traditional dates moving or merging to create a situation in which many grounds only receive one or two weeks rest between seasons. Grounds cannot recover, renovations have little impact and surface quality deteriorates. Many sports have introduced 'all year' competitions, with a number of traditional winter sports now conducting summer competitions. Summer soccer, played on multiple small fields with 6 players per side is a good example of this trend.

Women and girls have in recent years embraced traditionally male dominated sports such as soccer. This has generated additional use of fields for both training and competition, impacting on sustainability. This change has also required an increased need for change rooms that can meet the needs for female participants and umpires.

Across much of NSW there has been a significant increase in the numbers of participants across 'traditional' sports such as football, cricket and particularly soccer. Relatively new or developing sports such as Oztag, softball, baseball and hockey are also experiencing increases in growth. Many sports are now developing recreational programs held on week nights, meeting the demand for more flexible, social, pay as

you go low commitment sports. These programs have been successful in attracting new participants, placing further strain on already overused sporting grounds.

## **Current Requirement for Updating and Refurbishment of Sportsgrounds and Infrastructure**

The increase in the levels of utilisation of sporting fields has a direct financial impact on Council budgets, both in terms of capital funding for upgrades of infrastructure such as lighting, amenity buildings, drainage, irrigation, carparks and in the provision of funds for sportsground maintenance.

Over the 2005/06 summer season Council undertook major resurfacing / renovation works at 14 major sites.

Council's total expenditure on these field renovations over the summer season was \$1,042,000. This represented the most extensive and expensive program ever undertaken.

In the 2006/07 budget Council has allocated \$300,000 for sports field renovations. Assessments on the conditions of Council's sportsfield are currently being undertaken, with initial indications suggesting that all grounds will need to be top dressed to level out the oval surfaces in an attempt to make them safe. The cost of topsoiling alone will be \$250,000.

Council is also investigating the option of installing synthetic surfaces for training and competition use. Technology has now advanced to the point that these surfaces are an option for sports such as soccer and rugby union. Whilst having a high initial capital cost (\$700,000), the whole of life costing (replacement every 10 years) for this type of surface compares favourably with a normal grass field. The advantage of this type of surface is that it can be used in all types of weather, is not reliant on water and is sustainable in the long term.

### **School Facilities**

In addition to works on existing infrastructure opportunities Council has been working closely with the NSW Department of Education and Training to facilitate the use of school sporting fields after hours and on weekends by community sporting teams.

Sutherland Shire Council and the Department of Education and Training have had an ongoing positive relationship over many years in relation to community sporting use of school facilities. Significant use of school facilities by community sport has occurred at 4 major school sites.

Typically Council undertakes the maintenance of the ovals at these locations at an annual cost of \$10,000. Council has also contributed funding towards the provision and /or upgrade of various school facilities. Recent examples include a \$90,000 contribution towards the construction of a new field at Endeavour Sports High School, \$80,000 towards the upgrade of the Illawong Primary School Oval and a current budget allocation of \$160,000 towards amenities and floodlighting at Woolooware High School. Council also provide schools access to sporting fields for school sport and other related activities at no cost.



Schools have been supportive in allowing access to their facilities by community sport after school and on weekends. This has enabled community sport to develop and meet the needs of their expanding membership base.

### **Opportunities for Development**

The development of school sporting ovals for use by community sport needs to be beneficial to both the school and the community. The capacity to physically segregate school and community use has been identified as an important issue. Whilst each potential site has its own specific issues, there are a number of common elements to any upgrade of school playing fields to accommodate community use. These generally include -

- Upgrade of playing surface – turf / drainage
- Installation of automated irrigation system
- Ongoing facility maintenance by Council
- Carpark construction
- Floodlight installation for night training / competition
- Construction of Amenity Facilities – toilets / change rooms etc

In addition to the physical elements described, the site available for community sporting use needs to be a minimum of 80m x 110m (8800sqm), and generally in a rectangular configuration. Whilst a number of schools have these characteristics, many have other constraints that would compromise their development potential. Issues such as site access and residential impacts limit the potential for development at a number of sites.

For facility development and upgrade to occur a number of key issues need to be addressed. These include:

**Tenure for the Community** – The investment of significant capital into facility upgrades requires a guarantee of tenure for an appropriate period of time. This may be in the form of a lease, licence or other method.

**Funding** – Sourcing of funds to undertake the initial development and ongoing asset maintenance.

**Liability** – Identify responsibilities of all parties.

**Maintenance** – Field /Structures – Funding for ongoing field and building maintenance. Ideally included in formal agreement.

**Development Approvals** – Meeting the requirements of, and obtaining approvals under the appropriate planning codes.

### **Funding Sources**

Despite the fact that the Federal Government is actively encouraging participation, no Federal grant programs currently exist to support facility construction or enhancement. At a state level, the NSW Department of Sport and Recreation has two grant programs designed to support the construction of sport and recreation facilities.

The Regional Facilities Program provides funding of up to \$400,000 (Grant \$200,000) on a dollar for dollar basis for major sporting facilities of regional significance.

The Capital Assistance Program provides funding on a dollar for dollar basis towards the development of sporting facilities. The average grant under this program is approximately \$10,000. Council and many community sporting organisations have been successful in obtaining funding under this program.

Whilst a source of funding, these programs are inadequate, both the terms of the quantum of funds available and the flexibility in their application. Grants are allocated on a per electorate basis for the Capital Assistance Program. The cumulative funds available, combining the allocation to the 3 electorates in our Council area would result in approximately \$120,000 being available. These funds would enable a public toilet block to be constructed. The situation in NSW is even worse when compared to other states, most notably Queensland and Victoria who provided greater funding for a variety of programs that actually facilitate the growth and development of the industry.

Community sporting groups have indicated a willingness to assist Council in the development of facilities. Council has a history of partnering community sport in the development of many facilities.

The major responsibility for the development of new facilities primarily rests with Council. Funding sources include capital works funding as part of annual budget allocation or the utilisation of Section 94 funds. These funds are typically tied to specific areas and may or may not be a viable option depending

## **Appropriateness and Fairness of Council's Pricing Principles for Facilities**

Sutherland Shire Council has a long held position of not charging any Shire based community sporting club or school to use its sportgrounds. This principle applies to turf cricket wickets, synthetic athletic tracks, netball courts and sporting fields.

Community sporting organisations are responsible for the payment of electricity consumption associated with their use – floodlights, canteens etc and generally make significant contributions towards the upgrade or development of amenity facilities, either through acquiring grant funds or sourcing in kind support.

This approach supports one of Council's key strategic directions and fosters a co-operative approach between Council and sports in facility development.

