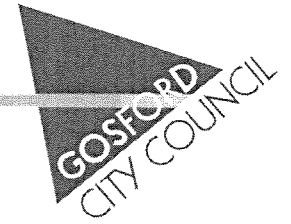


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Please Quote: K Tucker

The Committee Manager,
Standing Committee on Public Works
Parliament House
Macquarie Street,
SYDNEY NSW 2000

11 August 2006

Dear Committee Members,

RE: NSW Legislative Assembly – Standing Committee on Public Works

Thank you for the opportunity to make comment on this matter before the Committee.

1. Adequacy of provision of quality sportsground to meet community needs across NSW;

To-day in the Gosford LGA we have 34 sporting grounds under the control and management of Gosford City Council. This insufficient to meet the current needs of the sporting community.

- Of these
- One (1) ground is a regional event facility and managed by a Council 355 Committee
 - Two (2) grounds are managed either by licence or a 355 Committee.
 - Three (3) grounds have no amenities.
 - Four (6) grounds are old tip sites and requires enormous amount of maintenance.
 - Four (4) grounds are flood retention basins and their use is subject to weather.
 - Five (5) grounds are situated in flood prone areas and their use is subject to weather.
 - Seven (7) grounds are small and are suitable only for juniors to play on.

This leaves eight (8) Council grounds that are not increasingly impacted by maintenance cost, size or management issues.

A small number of school playing fields (5) are used by the sporting community. At present Gosford Council and the Education Department are working on a agreement for the improvement and use of sporting fields attached to Erina High School. We hope, when this agreement is finalised that this will be start of other schools joining with council to provide the much needed sportsground to the community.

There is one private sporting facility within the Gosford LGA.

The State Government has a sporting complex within Mt Penang Gardens, Festival Development Corporation. There is a large area here that could be developed into



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sporting fields, but due to the lack monies it is left idle.

The Gosford Local Government area is growing fast. The following information was sourced from 'The Central Coast - A Better Business Environment - 2005 Investment Prospectus' showed the Gosford LGA population as

| 1986 | 1991 | 1996 | 2001 | Projections | 2011 | 2021 |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|-------------|---------|------|
| 109,278 | 128,956 | 144,840 | 154,654 | | 174,200 | |
| 181,800 | | | | | | |

The infrastructure to meet this growing population lags far behind, since 1986 we have had only three (3) new sporting grounds established. Two are in a flood prone areas and one is a retention basin.

Another ground is awaiting development, but is delayed in the first instance to environmental issues and now due to the lack of funds available to complete the facility.

In November 2001, the State Government through the Department of Sport & Recreation undertook a review of sport and recreation facilities on the Central Coast. They commissioned Suter and Associates Leisure and Tourism Planners with Thompson Tregear Leisure Management Consultants to undertake the review titled '*The Central Coast Regional Sport and Recreation Facilities Strategy*'. We would recommend to the committee that you obtain a copy of the review as it documents needs of the Gosford Local Government area.

The Central Coast Regional Coordination Management Group (RCMG) are responsible for the implementation of the review recommendations.

The projects completed from the CCRS&RFS within the Gosford City LGA to date have not helped to increase the number of sportsgrounds or to improve the amenities. The projects include:

- Peninsula Leisure Centre
- Pluim Park redevelopment
- Surf Lifesaving Clubs redevelopments

The Pluim Park redevelopment is on private land, and the grant received from the NSW Government (\$300,000) was to cover change rooms and carpark redevelopment.

In Gosford City we lack space to build new sportsgrounds. The areas that have been identified for sportsgrounds, have been held up due to environmental issues and this has impacted of the project costs.

The current water crisis is creating major concern within the sporting community, as the majority of our sports fields (except for our regional event facility - Grahame



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Park) only receive rain watering. A hand full has water available from bores, but as the water table drops this will also diminish.

Should the drought continue the fields will deteriorate and become unplayable. And due to the condition of the fields clubs public liability insurances could be/will be cancelled due to the injuries that could be sustained.

There will be a need for extra funding in the future to repair damage created by the drought and Council and the local sporting community will be unable to meet these extra costs.

2. **Cost and revenue arrangements including capital upgrades**

Councils budget for the maintenance of our the sportsgrounds is \$800,000 per year.

Council charges sporting groups fees for usage of our groups with the fees based around 15% cost recovery. This also includes the use and maintenance of floodlighting for fields. Currently these fees provide little assistance for field renovation, repair and maintenance.

Council tries to keep its fees for use within a realistic budget for sporting groups but codes are indicating that their members are finding it hard to meet the fees.

Considering our nation has a high percentage of obesity, especially in our children, as a community and local government organisation we should be encouraging people of all ages to participate in sport and recreational pursuits for health reasons alone. The increasing costs to maintain sporting fields makes this a difficult task.

