

## **PUBWORKS - Inquiry into Sportsground Management in NSW**

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I refer to correspondence received on 12th July from Kevin Greene MP, Chair of the Standing Committee on Public Works.

I understand he has commenced an inquiry into Sportsground Management in New South Wales and a submission from the NSW Golf Association will be welcomed.

From the correspondence received, the Committee will examine the following factors to which we would like to add our comments:

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

*Generally speaking, we believe there is adequate provision of space for golf. The only metropolitan areas of Sydney which appear to be short of golf courses are the areas in the vicinity of (i) Peakhurst, Lugarno, Illawong and (ii) Fairfield.*

*Having identified these areas, it is acknowledged that the availability of land (usually around 100 acres) for new golf courses is not easy. This accounts for the fact that newer golf courses are generally constructed in the outer metropolitan areas of Sydney and in coastal regional areas.*

2. Cost and revenue arrangements including capital upgrades:

*Most Golf Clubs and tenants in NSW accept responsibility for capital upgrades unless a lease is in place which clearly identify this as a council responsibility.*

3. Environmental Concerns associated with sportsground management:

*Virtually all golf courses in NSW are maintained by professional course superintendents who have been adequately trained to deal responsibly with environmental issues. Having said that, it is acknowledged that human error does occasionally occur however, in general, the responsibility of environmental matters at golf courses is of a very high quality.*

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

*It is unfortunate to report that some councils in particular have, in the last 5 years, seen golf courses under their control as "revenue raisers" rather than the community facility they were built to be. Except for future water availability, the biggest issue facing golf clubs with councils as landlords is rental increases. To survive, golf clubs must then increase green fees and/or membership fees to local users. This action often causes concern among local residents and, in some cases, results in a reduction or cessation of participation.*

*It is our view that councils need to reconsider their current rental reviews and remember that golf courses under their control are community facilities - they are not designed to be "cash cows".*

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

*Like all sports, golf is excellent exercise involving walking, skill and self discipline. It can be played alone or with others. Obviously, the game becomes more difficult to access for the disadvantaged if golf courses are required to raise their participation fees due to council rental increases.*

**6. Traffic, noise and other direct impacts on residential amenity:**

*The main area of concern on these matters relate to the occasional invasion by golf balls into residential amenities. Golf Clubs are very aware of this issue and treat the matter very seriously and responsibly.*

**7. Affect of litigation and insurance costs on financial viability:**

*Fortunately, litigation is not rife in the golf community. However, on the small number of occasions when it does occur, the action is usually significant and usually results from someone being injured by being struck by an errant golf ball. Again, it is stressed that these occasions are minor.*

*Insurance costs (especially public liability insurance premiums) continue to rise steadily.*

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

*A number of council owned golf courses are also identified as public park/access areas. The main issue is the lack of care by the public of the possibility of being accidentally struck by golf balls during their open space activities. Generally, golfers are responsible and make careful allowance for members of the public who may be at risk. Closer co-operation between councils and golf clubs (by way of additional warning signage etc) would be useful. Fortunately, the likelihood of someone being injured to date has been rare.*

Regards,

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