## **Environmental Issues**

On 1<sup>st</sup> October 2003 Sydney Water introduced Mandatory water restrictions in Sydney, the Blue Mountains and the Illawarra. These restrictions, coupled with the ongoing drought conditions have had a significant impact on the quality and capacity of Council's playing fields to sustain high levels of community use. These conditions, coupled with the cumulative impact of lower than average rainfall since 2001 and increased levels of facility utilisation have resulted in a reduced quality of turf surfaces. An inspection of playing surfaces reveals uneven surface levels, uneven or non-existent grass cover and weed infestation, each impacting on the quality and capacity of our playing fields to tolerate high levels of use. Anecdotal evidence suggests that more players are being injured due to the uneven and hard nature of playing surfaces.

Current conditions imposed by Sydney water for watering sports surfaces are:

1. **Only grass surfaces** can be granted exemptions. All other surfaces may not be watered at any time.
2. **Sprinklers and watering systems may operate from 6.00am - 9.00am and 5.00pm - 8.00pm on Mondays only.** (20mins per location)
3. Automatic watering systems may also be programmed to operate on active sporting fields from **1.00am - 4.00am on Mondays only.**
4. Sprinklers and watering systems may operate immediately after the application of pesticides and fungicides for a maximum period of one hour.
5. A suitable backflow prevention containment device must be in place.
6. Any standpipe that is used must be metered and issued or approved by Sydney Water.

These restrictions significantly limit Council's and the community's capacity to apply a sufficient quantity of water to encourage turf growth.

Sutherland Shire Council has responsibility for the maintenance and management of 122 playing surfaces located at 61 sites at various locations throughout the Shire. These facilities provide an active sports surface of some 108 Ha in area and accommodate a variety of summer and winter sports for both male and female participants. Increased player participation and out of season competition eg. summer soccer, place additional pressure on already over-utilised fields and allow little time for necessary maintenance and renovation works. Of the 122 playing surfaces, 19 have automatic irrigation systems, with the remainder irrigated by community volunteers utilising sprinklers and hoses.

The imposition of the water restrictions has had a significant impact on Council's capacity to undertake regular maintenance and return the grounds to a satisfactory condition over the summer growing season. Whilst being a significant factor, the reduction in water use alone is not the only causal factor that is impacting on turf quality. Equally, the physical attributes of the playing field (soil profile, drainage, irrigation) and the level of utilisation of the facility have a direct impact on surface condition. These 3 factors are inter-dependent, with the non performance in any area detrimental to the condition of the asset. Refer Diagram 1.

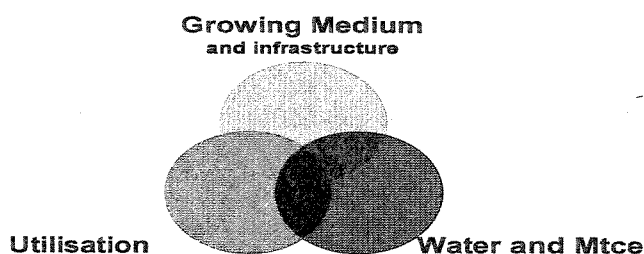


Diagram 1.

### **Effect of Water Restrictions**

The Shire's playing surfaces are covered in warm season turf species that have been chosen to withstand the environmental and high use conditions that present as well as displaying efficient water use. Winter sport codes cause significant damage to sports turf when combined with high utilisation and the lack of turf growth during the cooler months.

Historically, at the end of a normal winter season, the Shire's sports fields are generally in poor condition largely due to overuse on surfaces constructed with a sub-standard growing medium. The summer season renovations, would usually involve activities like levelling, topsoiling, weed control, fertilising, returfing large barren areas plus application of water to ensure the renovations are effective. These works are performed on a priority basis as funds allow and not all desirable works can be performed due to competing budget demands. This situation is compounded by an inability to shift field users to other venues due to sites being at capacity usage.

**The Watering exemption granted to Council by Sydney Water allows a watering regime which is insufficient to maintain sports turf to an appropriate standard.**

In December sports turf requires approximately 25mm per week applied irrigation in normal rainfall periods. December represents peak demand period and 25mm applied irrigation provides optimal growing conditions. Irrigation needs and application vary from this peak demand in December to zero requirement in June and some site specific factors also apply. Depending on the irrigation system specifications a weekly watering timeframe would usually be between fifteen and eighteen hours per field per week at peak demand in December. The watering restrictions allow three hours on a Monday which provides approximately 16% to 20% of required water at this critical time when optimal growing conditions are required to restore the playing surface.

Similarly, the average sprinkler and hose application, undertaken by volunteer Oval Committee members, requires each sprinkler to stand for 9.8 hours at each location over a given week. Our exemptions allow only 20 minutes per sprinkler twice on Monday only. The ability to have volunteers available during the specified hours is problematic as is the situation that our sports fields are in use for training during the afternoon watering period.

All Sports field renovations are dependent on an adequate supply of water in order for the works to be effective. It is useless spraying herbicide to kill weeds when all that will grow back are weeds due to their colonising characteristics and lack of water to encourage turf growth. The annual field audit performed toward the end of July each year by Council staff assesses the field quality. The majority of current field conditions can be described as quite poor with uneven surfaces and/or poor turf quality.

**An equitable water allocation for sports field maintenance and repair based on turf physiological needs is essential to ensure the continuation of community sport on turf sports surfaces.**

Chart 1. depicts the significant reduction in water usage recorded for parks and reserves usage and the corresponding increase in annual cost for sports field maintenance and renovation.

Although individual site water usage has not been analysed for this submission it is considered the far greatest portion of water usage is in the area of sports field watering.

