

Reference: 80/30/0003

Contact: M Stanton

10th August 2006

Mr Kevin Greene MP
The Committee Manager
Standing Committee on Public Works
Parliament House
Macquarie House
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Kevin

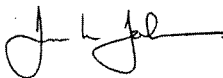
Subject: Inquiry into Sportsground Management in NSW

AlburyCity appreciates the opportunity to provide a submission to the Standing Committee on Public Works for the inquiry into Sportsground Management in New South Wales.

Sportsgrounds play a major role in the lives of many and providing quality playing sportsgrounds to meet demands provides Local Government with many associated issues. We hope the information provided in this submission is useful and we look forward to hearing the outcomes from the inquiry.

Should you require any additional information please contact AlburyCity's Recreation & Open Space Planner, Michael Stanton on 6023 8750.

Yours faithfully



James Jenkins
Group Manager
Community and Recreation



INQUIRY INTO SPORTSGROUND MANAGEMENT IN NSW

AlburyCity is pleased to provide a submission to the NSW Standing Committee in regard to Sportsground Management in New South Wales. We have provided a number of points in relation to sportsgrounds in Albury which address several of the factor you have requested and other relevant points.

Overview of Outdoor Sporting Facilities

Albury is home to around 46,500 people and covers an area of 332 square kilometres from the Murray River at the Victorian border, far east to the shores of Lake Hume, and north west to Splitters Creek. AlburyCity has 36 active outdoor playing surfaces which include:

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|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1. Albury Croquet Club | 19. Albury Skate Park |
| 2. Albury Sportsground | 20. Albury Tennis Club |
| 3. Alexandra Park (Fields 1-7) | 21. Alexandra Park Athletics Track |
| 4. Alexandra Park Hockey Complex | 22. MurrayField (Alexandra Park) |
| 5. Aloysius Park | 23. Billson Park |
| 6. Black Range Park | 24. Bonnie Doon Park |
| 7. Bunton Park | 25. Collings Park |
| 8. East Albury Tennis Club | 26. Ernest Grant Park |
| 9. Forrest Hill Tennis Club | 27. Glen Park |
| 10. Glenly Tennis Club | 28. Greenfield Park |
| 11. J.C King Park | 29. Jelbart Park |
| 12. Lambert Park | 30. Lavington Tennis Club |
| 13. Melrose Park | 31. Noreuil Park Oval |
| 14. Norris Park Oval | 32. Sarvaas Park |
| 15. South Albury Tennis Club | 33. Springdale Heights Baseball Field |
| 16. St Pats Tennis Club | 34. Thurgoona Reserve |
| 17. Uiver Park Tennis Club | 35. Urana Road Oval |
| 18. Waites Park | 36. Haydon Park |

The above playing areas provide facilities for Athletics, Australian Rules, Baseball, Cricket, Croquet, Hockey, Netball, Tennis, Touch Football, Rugby League, Rugby Union, Skateboarding, Soccer, and Softball. These 36 playing areas include:

Athletics:	1 fully equipped facility with synthetic track
Baseball/Softball Diamonds:	3 diamonds
Cricket:	18 oval (13 synthetic wickets & 5 turf wickets)
Cricket Practice Wickets:	16 synthetic @ 5 facilities & 4 turf @ 1 facility
Football:	14 ovals
Hockey:	4 fields (2 synthetic & 2 grass)
Netball:	18 courts (13 acrylic & 5 asphalt)
Rugby:	5 fields
Tennis:	49 courts (35 synthetic & clay)
Soccer:	13 fields

Summary of Outdoor Sporting Facilities

- The above 35 sporting areas cover approximately 120 hectares
- These facilities are used by 40 different sporting clubs and associations
- User groups of these facilities have either a formal lease/licence agreements or are permitted seasonal use.
- Over 50% of the playing surfaces have poor or no training lights at all
- Only 8 facilities have lighting suitable for competition
- 26 of these playing areas are on Crown Land
- Many of the facilities have no designated car parking space and no identified car parking for people with disabilities
- Access to facilities for people with disabilities is generally inadequate
- 16 facilities do not have club rooms or appropriate meeting space
- Many facilities lack adequate seating, shade, undercover areas and access to water
- Local schools use the facilities extensively and are not charged for this use
- Facilities in Albury are host to many regional carnivals including athletics, Australian rules, soccer, softball and others
- State championships in both soccer and softball have been held in Albury in recent years

Maintenance Expenses/Income:

- AlburyCity's annual expenditure on sportsground maintenance is approximately \$500,000.
- AlburyCity's annual expenditure on sportsfield buildings and amenities maintenance is approximately \$400,000.
- There are three leased sportsground facilities in Albury, which the lessee is responsible for the maintenance at considerable cost.
- There are many AlburyCity staff involved in the maintenance, management, planning and upgrades of sporting facilities. This includes staff from Community and Recreation (Parks and Recreation section), Engineering (Building and Assets and Landscape Services sections) and others.
- AlburyCity receives approximately \$80,000 in leased income and ground fees per year for the use of sportsgrounds.