Parents with two or three children find it extremely difficult to meet the increasing costs of playing sport. We know that the ground fees are only a small part of the total fees paid but to some families this small part it what says yes or no to the children and/or parents playing sport.

The field based sporting community helps to contribute to the capital upgrades to facilities, by contributing funds they raise themselves, through grants available through Sport & Rec and from their own governing bodies. This assistance is greatly appreciated by Council and helps alleviate the ever increasing list of required capital works projects.

Gosford City Council runs a Recreation Assistance Program Grant system which has a recurrent budget of \$40,000 annually for grants for the sporting recreation community to access. The grants are on a dollar for dollar basis.

This year 26 applications were received, of these 16 were from sports who use sporting grounds. The total cost of these projects were \$52,647.30 and 10 were approved for \$20,089.25. The other 10 applications covered other recreational projects, the total costs of these projects was \$180,648.57, with 7 projects



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approved for \$19,910.75.

Gosford City Council's Capital Works Program for 2006/07 – 2009/10
has the following sportsground projects listed

| | | | |
|-------------|--|---------------------|---------|
| Project 243 | Replacement of Turf Wickets | \$80,000 | 2009/10 |
| Project 247 | Adcock Park Netball Courts Resurfacing | \$300,000+\$100,000 | |
| | Sport & Rec Grant | 2008/09 | |
| | Adcock Park Netball Courts Resurfacing | \$300,000+\$100,000 | |
| | Sport & Rec Grant | 2009/10 | |
| Project 252 | Installation of Bore Pumps to 8 Sportsgrounds and subsequent Reduction in town water usage | \$100,000FedGrant | 2006/07 |

Although these are the current listed projects, there is a large amount of work required across all of our facilities but due to lack of available funding, priorities need to be made and those projects with the highest priority are listed for funding first.

3. Environmental concerns associated with sportsground management;

Environmental issues are not only concerns for Council with sportsground management but with their development.

Council is currently developing a new recreation area at Kincumber on leased land from St Vincent's De Paul. In planning for this facility Council had allocated in excess of \$2 million to complete the project. Investigation and correction of environmental issues in relation to the development of the facility reduced the funding budget to over half which now has left the remaining projects of the development unfunded. These projects include the development of the playing fields, installation of a multi purpose hard-court and installation of a skate park. In it's current condition the development is only utilised for Tennis as this is the only section that has been completed (with the exception of a tennis club house).

Council is currently trying to fund or investigate funding opportunities to at least finish the playing fields so that the facility can be utilised for its original intentions.

Environmental concerns also impact on the maintenance and redevelopment of sportsgrounds and add considerably to the budgets required to undertake these projects. Endangered ecological communities, flor and fauna are increasingly being identified within close proximity to sportsgrounds which then places restrictions on the usage and maintenance of the areas. With our sportsgrounds already over run and our staff already stretched in fulfilling its maintenance requirements, these issues place further stress on the situations.

Increasing restrictions on Occupational Health and Safety requirements also place increased pressure on staff and budgets through changing maintenance practices



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and equipment utilised to complete the maintenance.

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

The administration of sports grounds can be defined as follows:-

Gosford Council: Has a very good defined policy for access to facilities for all sectors of the community. Although ground availability is limited, we believe our system is fair and equitable to all sporting codes and the community in general.

Schools: In our LGA we know of only five (5) schools that allow the sporting community the use their fields. It has been very noticeable, especially in the last few years, schools will use councils grounds instead of their own so not to cause damage to their grounds.

Private Operators: Only allow their own body to use their facilities. We have also noted on occasion they have not let other clubs within their code to use their facilities. They too have closed their facilities on occasion and used council grounds so not to cause damage to their grounds. This is very disappointing considering grant monies they receive from local, state and federal governments to improve their facilities.

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

Within our area we do have a percentage of low income and unemployed families that are facing increasing costs each day to their budgets (i.e. interest rates, petrol costs, insurance increases, rate increases etc.)

As mentioned earlier the costs associated with playing sport and, in particular, field based sports is becoming out of the reach of these families. As budgets diminish they slowly eliminated items from their budgets. One of the first things to go is sporting activities for their family, due to the other associated costs (i.e. travel expenses).

Obesity and diabetes is fast becoming a problem in our communities. As a community we should be encouraging people of all ages to participate in sport and recreational pursuits for health reasons alone.

Providing alternative and informal recreation facilities that are free of charge and



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open to the community, such as Skate Parks and BMX tracks, often raises opposition within the community as they are perceived as creating anti social environments and encouraging youths to congregate. Council has installed, and continues to plan to install, a number of these facilities and then becomes heavily involved in positive public promotion of these facilities through the delivery of skate programs and community forums / activities to assist in maintaining a positive environment for the area.