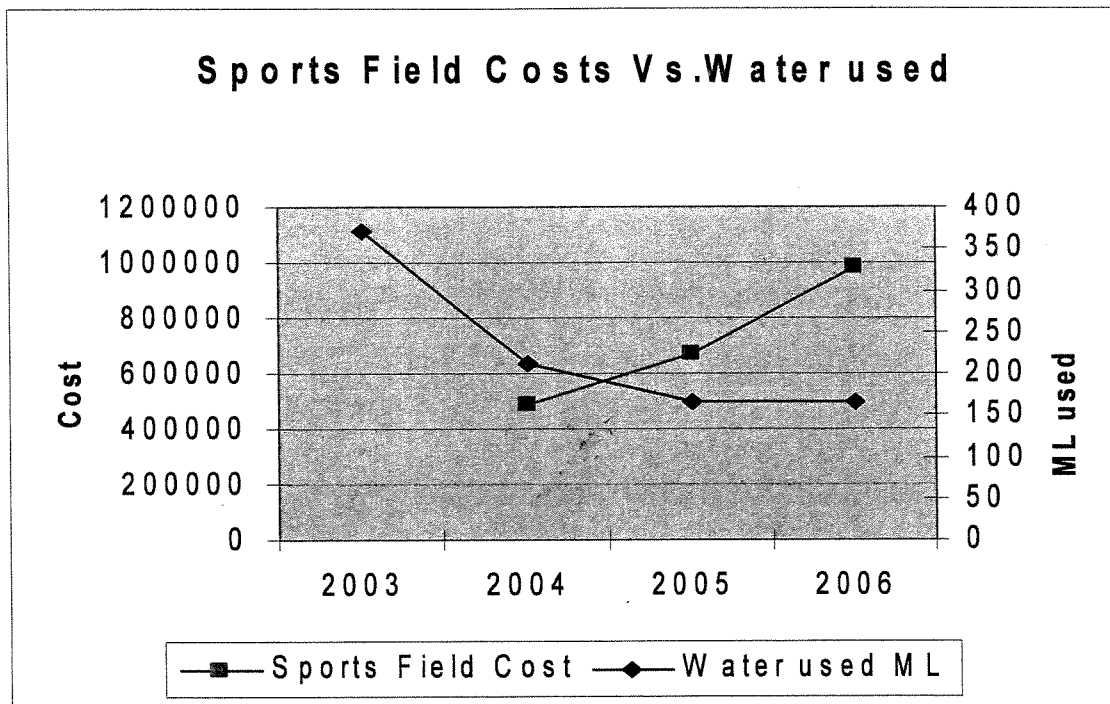


Chart 1. Note: 2003 was pre-water restrictions.

Since the introduction of mandatory water restrictions the deterioration of Council's sports field assets has been noticeable. Where volunteer Oval committee members are unavailable and where renovation works are undertaken staff may need to undertake watering activities. This function is not normally performed by staff but is part of Council's user-does strategies.

Chart 2. depicts the staff labour costs associated with maintaining and renovating Council's fields and the overtime payments paid to staff due to the water restriction specified times being outside normal council operating hours.

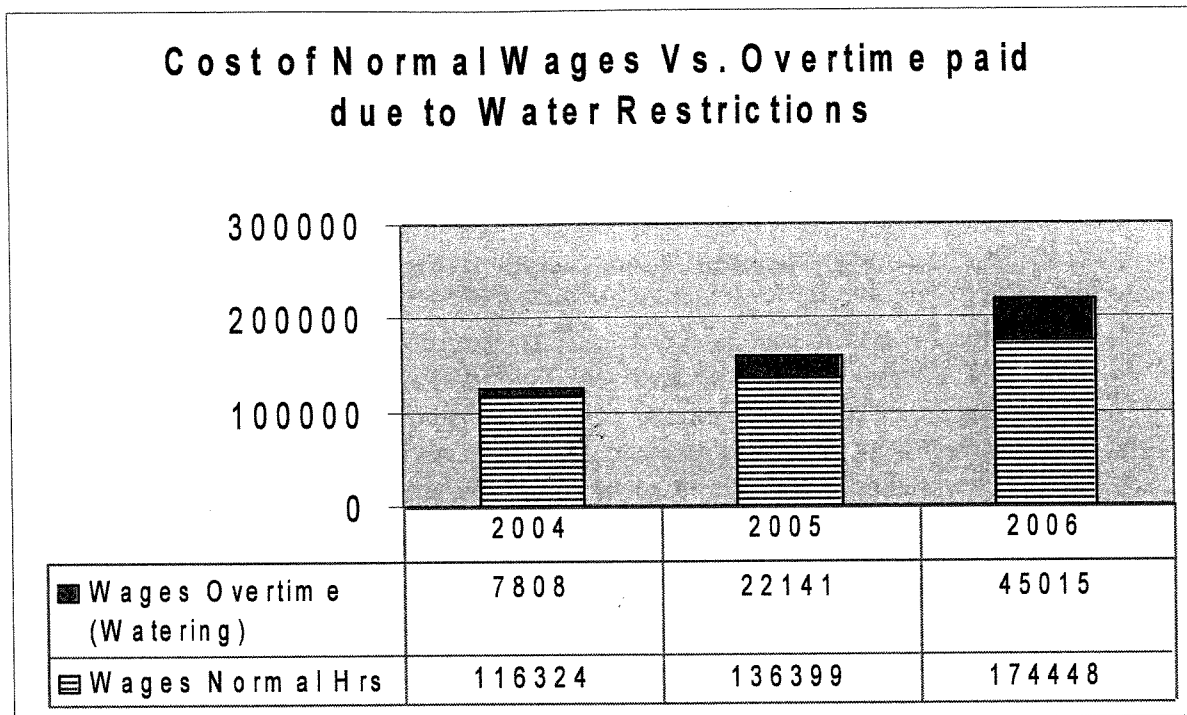


Chart 2.

Chart 3. depicts the increasing cost of turf and topsoil purchases associated with restoration of degraded sports fields caused through lack of water and overuse.

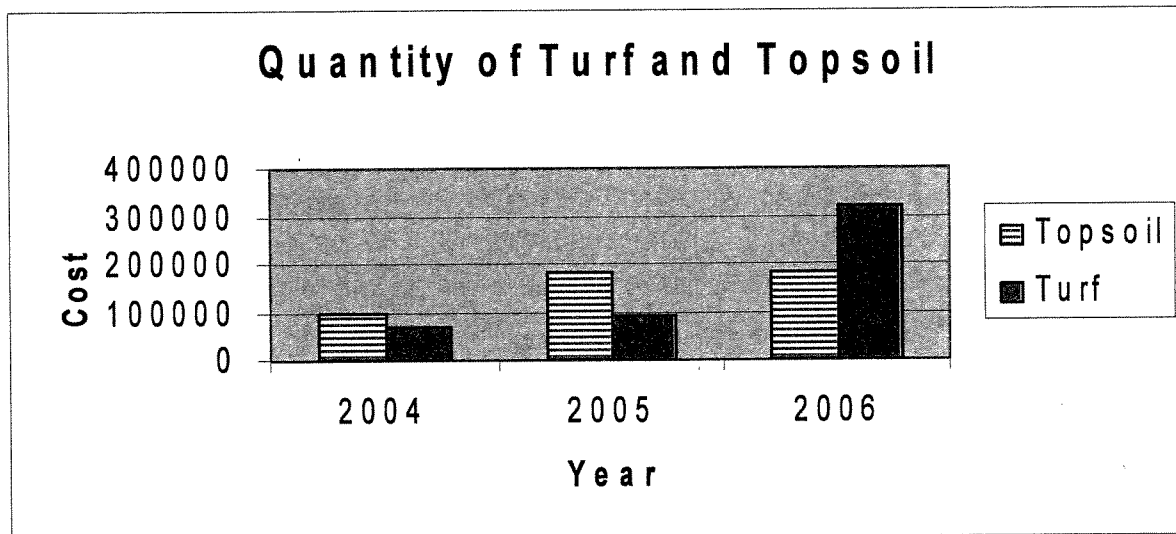


Chart 3.

