



# NSROC Regional Sportsground Management Strategy

Volume I. Strategy



## About this document

This document is Volume 1. NSROC Regional Sportsground Management Strategy. It has been prepared by @leisure on behalf of, and in conjunction with staff from member Councils.

Volume 2. is the Consultation Findings and Analysis. Recommendations from this will be developed by Council staff to include in specific code plans.

Two internal reference documents were also prepared for NSROC member Councils:

- ▶ a preliminary sportsground asset inventory, including estimates of probable costs of known upgrading works, and
- ▶ a summary of NSROC Councils' sportsgrounds fees, charges and occupancy arrangements

## Acknowledgements

@leisure wishes to acknowledge the support and assistance provided by Council staff, sports clubs and associations, and a range of individuals who attended workshops, provided information, made written submissions and who answered surveys about sport in the NSROC region.

In particular, we would like to thank Carolynne James, NSROC Executive Director.

### More information

For more information about this project please call NSROC on 02 9911 3651.

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## Definitions

### What is NSROC?

The Northern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils (NSROC) is a voluntary organisation of local government established to: provide strong local government leadership; work co-operatively for the benefit of the Northern Sydney region; and effectively advocate on agreed regional positions and priorities.

There are seven NSROC member Councils: Hornsby Shire, Hunter's Hill, Ku-ring-gai, Lane Cove, North Sydney, Ryde and Willoughby.

### What is sport?

The Australian Sports Commission defines sport as: 'A human activity capable of achieving a result requiring physical exertion and / or physical skill which, by its nature and organisation, is competitive and is generally accepted as being a sport'.

### What are, and why sportsgrounds?

This project is focused on sportsgrounds due to identified pressures on use and concerns about future capacity in the NSROC region. Sportsgrounds are defined as public outdoor grass playing fields, sport courts and greens (such as netball, tennis and golf) used for sports competitions.

A range of other leisure pursuits occur on sportsgrounds and their surrounds. It is acknowledged that these are important for community wellbeing and that these can generally occur on open space not designed and managed as purpose-built sportsgrounds.

It is also acknowledged that there is a wide range of other indoor and outdoor sports facilities in the region. However, these other types of sports facilities are not directly considered in this project.

A further study may be required on indoor sports.

## Executive Summary

Community sport is an integral part of Australian life, providing a wide range of personal and community benefits through physical and social activity.

While across Australia health and fitness levels are generally in decline, residents of the NSROC region are more likely to engage in physical activity than other regions, and there are opportunities to provide significant additional health and wellbeing outcomes through sport.

The role of NSROC member Councils is to provide opportunities to support and promote community sport through effective management of public sports infrastructure.

Whilst a range of physical and social opportunities contribute to community wellbeing, this study limits its scope to sportsgrounds due to identified pressures on use and capacity of existing grounds.

### Sportsground supply “gap”

There is currently a shortage of sportsgrounds in the NSROC region. This is evident in the poor condition of grounds. Most grounds are overused in winter and cannot provide for the desired level of training use, or accommodate expressed demand or future projected demand for outdoor sports.

Major reconstructions of sportsgrounds and provision of lights will be required to comfortably sustain current usage, however these works will do little to provide for future demand. The shortage of grounds will be exacerbated as the region’s population grows and the numbers of people wanting to play sport increase.

The demand for established sports such as soccer, rugby union, cricket, and hockey already exceeds supply. With plans for growth in these sports and emerging sports such as AFL, Councils and sportsground users have to look at new ways of managing and developing sportsgrounds across the region. Some sports such as hockey and soccer will decline if additional synthetic grounds cannot be provided.

Currently there are around 300 sportsgrounds including bowling greens, netball courts, golf courses, etc) in the region.

It is difficult to be precise about exact numbers of grounds required as accurate data on current carrying capacity, use, participation and registration rates is not comprehensive or consistent across the region. There are many non-club, “pay as you play” forms of sport (such as touch football, ultimate Frisbee) and fitness programs (and personal training) being conducted on sports grounds. This non-club sport participation is growing rapidly however this use is not always quantifiable or captured by Councils.

Also given the lack of data on individual ground’s turf and ground conditions, it is difficult to determine the precise carrying capacity of all grounds.

The NSROC region currently has a population of approximately 550,000 with a projected 200,000 people participating in the top 15 community sports. The numbers of people currently participating is likely to be less than the potential number of players, due to ground shortages.

Based on the limited information available, and the likely carrying capacity of members per field per sport, a high level indication of the number of grounds desirable to meet potential demand have been projected. State participation rates for sports and population projections for the region have been used as a basis for these projections of potential demand (See Appendix1.)

