



11 August 2006

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the inquiry.

Background

St Ives Soccer Club has 750 players in 625 households in St Ives, a suburb of 17,000 people and 4,900 households. It operates within Ku-Ring-gai Local Government area (population 101,000) and is part of the Ku-Ring-gai and Districts Soccer Association which covers several Local Government Areas.

Adequacy of provision of sportsgrounds

Current Situation

In Ku-Ring-gai LGA there are 42 sports grounds, for the most part dedicated to a specific sport for a season (5 months). Problems with the number of available fields were identified in Council's "Comprehensive State of the Environment Report 2004" which noted "*The provision of local and district sportsfields at 0.62 hectares/thousand people is considered low compared to the Sydney Council's average.*" (Sydney Council Average is 1.21 hectares/thousand).

Soccer makes use of the majority of the fields in the LGA. The youngest group (under 6 and 7) use quarter size fields, the under 8 and 9 age group use half size fields whilst older ages use full fields. The smaller fields are typically situated on small parcels of land unsuitable for other use or primary school playing fields.

Fields without lights can only be used until sunset (approx 5pm) this is not a concern for younger children however it can present issues for volunteer coaches. It is not possible to schedule training for adults prior to 5pm because the majority have other commitments. Generally, teams do not wish to train on either a Monday or a Friday as this would be immediately prior to or following a game. This is exacerbated for our club due to a significant number of members of the Jewish faith who do not wish to train on Friday nights.

Warrimoo Oval is our home ground (with lights). Historically, a fairly standard allocation for training would be 1 hour per week on half a field for each junior team and 2 hours per week on half a field for and adult team. At present, we have up to 6 teams training on a field, this is 90 people trying to fit on space intended for 22.

Following is a table of typical usage over a week.

	5:00pm	5:30pm	6:00pm	6:30pm	7:00pm	7:30pm	8:00pm	8:30pm	9:00pm
Monday	u9E			9C					
			u13A			O35'd5s			
	u10D		u10c						
			u11B						
Tuesday	u9A		u12A			WAA2			
	u8G		10B			WAA4			
			u11C			WAA3			
						WO30			
Wednesday			u10A			O35 D1			
	u9B		u12B			O35 D1R			
			W14			O35 D3			
			W16			O35 D3R			
Thursday	u8B		u11A			AA4A			
	Junior	Skills			AA4AR				
			u13			AA4B			
			u12A			AA4BR			
						AA7			
						AA7R			
Friday			W18						
	u8C		6C						
			u11D						

Weekday training is then followed by weekends where junior games take 50 minutes + a 5 minute break and adults play 90 minutes + break. A typical weekend would be

	8:30	9:30	10:30	11:30	1:00pm	2:00pm	3:00pm	4:00pm
Saturday	12B	11C	10C	13A	AA1		AA1R	
Saturday		W16	W14	W18	WAA3		WO30	

Whilst the above tables may be a little confusing, they are intended to demonstrate that the playing field is:-

- overcrowded for training;
- being used to absolute capacity catering for 11 games (22 teams) each weekend.

Planning mechanisms

Ku-Ring-gai Council's "Comprehensive State of the Environment Report 2004" identified "The provision of local and district sportsfields at 0.62 hectares/thousand people is considered low compared to the Sydney Council's average." (the Sydney Councils average is 1.21 hectares/thousand).

Since the State of the Environment Report, Council has produced an Open Space Strategy published in 2005. The strategies to address the issue of sports fields were

Development of district scale sports facilities	Development of North Turramurra site (adjacent to golf course)
	Undertake a new sportsground needs study – taking into consideration current and forecast sports club registration numbers
Improved scheduling of sports	Consider the merits of conducting an annual forum of sports fixtures and communication ground users to discuss ground allocation

Whilst these strategies appear to be worthwhile, and demonstrate a planned approach, decision making by Council needs to be put in context.

The proposed development of North Turrumurra that appears in the 2005 strategy also appeared in the 2000 management.

MANAGEMENT PLAN 1999-2000 KEY RESULT AREAS AS AT 30 JUNE 2000						
Lifestyles and Opportunities		V3	Period:			1999-2002
Strategic Plan Outcome		O2	People participating in and gaining from the benefits attached to sporting, recreational, community and cultural activities or events			
REF NO	INDICATORS	ACTION PLANS	ACCOUNTABILITY	TIMING	% COMPLETE	PERFORMANCE INDICATORS
V302S2	Continue to upgrade major recreation facilities	Proceed to develop a new Sportsfield Complex at North Turrumurra Recreation Area	DEAOS	9/1999 to 12/2002	50%	Approved works completed. Current Status: • Pending DA approval.
		Develop the Golf Course	DEAOS	8/1999 to	100%	(Subject to approvals and financial approval)

In the 6 years since the 1999 plan the number of full-size teams playing for KDSA has grown by 156. These 156 teams play 78 games (enough to completely fill 7 fields playing Saturday and Sunday) and in that time no new fields have been created.