#### Hours of use of playing fields

The horticultural ideal for use of a playing field varies depending on the quality of field construction but in general is about 20 hours per week. When use exceeds 20 hours a week the grass becomes stressed leading to a significant wearing of the surface. Continual overuse will lead to the development of bare areas and eventually an uneven surface which can be unsafe for play.

Over the past decade the hours of use of playing fields within the Sutherland Shire has increased significantly. The average hours of use per field in the winter season for community sport was 37.5 hours per week and an additional 9 hours per week per field for school use. The total average hours of use is 46.5 hours. The horticultural ideal of 20 hours of use per field a week is well exceeded. To reduce the hours of use Council has to either reduce the level of participation, which is considered undesirable or alternatively look to the provision of additional facilities.

Options for the provision of additional facilities has been extensively investigated as a strategy to spread the use on our playing fields, thus reducing the wear on the turf. School sites represent the best short term option for the creation of additional areas. Council has pursued these options as funding becomes available, however this strategy is not a short term solution to the problem currently being faced.

### **Physical Attributes**

The physical attributes of playing fields have a direct influence on the capacity of the field to sustain high levels of sports usage. The key elements of a good sports playing surface include a quality growing medium, sub surface drainage system and an irrigation system. Each of these elements complements the other and provides turf with optimum conditions for growth and development.

Most Council playing fields were constructed in the 1960's and 70's. Many fields were constructed on low value land such as old tips (Anzac Oval, Oyster Bay Oval, Captain Cook Playing Fields) with a construction methodology that was not designed to accommodate the high levels of utilisation currently being experienced. Generally these fields were levelled, a layer of topsoil applied and then turfed. This construction methodology means that the capacity of these facilities to cope with the stress of drought and high levels of use is compromised. Council has undertaken regular upgrading of these older type surfaces as funding permits, however the impact has been minor at this stage.



# Kareela Oval No 1

25<sup>th</sup> Feb to 4<sup>th</sup> June 2005



*Photograph 1.* Note: significant deterioration in just over three (3) months. This field was levelled and completely returfed at the end of the season.

# Kareela Oval No 1

18<sup>th</sup> May 2006



*Photograph 2.* New turf starting to show wear patterns

## Kareela Oval No.1

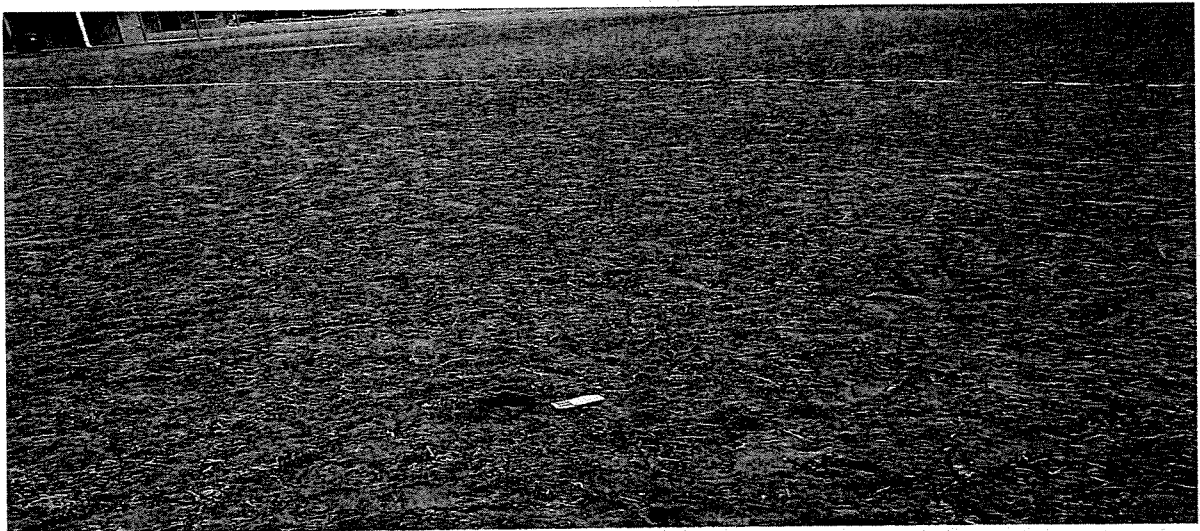
17<sup>th</sup> July 2006



*Photograph 3.* Significant damage to turf surface caused through overuse and less than optimal growing profile.

## Kareela Oval No.1

17<sup>th</sup> July 2006 - after rain



*Photograph 4.* Bear and uneven surface presents a potential public risk liability.

The current water exemptions allow an eight (8) week establishment period for turf where the area is greater than 150 m<sup>2</sup>. In this time the turf can be successfully established however the surface quickly deteriorates following the resumption of the Monday Only watering regime.

Corea Street Oval is another example of a field completely rebuilt at the end of last Rugby season. With restricted usage and ample water the field presented in excellent

condition in December 2005 but has deteriorated since through lack of water, overuse, poor growing profile and lack of subsoil drainage. Refer Photo 5.

## Dec 2005 – Corea St Oval end of 8 week establishment period



*Photograph 5: Newly established turf*

## Corea Street Oval 17<sup>th</sup> July 2006



*Photograph 6: Turf surface in severe decline*

# Corea Street Oval

17<sup>th</sup> July 2006



*Photograph 7: Closer view - Sports Field in poor condition once again*

### **Increasing Field Carrying Capacity**

Council has pursued available horticultural and management options designed to increase the horticultural carrying capacity of the shire's sports fields. Actions taken to date include:

- Engaged consultant hydrogeologist for examination of the shire's potential to utilise bore water. Three (3) test bores performed at a cost of some \$70K with poor yield and low quality water found. Concept of bore water for sports fields abandoned.
- Council established a Sports Field Taskforce comprising Sports Association representatives, Councillors and senior Council staff to consider and formulate plans to enable provision of quality sports surfaces
- Grant application successful under the Community Water Grants program for ten (10) fields to be irrigated and a back to base central control system. Existing systems will be connected and water usage will be more efficient. Proposals include three (3) water reuse schemes
- Grant applications made to both State and Federal programs to fund a project to bring treated effluent from the Cronulla STP to two (2) schools, two (2) golf courses, eight (8) playing fields (including Shark Park) and a large business site. Ability to extend the project also presents. Project not successful at this time.
- Grant applications made under Round two of the Community Water Grant program for introduction or extension of eight (8) water reuse schemes on sports fields.
- Major renovation returfing works incorporate Couch turf for its more efficient water use.
- Soil amendments and wetting agents used in maintenance activities designed to increase wear tolerances and retain water.
- Increased maintenance inputs of fertilisation and aeration to encourage rapid turf growth.
- Facilitated user transfers to, as far as practicable, share the usage burden between the fields.
- Installed drainage and irrigation systems and improved growing profiles as budget permit.