AlburyCity is currently in the process of updating all recreation related policies, which will include a review of the current fees and charges policy, to ensure an adequate but fair return from the use of sportsgrounds.

Funding:

The current funding programs offered by the NSW Department of Sport and Recreation provide little assistance in the development of major sporting infrastructure. Despite some quality applications and excellent projects, AlburyCity has only been successful in 1 Regional Facilities Program project (\$82K) over the last eight years, it has however obtained about \$50,000 for several programs in the Capital Assistance Program over the past five years. When the above funding is compared to other states the gap is considerable and has an impact on recreation planning at a local government level.

The lack of funding through the NSW State Government in the sport and recreation area is evident. AlburyCity has completed a number of strategic planning documents in recent years which have highlighted a number of developments and upgrades on sporting facilities. However despite the demands and feasibility for these projects with little external funding available the majority of these projects will not proceed in the short to medium term.

The lack of funding in Albury is further complicated by cross-border issues. Many sporting clubs or associations based in Albury are affiliated with Victorian competitions or associations. When applying for funding through the NSW State Government they find themselves ineligible because of this Victorian association, whilst any approach to the Victorian State Government also eliminates them as they are located in NSW. This creates added frustration for the local sporting community and in turn places greater pressure on the Councils to then compensate for not being eligible for whatever funding program they were seeking support from.

Attached with this document is a list of participation figures on our sporting facilities and comparisons over a three year period which shows increased use. AlburyCity continues to grow at a rate of about 1%, and with current sporting participation rates also continuing to increase additional open space areas have been identified in Albury's Land Use Strategy for the development of sportsgrounds. AlburyCity is keen to develop some of our major sporting facilities into sporting precincts which will address the need of a variety of recreational activities throughout the year, therefore maximising their use.

The development of these future sporting precincts will require significant funding. The need and demands for these developments will be assessed and weighed up against other infrastructure projects which will also be required in AlburyCity to meet the growing population as well as on-going capital and operational costs.

AlburyCity is committed to providing quality accessible open space facilities for all residents as we appreciate the positive health and well-being benefits these facilities offer. However the increased expectations of the community, demands of sporting associations, and risk management/liability issues increase the costs and resources required by Council to develop and manage these facilities. Based on the above and lack of funding it is becoming more difficult for local government to provide equitable accessible facilities that meet all requirements and many worthwhile projects are delayed or never eventuate.

Sportsground Use:

A recent recreation plan has revealed that outdoor sports in AlburyCity are generally well catered and the grounds cope with current use, however it also revealed:

- That Council maintain their current maintenance standards on sportsgrounds.
- An adequate facility for Baseball/Softball should be investigated as their current sites have safety concerns and prevent the sports from developing.

Some other general issues identified are:

- The use of grounds at peak times. There are a number of sportsgrounds with limited or no lighting resulting in the same areas being used at the peak times and the emphasis is on the user groups and Council to upgrade and provide additional lighting.
- The standard, demands and risk-management practices of peak sporting associations to run competitions, events and tournaments continues to increase impacting on the resources and funds of councils and sporting organisations.
- The cost and lack of water to adequately irrigate sportsgrounds. Over the last three years AlburyCity has begun a program of implementing couch grass in our sportsgrounds. This has initial capital expenditure but with the aim of significantly reducing water use and costs over time.

- The need to make sportsgrounds multi-use to cater for a variety of sporting and recreational activities and events, and the number of new sporting and recreational activities which are becoming increasingly popular.

Surrounding Country Clubs Using AlburyCity Grounds

In recent years the number of country football (AFL) clubs who are based outside of Albury / Wodonga are using and/or requesting the use of sporting grounds in Albury and Wodonga because of the following:

- Majority of their players live and/or work in Albury/Wodonga
- Watering of some sporting grounds in country areas has ceased or been reduced in recent years due to water restrictions and leading to “unfit” training or playing surfaces
- Sporting grounds in Albury / Wodonga are generally in better condition
- Generally country clubs have been charged minimal or no charges for the use of these sportsgrounds

Some of the issues in regards to country clubs using sportsgrounds in Albury / Wodonga are:

- Overuse of sporting grounds
- Risk Management issues with conflict between users and different sporting training requirements
- Clubs deliberately not advising AlburyCity or City of Wodonga of their use to avoid fees and charges
- Regular users of the sportsgrounds express concerns about AlburyCity and City of Wodonga supporting these country clubs

AlburyCity has been supportive of these non-Albury clubs and attempted to find them a training venue, only where it will not inconvenience the existing use of Albury clubs or be to the detriment of the sports grounds.