Whilst not directly related to playing fields, planning for a proposed indoor swimming centre points to problems with decision making. The demand for an indoor swimming pool in the Ku-ring-gai Council area was identified in a Recreation Needs Survey undertaken by Manidis Roberts in 1989.

- In 1994 Council acquired land with the intention of building a facility in partnership with the YMCA.
- In 1997 the YMCA withdrew from the project.
- In 2003 the acquired site was converted into a Council depot
- Council has once again commenced evaluating sites for possible indoor pool facility.
- Meanwhile demand for a swimming centre has continually fallen (see table below)

Number of Visits – West Pymble Pool

Season	Adults	Children	Schools	Squads	Total
1998/99	41,668	38,064	19,263	8,715	107,710
1999/00	36,549	34,803	18,870	8,567	98,789
2000/01	35,552	34,825	23,353	8,500	102,230
2001/02	33,376	30,439	22,473	8,470	94,758
2002/03	30,400	31,705	25,609	8,500	96,313

In short, whilst planning mechanisms are in place, there seems to be an inability to deal with identified needs or to change direction in face of changing circumstances.

In recent years there has been a significant change in the participation in different recreational activities. In particular, the growth in the popularity of soccer is undeniable. The following table shows the growth in the number of players within the KDSA over the past 12 years.

Year	Under 6's	Under 12's	Under 18's	Adult
1993	334	251	108	1552
1999	620	404	270	2769
2005	1276	646	370	3970

Whilst the current international success of both the men's and women's teams is bound to give rise to stronger growth, even a plateau in numbers for the youngest players would see continued growth through the upper ages as current players age. Should children already playing on the smaller half/quarter size fields continue through to full-field competition level with historic retention rates, in 6 years time we are likely to see an additional 90-130 teams in Ku-Ring-gai in the junior competition levels. This is aside from any growth in the number of adult players.

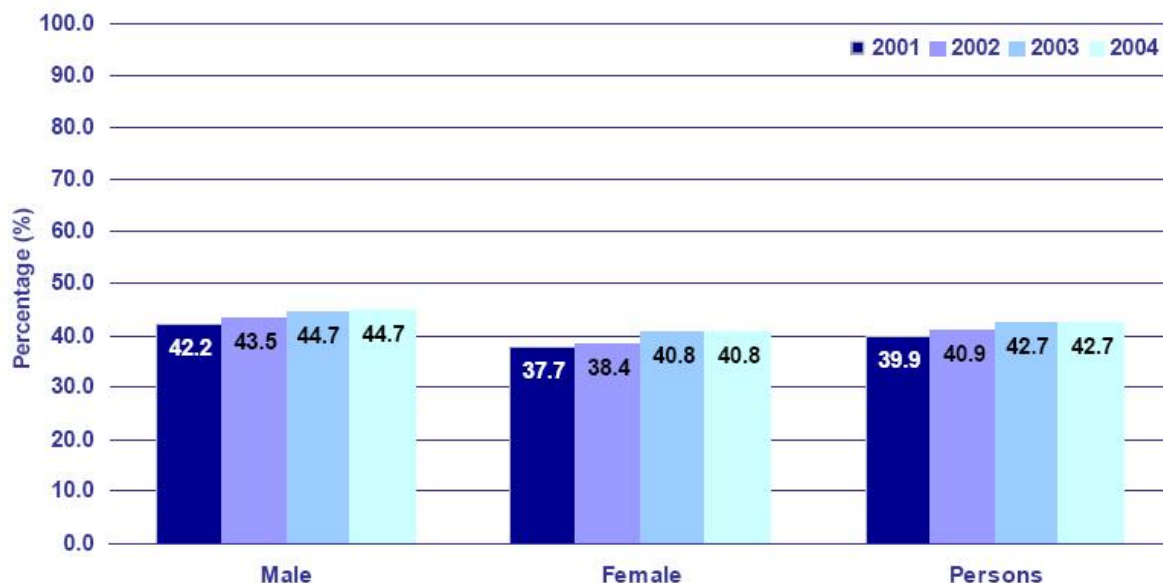
The growth in popularity can be attributed to four causes

- An increase in participation in organised sport for teenagers, in particular soccer.
- A general move from the traditional rugby codes, this is borne out in our own experience as well as in studies from the most authoritative sources such as the Australian Bureau of Statistics, Morgan Research and the Standing Committee on Recreation and Sport (SCORAS) and Sweeneys.
- A move by females from traditional female dominated sports such as tennis and netball.
- An increase in participation of the over 35's. Older players of other codes now see soccer as a suitable alternative to giving up participating, perceiving soccer as placing less stress on the body.