Sports field infrastructure namely floodlighting, drainage and irrigation systems as well as improvements to the growing medium are critical to increasing the capacity of sports fields to sustain the wear to which they are subjected.

Typical costs per field are in the following order: floodlighting \$100K, drainage \$60K, Irrigation system with water harvesting \$100K, improvements to growing medium with returf \$120K.

## **Residential Amenity, Public Liability and Security Issues**

Council has been working closely with the sporting community in an attempt to develop strategies that enable sports to meet the needs of their members and cope with forecast increases in participation. One strategy that is frequently raised is the conduct of mid week competition fixtures. The capacity to pursue this strategy is limited in many circumstances by the proximity of surrounding residences, traffic and noise impacts and the need to raise the level of floodlighting to meet Australian standards. Consultation with residents indicates that whilst they appreciate that living near a sporting field brings with it some expectation of impact on residential amenity, the conduct of competition fixtures outside the normal weekend timeframe is generally not supported. Issues such as noise, parking, and lighting are frequently listed as objections to such proposal. Council is sensitive to these issues and has been investigating the conduct of night competition fixtures at venue that have little or no residential impact.

### **Liability Issues**

Unfortunately the practice by legal practitioners acting on behalf of injured sports persons to involve Council in litigation when the injury is obviously sports related leads to costs and then mitigation strategies by the Council to protect ratepayer's funds from such costs in the future. Sports related injuries such as those arising from the nature of the game, the game's rules, umpiring/refereeing decisions including whether to play on a particular surface at a particular time should not be argued as a responsibility of Council.

Due to these types of claims in the past it is a recognised procedure for many Council's to seek formal use agreements or service level agreements with Sports Associations/Clubs.

Since the introduction of the Civil Liabilities Act 2002 it is Sutherland Shire Councils experience that the number of matters involving litigation has reduced. It is recommended that this Act remain unchanged. Recent changes to allow a plaintiff lawyer to increase their fees will, it is anticipated, lead to a resurgence of "Sports" claims.

Of growing concern are the claims being made by residents adjoining sports fields. Damage from baseballs and golf balls being a major problem. Technology improves the player's ability to hit further and the configuration of the playing surfaces needs constant monitoring with the inevitable result that games will be restricted or grounds closed due to the small playing areas. Demand for larger playing areas cannot be met.

Relative new team sports such as oztag, improved lighting on grounds and demand for mixed teams increases the use of grounds and extends the demand for playing hours. The amenity of nearby residents is affected.

Consideration of provision for larger playing fields, and buffer zones around grounds must be made.

## Attachments

Please find following Council's current management policy for sports fields and the adopted schedule of fees and charges for the 2006/07 financial year as requested.

### Management Policy.

Following is Council's Active Playing Field Service plan that defines the roles and responsibilities of both Council and community sporting organisations in relation to the use of sports fields. This plan is currently being reviewed in consultation with community sporting organisations.

### Policy - Active Playing Fields/Service Plan

<b>Title of Report:</b>	SUTHERLAND SHIRE COUNCIL ACTIVE PLAYING FIELD GUIDE SERVICE PLAN
<b>Records File No/s:</b>	P2
<b>Computer File Name:</b>	POLICY ACTIVE PLAYING FIELDS/SERVICE PLAN
<b>Committee:</b> (Report No. & date Originally recommended)	WORKS COMMITTEE (WKS114-96 of 11/12/95)
<b>Council Minute No.</b> (date originally adopted)	Minute No.705 of 18/12/95
<b>Date Amended:</b> (Council Minute No.)	

# **SUTHERLAND SHIRE COUNCIL ACTIVE PLAYING FIELD GUIDE SERVICE PLAN**

Sutherland Shire Council is a major provider of open space facilities for sport within the community. Council and Sports Associations have a responsibility to not only provide a quality facility, but to fully utilise these facilities.

This short guide is an attempt by Council to improve the channels of communication between the service provider (Council) and the service user (Sports Associations/Clubs).

It addresses the following areas:-

- **Communication**
- **Ground Usage & Bookings**
- **Facility Maintenance**
- **Wet Weather Procedures**
- **Facility Development**
- **Fees and Charges**
- **Club Development**
- **Contact Number Index**



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>1.</b>	<b>Communication and Co-operation</b>	<b>Page 1.</b>
<b>2.</b>	<b>Ground Usage and Bookings</b>	<b>Pages 2-</b>
<b>4.</b>		
	a) Blanket Bookings	
	b) Ground Usage	
	c) Floodlight Operations	
	d) Pre-Season Trial and Grading Days	
	e) Presentation Days	
	f) Social Bookings/Special Events	
	g) Sponsorship and Advertising	
	h) Ground Management Committee	
	i) Public Liability Insurance	
<b>3.</b>	<b>Facility Maintenance</b>	<b>Pages 5-</b>
<b>8.</b>		
	a) Ground Mowing and Maintenance	
	b) Ground Cleaning	
	c) Floodlight Operations	
	d) Electricity Costs	
	e) Covering/Uncovering of Cricket Wickets	
	f) Goalpost Installations/Removals	
	g) Linemarking Materials	
	h) Top Soil/Re-Turfing	
	i) Ground Watering	
	j) General Facility and Ground Requests	
<b>4.</b>	<b>Wet Weather Procedure</b>	<b>Page 9.</b>
<b>5.</b>	<b>Facility Development</b>	<b>Pages</b>
<b>10-11.</b>		
	a) Sources of Funds	
<b>6.</b>	<b>Fees and Charges</b>	<b>Page 12.</b>
<b>7.</b>	<b>Club Development</b>	<b>Page 13.</b>
<b>8.</b>	<b>Contact Index</b>	<b>Page 14.</b>

# **COMMUNICATION AND CO-OPERATION**

## ***"WHO SHOULD I TALK TO?"***

Communication between Council and sporting groups is the most important factor in effective facility management.

Council recognises the invaluable voluntary contribution made by club and Association Officials but are also aware that changes in Committee personnel often take place on an annual basis. The following steps can ensure that communication between Council and your sport can be maintained:-

- 1. Obtain a PO Box number to ensure information is received irrespective of changes in committee membership.**
- 2. Nominate one member of the committee who can be contacted during office hours and after hours.**
- 3. All Associations should inform Council of their executive committee each year and the executive committees of their member clubs.**
- 4. Get to know your Council contact, that is the Sport and Recreation Officer.**

# GROUND USAGE AND BOOKINGS

Council's ground booking procedure operates on a 2 season schedule:-

- Summer Season - 2nd Saturday in September - 2nd Sunday in March
- Winter Season - Last Saturday in March - Last Sunday in August

There is a two week break between seasons to allow Council to repair and renovate the fields, preparing them for the following season.

