



09 August 2006

Ms Carolynne James
Committee Manager
Standing Committee on Public Works
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Ms James

**RE: PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY INTO SPORTSGROUND MANAGEMENT
IN NSW**

Please find enclosed AFL (NSW/ACT)'s submission for the above Parliamentary Inquiry.

Sportsground management varies substantially in NSW and effective management is fundamental to the development of Australian football. The demand to play, especially in Sydney, is far greater than the availability of sportsgrounds. This is currently limiting our ability to grow the game.

Over the past five years AFL (Australian Football League) has and is continuing to expand rapidly in NSW. Last year, nearly 60,000 players participated in the game, and this is projected to increase by 67% to 100,000 participants by 2010. A key factor in achieving this objective is adequate access to appropriate facilities.


The key guiding principles behind our submission are as follows:

- More co-ordination is required across Councils in planning and providing sportsgrounds to ensure the quantity and quality of supply meets demand;
- Greater investment is required from the NSW State Government and Councils to develop existing and new community sportsgrounds;
- Sporting groups would be encouraged to invest in the upgrade of sportsgrounds if Councils and the NSW State Government, in return, were more willing to provide and make it easier to secure long term tenure;
- Greater co-ordination of Councils is required to provide consistent policies and administrative practices including usage charging; and
- Councils require greater capacity to adequately water sportsgrounds.

AFL (NSW/ACT) is willing to participate at any stage in the inquiry to help address these critical sportsground management issues throughout NSW.

Should you have any further queries please do not hesitate to contact me on 8333 8002, or Clare Toia-Bailey on 8333 8003 or 0402 407 103.

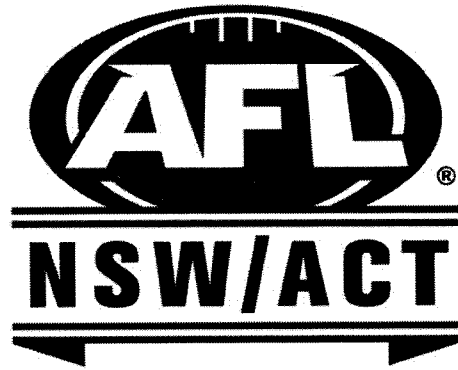
Kind regards


DALE HOLMES
GENERAL MANAGER



PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY

**INQUIRY INTO
SPORTSGROUND
MANAGEMENT IN NSW**



FROM AFL(NSW/ACT)

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS: 12 JULY 2006

SUBMISSIONS CLOSE: 11 AUGUST 2006

**SUBMITTED BY: CLARE TOIA-BAILEY
STRATEGIC PROJECTS**

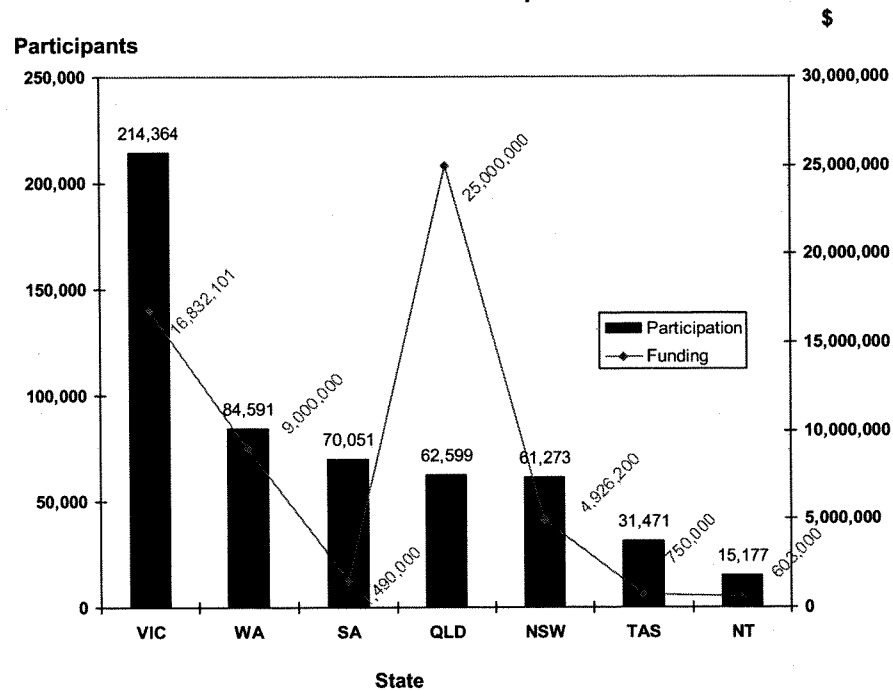
▪ **What criteria should determine the provision of sports facilities:**

