

project can be undertaken or not. The ability for the main user groups to contribute to costs should therefore be included in any criteria.

3. Location (benefit the greatest population catchments).

Unless there is justification through demand (actual numbers) new facilities should not be built in areas where it can be argued sufficient facilities already exist. When sporting facilities have reached their capacity to accommodate user groups, new facilities should then be considered.

- **Current requirement for updating and refurbishment of sportsgrounds.**

Blue Mountains City Council (due to its financial position) usually seeks a partnership approach with user groups when considering upgrades of its sporting facilities (much the same way the NSW Sport & Recreation department does). Clubs are asked to contribute either part of the funds or the entire amount. Blue Mountains City Council does however manage to fund at least one major project annually (\$500,000 vicinity). Often these projects have been on the Capital Works agenda for many years!

- **Appropriateness and fairness of council pricing principles for facilities.**

Although the vast majority of councils in NSW charge users for the use of the sporting facilities they manage, Blue Mountains City Council has been unable to introduce fees (with the exception of swimming pools). This is a political decision that has been made. It would be helpful if it was compulsory for councils to have fees and that these fees be linked to ongoing maintenance and improvement costs.

- **Environmental issues, including water conservation and grounds maintenance.**

The 2 greatest contributors to poor sports field surfaces is “the drought/water restrictions” and overuse by user groups. Blue Mountains City Council closes its sports fields for the entire month of September to do maintenance and give the grounds a rest. Limiting the number of hours a field can be used per week is one possible way grounds could be spared deterioration, however in reality there is such great demand (especially in winter) that this isn't possible.

Any decision by the Committee to recommend more opportunities for grant funding for water related initiatives would be greatly appreciated.

- **Residential amenity, public liability and security issues.**

It is more than likely that at some stage user groups will create levels of noise unacceptable to local residents. Councils should have policies in place to reduce this occurring. Noise, especially at night, can be a major cause of conflict. Active engagement by relevant council staff can highlight the issue and then council can meet with those involved (resident groups/user groups) to discuss solutions. Often noise problems are simply people showing off doing “wheelies” after practice and user groups can deal with this behaviour.

Traffic is a major issue. Often sporting facilities grow over a period of many decades. Initially when built there may have been few residences around (such as in the Blue Mountains). Many of the Blue Mountains City Council sporting facilities have unsealed car parking that is inadequate for the location (creating environmental issues due erosion and run off) . With the financial situation the way it is here, sealing car parks is a low priority when weighed up against other projects and maintenance expenses. It would be greatly appreciated if councils could apply for specific funding grants for the sealing of car parks at sporting facilities.

Blue Mountains City Council requires sporting groups and schools to make bookings when using its facilities. Public Liability Insurance is also compulsory for these groups. This protects council from claims. This policy has worked well.

Additional comments:

Blue Mountains City Council stretches along the Great Western Highway for approximately 70km through 26 townships from the outskirts of metropolitan Sydney through to the gateway of regional NSW. Being on this unique fringe, the Local Government Area has residents with the expectations of metropolitan Sydney with Council having limitations many regional council's experience.

Blue Mountains City Council has extremely limited resources (staff, financial) that are responsible for massive land areas (1433 square kilometres) with a population of 78,000 people and have limited government funding opportunities.

Councils vary in size and in their capacity to collect revenue. Many large councils reportedly spend hundreds of thousands of dollars of Section 94 money providing sporting facilities for their community in addition to receiving substantial grants through various programs. Admittedly there may be expanding populations to provide for, but money exists none the less for such projects. With little commercial development opportunities within the city, Blue Mountains Council has a negligible amount from Section 94 contributions for sport and recreation allocation.

It would be appreciated if the Committee can bear this in mind and assist councils in unique situations such as Blue Mountains City Council. We sincerely need as much financial assistance as possible to help provide for the local communities sporting/recreational needs.

Yours faithfully

Adrian Birkbeck
Sport & Recreation Officer
BLUE MOUNTAINS CITY COUNCIL