To determine ground allocations for each sport, the Sporting Advisory Committee meets twice per year, Summer Season mid July and Winter Season in November. Applications for ground usage are only received from a Sports Association, not individual clubs.

Associations seeking ground allocations are to make a written application to Council at least 1 month prior to the Sporting Advisory Committee meeting or if advised by Council.

Due to the high demand for sporting facilities, the following conditions must be followed:-

**a) Blanket Bookings**

Many different sports share a facility, the practice of blanket bookings will not be permitted. Please only apply for ground usage if the facility will be fully utilised. In some cases this may need to be justified by club member numbers and training/games schedules. All sports must co-operate and play the game.

**b) Ground Usage**

Council Officers will try to ensure that a ground is not being over-used, by allocating too many sports. Council's Parks Operations Department will inspect grounds on a regular basis to ensure that grounds are not being over-used. Grounds to be considered over used may be closed for renovation works for a period of time. It is in the best interest of user groups that grounds are kept in good condition. For illegal ground usage please contact Council Ordinance Inspectors immediately on 710 0402, or after hours 018 162 343, 018 446 498, 018 446 714.

**c) Floodlight operations**

The floodlights are operated by a timer that is set per the ground allocations schedule. Any changes to the floodlight timer setting must be requested from each Sports Association by fax or letter at least 2 weeks prior to the start of each season.

Any changes to floodlight timers within the season will incur a \$45.00 service fee payable by the Association, prior to the service.

**d) Pre-Season Trial and Grading Days**

Council will allow a 4 week period prior to the start of each season for pre-season trials, training and gradings. However, it must be noted that **the current sport using the facility has priority** over the incoming sport. Associations must ensure that all clubs are aware of this rule and abide by it.

All pre-season ground usage must be applied for in writing to Council at least 4 weeks prior and a written confirmation from Council must be received by each Sports Association, prior to any pre-season ground usage.

Pre-season trials are only to occur with teams within the Shire. No trials are to occur with teams outside the Shire unless they are played on a leased ground or after the payment of \$130.00 ground hire fee.

Illegal usage of grounds may incur a fine or loss of field allocation. To prevent user groups' conflict and the over-usage of grounds, the abovementioned procedure must be strictly adhered to.

**e) Presentation Days/Picnics**

All presentation and picnic days are to be approved by Council. All Associations/Clubs wishing to use their home ground will not be charged a fee, but must fax or write to Council at least 1 month prior to the event for approval. Presentation/Picnic Days on any other grounds or reserves other than the ground used for the season will incur a fee of \$60.00

Please write or fax Council with 3 dates in priority order and those sports using jumping castles, mechanical amusements, slides or other amusements, must clearly state this, as additional licences may be required.

**f) Social Bookings/Special Events**

All social bookings for ground usage cost \$140.00 per day and Council must receive applications in writing at least 1 month prior to the event. Bookings for Council's turf cricket wickets cost \$260.00 per day and applications must be received in writing at least one month prior to the event. Upon confirmation the appropriate Council departments and Ground Management Committees will be notified.

Any special events arranged on Council facilities require the issue of a licence containing conditions in the usage of the facility. Please apply to Council in writing at least 2 months prior to the event.

**g) Sponsorship and Advertising**

The placement of any advertising (permanent or temporary) signs must be approved by Council's Development Control Plan for advertising structures and signs.

As many playing fields are classified as public open space and are available for a wide range of sports, the grounds are controlled by Council policies and Statutory requirements.

Prior to negotiating with potential sponsors, check with Council regarding what advertising can be accommodated at the ground.

**h) Ground Management Committee**

A Community Ground Management Committee is formed by the sports using a particular ground, residents and members of the community who feel they can contribute to the management of the facility.

The Committees are responsible for activities such as:-

- Monitoring ground usage
- Interaction between user groups
- Allocation and payment of electricity accounts
- Liaison with Council
- Initiate facility and ground upgrades
- Monitor the use of the ground in wet weather conditions (weekend & Public Holidays only)

Ground Management Committees operate per the length of each Council period. All Committees must be re-nominated at the start of a newly elected Council.

**i) Public Liability Insurance**

The allocation of playing fields is subject to Sports Associations indemnifying Council against all actions, claims, suits and legal processes arising from any loss, whether to person or property which may occur as a result of that Sports Associations use.

Council requires each Association to secure and maintain a Public Liability Insurance cover with a maximum value of \$5 million, with Council's interest as a principal specifically noted.

Additionally, Council is to be indemnified against all actions, claims and legal processes arising from any loss, whether to person or property which may occur as a result of any works, operations or use of facilities provided.

# FACILITY MAINTENANCE

Council's current policy on Active Playing Fields is a "User Does" directive, where Council provides a basic level of services and the user groups are responsible for any additional services, outside Council's provision.

All minor maintenance issues requiring Council's action can be reported on 710 0333.

**Council provided services are as follows:-**

**a) Ground Mowing and Maintenance**

Each ground is mowed weekly in summer and fortnightly in winter. It is advisable to notify Council if your sport is hosting grand finals, representative fixtures or special events. Some variation to the maintenance cycle may be possible due to work demands. Additionally, the grounds are fertilised 2 times per year, cored, shattered and sliced once per year as well as quarterly inspections and necessary renovation work, subject to funding availability.

**b) Ground Cleaning**

It is the responsibility of each ground user to leave the field in a clean condition after use. Please leave the garbage bins in easy proximity for Council cleaners to empty. Due to theft and vandalism of bins it is recommended to leave a minimum amount of bins on the ground for quiet times (i.e during the week) and making them available for busy periods, such as weekends. The purchase and emptying of re-cycle bins is the responsibility of the Association/Clubs, not Council.

**c) Floodlight Operations**

Council will set the lights 3 times per year as a free service, once for each season and once for daylight saving. Any changes to the floodlight timers during the season will incur a fee of \$45.00 payable prior to the service, with at least one weeks notice, additionally one-off events will require a \$45.00 service fee.

Please ensure that the on/off switch which is located on all grounds is used to minimise use of electricity and associated costs.

Council will replace blown globes (where Council approved installations are in place), cross arms and poles. In the circumstance of a blown floodlight, please contact Council's call centre on 710 0333 stating the location of the pole and light. Please allow 2 weeks for the globe to be replaced.

The upgrade of floodlights is the responsibility of the user groups and Ground Management Committees. All floodlight upgrades must first have the approval of Council. Such upgrades may require formal Development and Building Approvals, which can take up 12-14 weeks to process.