- i. Overall community needs Vs adequacy (quantity and quality of supply in a council, or specific region)
- ii. Current participation rates Vs adequacy
- iii. Projected participation rates Vs adequacy
- iv. Ensuring the majority of residents are rate payers if the facility is funded and maintained by ratepayer contributions. At some AFL venues, local clubs whose members are mostly ratepayers have to share home venues with sporting groups whose members are not ratepayers. These clubs are disadvantaged when access to their home venue is limited because council is accommodating non local groups.
- v. For community facilities those codes that also cater for underrepresented or disadvantaged groups should be considered favourably. Examples of these groups include:
 - Indigenous
 - Women
 - Youth at risk, and
 - Culturally and linguistically diverse peoples.

AFL nationally, and State wide offers programs that encourage participation from these groups. Greater access to sportsgrounds should be provided by sporting groups such as the AFL that provide programs to target these groups.

- vi. The investment made to date by the sporting groups to develop and maintain the venue. At some AFL venues, clubs and AFL(NSW/ACT) have invested substantially in the upgrade of a venue. In return, access to the venue and long term tenure via a lease or license should be provided. However, councils are reluctant to enter into these arrangements because of the State levy (15% per lease or license agreement) and red tape involved in establishing these arrangements. This is a deterrent to sporting groups willing to invest to upgrade facilities because ongoing access and tenure are uncertain.
- vii. Whether the sport is new and emerging sport or whether it's declining. AFL has grown enormously throughout NSW in the past five years. Whilst overall participation may be lower than other football codes, growth has been higher. In a number of areas in Sydney, it has been difficult to establish an AFL venue despite local demand because councils have not accommodated the growth of new sports in the area.

**Potential State Government Facility Funding
Vs
2005 Participation**



The graph above shows the potential State Government facility funding through the Sport and Recreation Departments and AFL participation in each State in 2005. (The Australian Capital Territory has been omitted). Despite NSW being the most populous State it provides less facility funding than Queensland, Victoria, and Western Australia.

Critical facility items for AFL include:

- i. A high quality playing surface

Councils have insufficient funds to provide capital works required to establish and maintain high quality sportsgrounds. Typically, AFL ovals have uneven playing surfaces, no/poor drainage, no irrigation, excess traffic, poor grass cover and are hazardous especially with the hard drought affected playing surfaces.

- ii. Adequate lighting for training and competitions

Despite the Australian Lighting Standards (AS 2560.2.3-2002 Sports Lighting – specific applications) most councils do not have lights that meet these standards. In many cases, this could present an Occupational Health and Safety issue with sporting teams training or playing matches with insufficient lighting. The Australian Lighting Standards are much lower than AFL(NSW/ACT) preferred lighting standards.

vi. Reluctance to control volume

Some council's do not control the volume of users sharing a sportsground. Rather than turn people away user groups are booked in and use is beyond what council's are prepared to invest in to adequately maintain a venue.

3. Environmental concerns associated with sportsground management – including water conservation and grounds maintenance

The water restrictions that have been enforced by Sydney Water Authority have resulted in many sportsgrounds having dangerously hard playing surfaces.

The AFL measures surface hardness by the Clegg Impact Soil Tester using the 2.25kg hammer with a drop height of 30cm. Peak deceleration is measured in gravities. Many of the AFL sportsgrounds in Sydney exceed the acceptable range being greater than 120 gravities. An example is the test results of an AFL oval based in Sydney's Western Region. The oval is not irrigated and had areas that were twice that of the acceptable range - measuring up to 220 gravities.

In Victoria, matches are cancelled when readings are above 180 gravities and in QLD cancellation occurs at 200 gravities or greater readings. The concern for playing Australian football in NSW – is whether there would be enough ovals available to play on if these standards were enforced. The reality is, it is unlikely there would be a competition!