Whilst some of these shifts place no increased demand on playing fields e.g. changing from rugby to soccer, most create additional demands on playing fields. Such a radical change in the number of participants inevitably places extreme demands on Councils with limited budgets and resources.

Whilst most reputable statistical studies suggest a move towards increased demand for more structured recreation e.g. Exercise, Recreation and Sport Survey (ERASS) 2004

Figure 4: Organised activity participation rates by sex and year



Council's open space planning is moving in the opposite direction. A *relatively new focus on improving the balance between 'structured' and 'unstructured' recreation has grown from equity considerations associated with the broad trends away from 'structured' team sports and other recreation activities to more 'unstructured' pursuits such as walking, cycling, informal play and leisure swimming.*

Current Requirements

Maintenance costs

Increased usage leads to greater degradation of playing fields. Having fields in constant use with up to 90 players on a field make this unavoidable. The cost of maintaining fields is detailed in Special Schedule No1 (page 62) of the Council's financial statements.

	\$'000						
	EXPENSES FROM ORDINARY ACTIVITIES		REVENUES FROM ORDINARY ACTIVITIES			NET COST OF SERVICES	
	Expenses	Group Totals	Non-Capital Revenues	Capital Revenues	Group Totals	Net Cost	Group Totals
RECREATION & CULTURE							
Public Libraries	3,174		355			(2,819)	
Museums							
Art Galleries	527		419			(108)	
Community Centres			23			23	
Public Halls	969		482			(487)	
Other Cultural Services	248		51			(197)	
Swimming Pools	91		3			(88)	
Sporting Grounds	1,519		458			(1,061)	
Parks & Gardens, Lakes	4,583		4,817			234	
Other Sport & Recreation	1,544		2,954			1,410	

Appropriateness of Pricing

Current Ku-Ring-gai pricing is as follows (CSO = Community Service Obligations)

Open Space				
	Fee Details	Fee For 2005/2006	Pricing Policy	GST
	Cricket - Artificial Wicket (per Saturday Season) half day.	\$307.00	CSO	C
	Cricket - Artificial Wicket half day (season - 15 Sundays).	\$220.00	CSO	C
	Winter Sports Seasonal hire per field half day (per Saturday Season).	\$535.00	CSO	C
	Winter Sports Seasonal hire per field half day (15 Sundays).	\$368.00	CSO	C
	Sportsground Floodlighting			
	<i>Note: Following fees are per hour / per location</i>			
	Warrimoo	\$5.50	CSO	C
	Sportsgrounds-Training			
	Field Hire	\$7.25	CSO	C

It is hard to assess the relative merits of pricing. Whilst it is true that winter sports may well cause greater damage to a playing field it is difficult to see what if any additional maintenance is involved. If anything, summer requires more watering and mowing.

Whilst the field is made available for each sport for 5 months a year, costs are disproportional the

- soccer, (5 nights training 5pm-9pm + lighting =\$255 +weekend =\$1806, total \$2061 per week).
- Cricket (1 evening 5pm -7pm =\$21.75 + one Saturday =\$607, total \$628.75 per week).

Residential Amenity

Whilst the demand and need for playing fields has grown, some amenities have been lost. In recent years there have been 2 school closures in St Ives alone. One adjacent to an existing sporting field in Warrimoo avenue, the other across the road from the Village Green playing fields on Mona Vale road. The open space associated with these schools is now medium density housing. Similarly privately open space held by religious organisations in the area has been sold and built on.

Even now, the fate of the UTS site and associated playing fields is to be decided with the likely outcome being a residential development. All these changes represent a loss of amenity to residents not often considered in the context of playing fields.

In the immediate future it may be necessary to alter the current limits on;-

- the use of lighting on weekends;
- the use of fields for games on weeknights;
- starting time of morning games on weekends;

if we are to meet the needs of those players aged 6-9 currently using the smaller fields. This is likely to bring sports into conflict with residents immediately adjacent to playing fields and may require a review of current planning and environment legislation.

As the present situation worsens, the necessity to either forgo outdoor sport or purchase and rezone land for use as playing fields is the challenge. A lack of decisive action now will leave clubs with their own difficult decisions as to which group will be turned away because of an inability to accommodate them. It will be more than embarrassing to find those children we asked to "get off the couch" in 2006 have nowhere to go by 2012 except the video arcade.

David Howard
Registrar
St Ives Soccer Club