Any floodlights installed without approval of Council will be removed at the cost of the user group responsible.

**d) Electricity Costs**

All users within the Shire are responsible for the payment of the electricity costs on the building (including security lights), floodlights and other associated costs. Please be aware that an electricity levy may be issued payable by either the Ground Management Committee or user group, not Council.

**It should be noted, that groups who do not pay outstanding electricity accounts will lose access to the facility and the ground.**

As a guide, in 1995, the cost to operate 1 floodlight was 30 cents per hour. Therefore, if a group used a ground with 4 floodlights for 2 hours for 10 weeks, they should be accountable for \$24.00

e.g. Number floodlights x \$0.30 cents x No. of hours x No. of weeks.

4 lights x \$0.30 cents x 2 hours x 10 weeks = \$24.00

Additionally, Sydney Electricity charge a \$30.00 service fee per quarter, with the cost shared by the user groups.

**e) Covering/Uncovering Cricket Wickets**

The covering and uncovering of cricket wickets occur in the 2 week period between seasons.

Council will only supply a geotextile cover and top soil levelling it across the pitch. User groups and Ground Management Committees are responsible for any turfing of this area, if required. Council does not supply or lay this turf.

There is no set schedule for the covering/uncovering of cricket wickets. No priority is given to any grounds for this procedure.

**f) Goalpost Installation/Removal**

The installation and removal of Rugby League goalposts occurs in the 2 week period between seasons. Please notify Council if the posts will be required for use in this period. Council will only remove posts that interfere with summer sport boundaries.

As all soccer and hockey goalposts are in the ownership of the clubs/Association, due to potential public risk claims, Council recommends that at the conclusion of each weekends games and season, the goalposts are moved away from the goal mouth area and securely locked. This includes the junior and senior goalposts.

School groups wishing to use goalposts for school games during mid week are to negotiate with each club on a ground to ground basis. If required, ask the schools for an indemnity letter for the usage of goalposts.

**g) Linemarking Material**

The linemarking of Soccer, League, Touch, Baseball, Otago grounds are the responsibility of the individual Associations and clubs. Council will linemark Netball Courts, Athletics and Hockey Fields once per year at the start of each season, any additional marking will be the responsibility of the respective Association.

It is illegal to use creosote when marking grounds. Council supplies linemarking material for each ground to use during the year. At the start of each season, Sports Associations on behalf of their clubs are to notify Council in writing as to how many bags will be required per ground. Requisition forms will be issued to each Association/Club with a maximum of 10 bags per requisition form issued on a ground basis.

When collecting linemarking material, each club/Association must take the requisition form to Council's Bath Road Depot Store, Monday - Thursday between 7.00am - 3.00pm. Only 10 bags will be issued per visit.

**h) Top Soil/Re-Turfing**

Council will supply topsoil to each ground for repair work and minor maintenance. Please notify Council by writing, fax or Council's call centre on 710 0333 stating the amount required and location for tipping. Please allow a 2 week period for delivery.

The turfing and topsoiling of grounds is the responsibility of the Ground Management Committee or user groups. Council's Parks Operations Branch will be available for on-site meetings to assist in ground management and to arrange quotations for the supply of materials. Please contact Council's Sport and Recreation Officer for further information.

**i) Ground Watering**

Council's ground watering honorarium pays individuals, user groups, and Ground Management Committees to water the grounds on a regular basis. Recommended watering times are as follows:-

1. Summer 5 hours of watering (or rain) per week per sprinkler area
2. Winter 1 hour of watering (or rain) per week per sprinkler area

The best time for watering is between 7.00am - 10.00am and 5.00pm - 9.00pm. (Please do not water ground before training or games)

Additionally, any instructions issued by the Sydney Water Corporation must be adhered to (Sydney Water Customer Service Phone No. is 132092). Please contact Council's Parks Operations Branch for advise on watering times and any exemptions for Council facilities.

Due to theft and vandalism, please ensure that all hoses and sprinklers are securely stored when not in use.

For replacement of hoses, sprinklers or to obtain any information on ground watering, please contact Council's call centre on 710 0333 stating the locations and requirements of material needed.

Please ensure the hoses and sprinklers are not left on the ground when it is scheduled to be mown.

**j) General Facility and Ground Requests**

For all general maintenance requests, including vandalism against a ground's facilities (including buildings or the surrounds), please contact Council's Call Centre on 710 0333, stating the following information :-

1. Exact location
2. Associated problem, - please be specific
3. Personal details if additional information is required - Contact name and telephone No.
4. Accessibility - e.g. key required, alarm etc.

Council will endeavour to fix the problem, but please allow 2 weeks from the time of request.

It should be noted that many general and minor maintenance issues can be fixed by members of a facility, user groups or Ground Management Committees and may not require the services of Council. By solving a problem in house, it saves Council's funds which can be used for facility upgrades and improvements. Please note that any such maintenance and repairs must be undertaken by qualified trades persons, suitably licensed.



# WET WEATHER PROCEDURE

After periods of prolonged rain, please call the following number:-

**Wet Weather Line: 710 0105**

This recorded message is updated after 11.00am each day. Associations Only may be granted an exception for the playing of finals or representative fixtures only.

Council has the authority to close a ground during the week (Mon-Fri) and controlling Associations have the authority on the weekend. (Sat, Sun, Public Holidays)

**It should be noted that:-**

- 1. Any club/Association playing or training on a ground that has been closed by Council will be liable for all restoration costs if the grounds are damaged.**
- 2. Any club/Association permitting play on a rain affected ground will be responsible for the restoration costs if damaged and may lose the usage of the ground for following seasons.**
- 3. Ground Management Committees have the authority to close the ground due to wet weather or ground works. If unsure as to ground availability please contact the Secretary of the Ground Management Committee and Council. Ground Management Committees are to notify Council if this circumstance arises.**

Please note that wear and tear on grounds is compounded in wet weather conditions. To ensure that grounds remain in a good condition, please restrict the playing of games and training when the grounds are rain affected.

Additionally, Council maintenance on grounds may be affected due to rain, such as, ground mowing, floodlight repairs installation etc.

# FACILITY DEVELOPMENT

Any Association or Club considering the construction of new facilities or an upgrade to existing facilities must contact Council to arrange the necessary approvals. As the asset owner, Council must be notified with any changes to the facility as well as any proposed changes in use and management.

To avoid confusion, it is essential to contact Council in written form detailing the proposal prior to developing detailed plans. First line communication may save great time and effort from the outset.

In general terms, the proposal should include:-

- Project description
- Approximate cost
- Approvals required (DA & BA etc) Plan of Management
- Time period of construction, start to finish
- Source of funds (including Council funds)
- Proposed Management and maintenance program
- Who will be doing the work? - Council, Contractor, Volunteer Labour
- Will the facility be a multi-purpose/use centre.