Ground hardness is a critical issue because AFL players spend significantly more time jumping than other football codes in preparation for taking a mark, or catching the ball. This exposes the player to greater forces when landing on a hard ground and the risk of injury is greater. Additionally, this can be compounded if a player is knocked unconscious in a mid air collision and is unable to protect themselves from landing on a hard surface.

In recent times AFL(NSW/ACT) has anecdotal evidence to suggest an increase in player injuries thought to be mostly related to the hardness of playing surfaces.

Presently, Sydney Water Authority has enforced a Grade three watering restriction. This limits the watering for local sporting grounds for a three hour period on Mondays. During this period the watering is restricted to hand held devices and the volume enabled is less than 10% of horticultural requirements. In fact in summer, the capacity to water is far less than the evaporation and transpiration rate. As a result, maintenance is limited and grounds do not recover during the summer season and there is ongoing deterioration of the playing surface.

In contrast, in Queensland watering can occur six nights per week from 7pm – 7am. The identification of strategies is critical to enhance the capacity of councils to water sportsgrounds, in order to maximise player safety. An AFL Oval requires 5 – 10 Mega litres of water per annum for adequate maintenance.

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

AFL nationally and across the NSW state implements its participation programs to all communities including those that are disadvantaged.

The disadvantaged areas, as defined by the NSW Department of Sport and Recreation, that we service include:

- Campbelltown
- Canterbury/Bankstown
- Cessnock
- Dubbo
- Gosford Peninsula
- Gunnedah
- Kempsey
- La Perouse/Maroubra/South Coogee
- Mt Druitt
- Narrandera
- Nowra
- Port Kembla
- Redfern/Waterloo
- Taree
- Wilcannia
- Wyong

AFL(NSW/ACT) can provide greater access to residents in these areas to its programs if venue providers were willing to assist with subsidising hiring fees.

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

The Committee will examine how councils are attempting to balance community concerns about noise and amenity arising from sportsground use.

Based on AFL(NSW/ACT)'s experience councils are managing the impact of traffic, noise and other direct impacts on residential amenity by a number of means including:

- i. Better planning:
 - Particularly, in areas where there are new developments, such as in Sydney's Greater Western region, council's are locating sporting venues in a critical mass. By locating the facilities in area council's can reduce maintenance costs and concentrate the impact to one area.
 - Provision of more parking in new sporting developments to minimise the impact on the surrounding neighbours.

Another example is the clause below noted in a councils booking from:

The Club / Corporation / Event Organiser/Community Group must provide

- *Documented evidence of a current public liability policy, indemnifying and naming the _____ or "any local government where the activity is taking place", with a cover of \$10 million.*
- *The insurance is to cover the set up, dismantling and duration of the function.*

It is usually compulsory to provide insurance details. The AFL, its state bodies, and affiliated leagues and clubs have Public Liability Insurance of \$20,000,000 which is required when booking any venue.

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

i. Limited Access for AFL

Particularly within Sydney, access to open space for Australian football is insufficient.

In Greater Sydney, there are 9,000 club players based at 73 club grounds. We presently have two clubs that are without home venues. They must share other home grounds, or travel well outside their catchment areas, up to 50 km to train and play matches. An example is a senior club that should be based in Baulkham Hills Shire, but because a suitable ground is not available players must travel to Henson Park in Marrickville to play matches.

By 2010, sufficient demand is anticipated to establish at least eight new clubs but presently, there are no new venues to accommodate this extra demand.

ii. Sharing with Other Football Codes

AFL shares nearly half these venues with other football codes. With more than one football code at the venue, more maintenance is required but not usually provided by councils.

There are also logistical issues in sharing the ground with other football codes. This includes the need and expense of hiring council staff to remove rugby union and league posts in the weekend to enable AFL matches to be played. An example is the shared use at Drummoyne Oval where AFL shares with Rugby Union, and Henson Park where AFL shares with Rugby Union.

Whilst other football codes are keen to share with AFL because it causes less damage to the playing surface, sharing with other winter codes frequently makes it difficult to finalise the draws. At some venues AFL(NSW/ACT) has to wait until the rugby league or union draw has been finalised before its access to a venue can be confirmed.