Council also works closely with the NSW Department of Tourism, Sport and Recreation to deliver programs that address the current health problems within our community such as childhood obesity.

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

We have limited public transport available in our LGA and this is a major issue, particularly for young families and older adults who may not have access to a motor vehicle.

There is a very poor private bus service that places a strong emphasis on viable bus routes and services.

As a majority of our sportsgrounds are located in out of the way places from public transports, the use of motor vehicles to access sporting venues is high. This does have an impact on residential amenity, especially on weekends.

Council's planning of sportsgrounds must ensure that residential amenity is not affected by their development. For this reason, the large majority of fields are developed in non residential or secluded areas, which in turn creates problems with limitation in access to those people who do not have access to a private vehicle.

7. Affect of litigation and insurance costs on financial viability; and

Over the years clubs / associations have reported to us on the effects of litigation on their sports and the effect this has had with increased insurance costs.

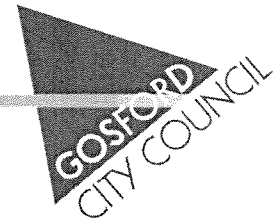
User groups have reported insurance costs rising as much as \$60,000 a year. This cost increase made it very difficult for the codes to remain financially viable.

One of the worst side effects of litigation is the decreasing number of people volunteering their services for sports administration at club/association level which consequently greatly affects the viability of sports.

The paper work has become onerous and the lack of free time to-day compared to 30 years ago is impacting on sporting bodies. Especially, when you compare working hours to then and now. Litigation issues were hardly every heard off then, now it is second nature for people to sue for any sort of injury sustained whilst playing sport.



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Council has had limited litigation from injury through sportsground use or management but in this respect Council spends large amounts of time and money to ensure sportsgrounds and their associated amenities are safe for the community and user groups.

The threat of litigation also creates an environment where Council is hesitant to allow certain usage of the facilities as well as limiting usage on facilities to ensure that grounds cannot become dangerous or unsafe.

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

Active space:

Due to increasing numbers of sports and participation numbers, the availability of sports grounds available to active recreational users has become very limited in the last two decades.

In considering this, Council in conjunction with the Gosford City Sports Council, developed a allocation policy which provides a fair and equitable system of allocation of fields to organised sporting clubs / associations. The policy takes into account the four following issues:-

1. Needs of codes (grounds tenure of same and needs competition and training)
2. Condition of grounds (including wear and tear)
3. Administration (including who is responsible for application, booking etc.)
4. Objections/Appeals

Although this system works well, clubs and associations are still unhappy with the amount of allocated time they receive on the sportsgrounds due to lack of facilities.

The policy document also gives comfort to clubs/associations that financially contribute to the infrastructure of a sportsground for the ongoing use of the venue.

Access to active recreation space for the general community during the winter months is generally limited due to the prevalence of organised sporting competitions. At times this can create issues for community members who are not members of an organised sporting organisation but the general consensus of the large majority of the population is that this is an acceptable situation.

When organised sport is not restricting usage of the active facilities, the general community has open access to the sportsgrounds. Council only has two Regional grounds which are fully enclosed with fencing to restrict access. This is due to their significance as high quality grounds. All other grounds within the LGA are guided by the Sportsground Plan of Management which prohibits the enclosing of grounds through the use of restrictive fences. This ensures that the community can utilise the fields at any time when they are not booked by a user group.



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Passive space

The community has unencumbered access to passive space within the LGA.

Your interest in these matters is greatly appreciated and Gosford City Council appreciates the opportunity to provide feedback in regards to our experiences. Should you require any further information or documentation regarding any of these matters please do not hesitate to contact me on 4325 8426.

Yours sincerely,

Karen Tucker
Coordinator Recreation Facilities
Gosford City Council
4325 8426



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PUBWORKS - Gosford Council Submission for the inquiry into Sportsground Management in NSW

From: "Kim Radford" <Kim.Radford@gosford.nsw.gov.au>
To: <pubworks@parliament.nsw.gov.au>
Date: 11/08/2006 2:54 PM
Subject: Gosford Council Submission for the inquiry into Sportsground Management in NSW

Dear Sir / Madam,

Please find Gosford City Councils submission to the NSW Legislative Assembly's Inquiry into Sportsground Management in NSW.

Gosford City Council has worked in conjunction with the Gosford City Sports Council to provide this feedback. Our responses are similar but vary in a number of areas.

Should you require any further information please do not hesitate to contact me.

Regards
Karen Tucker
Coordinator Recreation Facilities
4325 8426

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