Additionally, a report on the members of the Association/Club and the reasons for the development must be clearly stated to justify the development.

**ALL ENQUIRIES ARE TO BE INITIALLY THROUGH THE SPORT AND RECREATION OFFICER.**

## a) Sources of Funds

There are two sources of funds which sports Association/Clubs can apply for:-

### i) NSW Department Sport and Recreation - Capital Assistance Program

The process for the NSW Department Sport and Recreation Capital Assistance Program is as follows:-

May	Application forms available from Council and the Department Sport and Recreation and Racing
31 June	Applications due to Council (fully completed)
August	Department receives applications from Council
December	Successful applicants notified

Grants from the Department Sport and Recreation are based on a certain amount of funding being allocated per state electorate. Successful applicants have 1 calendar year to spend their appropriate funding.

The Capital Assistance Program is a matching dollar for dollar funding with the applicant. Council and other Government body approvals must be gained before any projects are to start. Other guidelines include:-

- Requests for retrospective funding, maintenance costs, operation costs, equipment and salaries are not considered.
- Projects which are private commercial ventures will not be considered.
- Low priority will be given to projects such as:-
  - Fencing or roadworks

- Development on privately owned land and leased by a Sporting Association
- If construction is unable to start within 18 months of application.

For more information of NSW Sport and Recreation Capital Assistance Program please contact Council's Sport and Recreation Officer, or the Department of Sport and Recreation 580 9899.

ii) **Sutherland Shire Council Contributions**

Sutherland Shire Council contributes to a range of schemes.

In general the Council's Sport and Recreation Division assesses each project request on its benefits to the Association/Club and the general community.

Specifically Council only contributes up to \$50,000 (dependant on site conditions and service location) for the public toilet component of buildings. All other costs on building construction needs to be found by the group concerned.

# FEES AND CHARGES

Council maintains all grounds and facilities to a basic level. Any additional services not provided by Council will be the responsibility of the user groups or Ground Management Committees, subject to Council notification and Consent/Approvals. Such services and upgrades include:-

## User Group/Ground Management Responsibility

- Clubhouses, canteens, changerooms - construction or extensions
- Upgrade floodlighting
- Ground topsoiling and returfing
- Goalpost purchase and maintenance
- Irrigation systems
- Additional cleaning of cricket wickets
- Additional linemarking
- Turfing of cricket wickets
- Grandstands and seating
- Landscaping etc.
- Cricket nets
- Interior facility requirements
- Scoreboards
- Sightscreens
- Backnets and fencing
- Linemarking

Contact Council for quotations, approvals for works the purchase of equipment (sales tax exempt).

Council fees for active playing fields are as follows:-

i)	Social function/ground hire	\$130.00 per day
ii)	Turf wicket booking	\$250.00 per day
iii)	Picnic presentation	\$65.00 if not at home ground per 100 people
iv)	Floodlight setting	\$45.00 (in season)
v)	Cleaning fee	\$60.00

There are no fees for Sporting Associations and clubs to use Council facilities applied through the Sporting Advisory Committee.

## **CLUB DEVELOPMENT**

Associations/Clubs need to be aware of the impact of increasing/decreasing numbers of members playing a particular sport utilising a public facility.

Existing grounds and facilities can only cope with certain levels of usage. When this level is exceeded, facilities and grounds cannot accommodate increased numbers without causing damages to playing surfaces subsequently increasing maintenance time, cost and risk to players. Similarly, under utilised facilities and grounds are wasting resources which can be used by other user groups which are emerging in the Shire.

Associations must take a greater control in optimising facility utilisation when allocating clubs fields and when scheduling games.

Additionally, Council is endeavouring to survey all sports on an annual basis to plan for the future. Matching the growing sports and areas to the recreational facilities.

Planning for growth needs to be undertaken in consultation with Council and Associations/Clubs to ensure adequate facilities are available to cater for increased participants and the changing needs of the sports within the Shire.

# CONTACT INDEX

## Call Centre

- |    |                                      |                              |
|----|--------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. | Sutherland Shire Council Call Centre | 9710 0333<br>9710 0265 (fax) |
| 2. | General Maintenance Requests         | 9710 0333                    |
| 3. | Wet Weather Line                     | 9710 0105                    |

## Sport and Recreation Division

- |    |                                      |                              |
|----|--------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 4. | Sport and Recreation Officer         | 9710 0127<br>9710 0594 (fax) |
| 5. | Ground Bookings/Usage                | 9710 0583<br>9710 0594 (fax) |
| 6. | Capital Assistance/Facility Upgrades | 9710 0605                    |

## After Hours Emergency

- |    |   |                          |
|----|---|--------------------------|
| 7. | Ordinance Inspectors                                | 9710 0402 (office hours) |
| 8. | After hours call outs - emergency calls for Council | 9710 0333                |

**All written correspondence to:-**

**General Manager  
Sutherland Shire Council  
PO Box 17  
SUTHERLAND 2232**

## Current Fee Schedule

Sutherland Shire Council **does not charge** Shire based community sporting organisations or schools to use its sporting fields. This includes turf cricket wickets and synthetic athletic tracks. Sports are responsible for the payment of electricity accounts and often make a significant contribution towards the upgrade of lighting and amenity facilities.

The adopted schedule of fees and charges apply to sporting groups based outside the Shire or to commercial organisations.

The schedule for 2006/07 is as follows –

<b>RECREATION AREAS</b>	
<i>Refer to Corporate Services Wedding/Photograph/Picnic Bookings Section page 24-25</i>	
<b>Sylvania Waters / Ridge Athletics Track</b>	
<b>Hiring Fees</b>	
Use by Shire Schools	
Cleaning Fee only	<b>105.00</b>
<b>Use by Schools outside the Shire</b>	
Hire Fee	<b>210.00</b>
Cleaning Fee	<b>125.00</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>335.00</b>
Regional / Zone Carnivals Cleaning Fee	<b>160.00</b>
<b>Casual Hire</b>	
Per day	<b>300.00</b>
Per Half day	<b>190.00</b>
2 Hours - minimum	<b>100.00</b>
<b>Turf Wickets - per day</b>	<b>385.00</b>
<b>SPORTS FIELDS / PLAYING FIELDS</b>	
Per day	<b>230.00</b>

Per Half day	<b>135.00</b>
2 Hours - minimum	<b>70.00</b>
<i>Sports fields rate only to be used for organised sport, ie. cricket match, football game, etc. Presentation picnics, etc., to be charged at rate shown for organised picnics on recreational areas. Includes Waratah Pk Athletics</i>	
Floodlight Timer Reset (In addition to Council standard of 3 times per year - daylight saving/change of seasons).	<b>70.00</b>