@leisure’s initial demand and supply analysis finds the following:

- ▶ By 2036, the population is projected to increase to around 680,000 people, with approximately 245,000 people participating in the mainstream outdoor sports. (This assumes current participation rates will remain the same)
- ▶ Additional people would play sport, if opportunities were available, and if these were promoted

- ▶ By 2036 the shortfall of grounds to meet the potential demand driven from population growth will be worse, despite the capital programs for sportsground upgrades to increase capacity, and new facilities proposed by individual Councils in the medium term (see Table 3 in Appendix 1)

The ability for each NSROC Council to address this current and future sportsground supply gap is limited by four main factors:

- ▶ Limited funds mean Councils are currently struggling to maintain the existing sportsgrounds and associated amenities to the standards required, or increase carrying capacity of these
- ▶ There is minimal open space available for the development of new sportsgrounds, especially in the high density areas of the lower north shore, and given the restrictions on the extent of development of facilities in the less dense, upper north shore due to national park and agricultural lands
- ▶ The high demand for open space for non competitive social and physical recreation activities such as dog walking, and casual ball games on sports grounds

- ▶ In addition to limited open space available, the high property prices mean that Councils in the NSROC region face higher costs than other regions for new sportsgrounds development.

This “supply gap” and the Councils financial and land constraints are the reasons for this project. Put simply, if Councils continue to operate “business as usual” in sportsground management, we cannot address the current and future needs of our community.

It is argued that regional coordination will allow for greater returns than each member Council responding independently to this problem.

This project reviews the current management of sportsgrounds and proposes a Regional Strategy consisting of:

- ▶ key principles for management
- ▶ regional initiatives, and
- ▶ specific actions for implementation.

These strategies and actions are subject to further consultation and funding availability.

Through this Strategy, the coordination of community sportsground management across the northern Sydney region will be improved to maximize community sport participation opportunities. In turn, this will deliver greater community health, social and economic benefits to the region.

## Key issues

The analysis of sportsground management in the NSROC region has been broken into five key issues. These are:

1. Councils' role in sport
2. Managing fluctuations in demand
3. Planning and managing infrastructure and the carrying capacity of grounds
4. Pricing and occupancy of facilities, and
5. Funding capital works as well as planning and management

Key principles and recommended actions are provided for each of these issues and are detailed in separate chapters.

A consolidated list of principles, regional initiatives and actions follows.

## Summary of principles

### ■ Councils' role in sport

- ▶ Councils' primary role in sport is strategic planning, provision and management of sports infrastructure and promotion
- ▶ Councils' secondary role in sport is supporting clubs
- ▶ Councils should provide support to all sports clubs in the region
- ▶ Councils' emphasis will be on community sport, recognising the importance of providing a pathways to all levels of competition
- ▶ Funding responsibility for sport should be shared with federal and state governments and sports codes
- ▶ NSROC will support Councils in developing and implementing regional projects

### ■ Managing fluctuations in demand

- ▶ Councils should seek additional grounds, increase carrying capacity and ensure facilities are shared in both seasons
- ▶ Seek to retain the current sportsground area per capita ratio
- ▶ Council should prioritise community sport over other activities on purpose built sportsgrounds, as many other activities in demand are able to use other open spaces.
- ▶ Maintain a diversity of sports in the region, and a good depth of competition

- ▶ Councils should provide for diversifying populations and lifestyles: age, ability, cultural backgrounds and demand for new sport formats and schedules
- ▶ Councils, in conjunction with sports codes, should market available sports opportunities and monitor use of facilities
- ▶ Councils should develop partnerships with schools and clubs ie: joint planning and use of facilities, clubs in schools to develop skills, and pathways to clubs
- ▶ Councils should assist sports codes with strategic planning
- ▶ Councils should devise smart transport initiatives and encourage low sport miles

### ■ Planning & managing infrastructure and the carrying capacity of grounds

- ▶ Councils should complement the supply of sportsgrounds with indoor facilities
- ▶ Councils should define and increase sportsground capacity, and enhance viability of existing facilities through lighting and design
- ▶ Councils should plan selective synthetic fields, where possible off reserves, and close to public transport
- ▶ Adopt a hierarchy of facilities and co-operatively develop regional facilities

■ **Pricing and occupancy of facilities**

- ▶ Base sportsgrounds pricing on: % of cost of use and replacement after provision; the grade of ground, and the proportion of use if shared, for grass and synthetic surfaces
- ▶ Councils should subsidise not-for-profit or volunteer based sports clubs more than commercial sports enterprises
- ▶ Councils should use price incentives to encourage clubs to train off-field, use low grade fields, and divert demand away from high grade facilities
- ▶ Councils should encourage one-off capital user contributions, whilst maintaining public ownership, shared use, and offering finite rewards e.g. rental rebate / tenure
- ▶ Councils should standardise: booking systems, occupancy agreements and conditions of use; ground closures, season dates and rest between seasons; approach to schools, insurance requirements; and collection of usage data

■ **Funding capital works, planning and management**

- ▶ Resource regional funding co-ordination: packaging funds for sportsground improvements and regional facilities, and share the cost of developing a regional inventory, booking system and sports portal
- ▶ Councils should plan collaboratively for turf and synthetic ground replacements and whole of life costs
- ▶ Councils should seek contributions from: federal and state government and sports codes (for regional priorities); users for one-off local projects; as well as corporate and private sports providers through joint ventures

## Regional initiatives

A number of key regional projects emerged from this plan that should be guided by NSROC or collaboratively pursued by member Councils. These regional initiatives are as follows:

1. **A regional sports knowledge base.** This would include a facility inventory and GIS mapping, standardising information about capital works, ground conditions and usage measures to be used by Councils for planning (Chapter 1)
2. **A regional golf, bowls and tennis strategy.** This will provide a better basis for planning infrastructure for these sports. This progresses and expands on regional sports code plans already undertaken by NSROC member Councils (Chapter 2)
3. **A regional schools initiative.** This will seek to development a better integration between school sport, Council and club activities and provide better facility planning and management of resource (Chapter 2)



4. **Smart transport and low sport miles.** This initiative seeks to minimise the use of private cars for sport and develop a transport access plan for sports complexes (Chapter 2)
5. **Joint Council approach to capital works forward planning.** This initiative is about creating an integrated regional approach across Councils to capital works planning and the development and funding of synthetic and other facilities to maximise sportsground capacity in the region (Chapter 3)
6. **Co-operative development of proposed regional facilities.** This will progress consideration of several key multi-code regional sports facilities suggested by @leisure (Chapter 3), to enhance service, avoid duplication, and maximise viability
7. **Standardising conditions of use.** This will seek to provide simplified and consistent conditions and principles in sportsground hire agreements to address priorities of use and carrying capacities (Chapter 4)
8. **Region wide sportsground information portal.** This would include public information about ground availability and closures across the region, collect booking and allocation data, notify users about common issues or grants, and eventually provide (where feasible) a regional booking, allocation and invoicing service (Chapter 4)
9. **A consistent approach to costs of ownership for synthetic and grass sportsgrounds.** This will provide a consistent philosophy and guide to planning capital works, replacements and user fees for synthetic and grass playing fields for the region (Chapter 4)
10. **Bundled projects and funding packages.** This initiative will bundle capital works projects across the region to address turf reconstruction, drainage upgrades, provision of lights, non-potable water projects, synthetic surfaces, and regional facility developments, so as to be negotiate funding with state government and peak sporting bodies (Chapter 5)



## Proposed actions and implementation plan<sup>1</sup>

ACTION	Lead role	External partners	Priority <sup>2</sup>
<b>CHAPTER 1 - COUNCILS' ROLE IN SPORT</b>			
1. NSROC Councils agree to a common regional view about the Councils roles and approach to community sport as per principles noted in Chapter 1	NSROC	Sports	A
2. NSROC Councils develop a common regional inventory of sportsgrounds and facilities (building on that prepared for this project) for joint regional strategic planning	One Council <sup>3</sup>	Sports	B
3. NSROC Councils standardise, collect and periodically update usage data in a regional system to assist planning and more accurately determine the demand for and carrying capacity of grounds	One Council <sup>2</sup>	Sports	B
4. NSROC Councils agree that NSROC lead regional co-operation and initiatives, and monitor the implementation of this Regional Sportsground Management Strategy	NSROC	Sports	A
<b>CHAPTER 2 - MANAGING FLUCTUATIONS IN DEMAND</b>			
<b>Prioritise use of sportsgrounds</b>			
5. NSROC Councils should adopt a "priority of use" policy when there is competition to use playing fields, based on the principles provided	NSROC	Leisure Centres, Sports	A
6. NSROC Councils should encourage clubs to develop off-field training schedules and implement the 'one team-one on-field night training' policy (where Councils are not doing this)	Each Council	Sports	B

<sup>1</sup> These actions and priorities are subject to funding availability and public consultation

<sup>2</sup> A (1-2 years), B (2-5 years), C (5-10 years)

<sup>3</sup> One member Council on behalf of NSROC

ACTION	Lead role	External partners	Priority <sup>2</sup>
7. NSROC Councils should ensure all available sports opportunities in the region are well promoted to residents by clubs and Councils consistent with available capacity	Each Council		A
<b>Maintain a diversity of sports</b>			
8. NSROC Councils' individual policies should protect a diversity of sports in the region and promote the small sports to ensure they can be sustained, along with facilities that enable a good depth of competition in the region	Each Council		B
<b>Plan strategically with sports codes</b>			
9. NSROC should facilitate the preparation of a regional bowls, tennis and golf strategy	One Council <sup>2</sup>	Sports	B
10. NSROC Councils should at the end of every season monitor the range of sports, and the number of clubs and players across the region (see Action 3)	Each Council	Sports	A
11. NSROC Councils should, in partnership with peak bodies, monitor sports facilities and clubs "health" in providing for local competition needs, player pathways and social participation opportunities	Each Council	Peak bodies	B
<b>Develop partnerships with schools</b>			
12. NSROC should progress a "schools initiative" to facilitate the development of a stronger relationship between schools, clubs and Council in delivering sports opportunities. This initiative should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ develop sports facilities on schools grounds for joint use</li> <li>▶ match club needs for training with available indoor facilities and schools grounds</li> <li>▶ connect clubs to schools to support sports development</li> <li>▶ better match schools needs with Council sportsgrounds</li> <li>▶ involve schools in Council sport planning activities</li> </ul>	NSROC	DET and private schools and Sports	B

ACTION	Lead role	External partners	Priority <sup>2</sup>
13. NSROC Councils should facilitate regular communication with schools (including private schools) regarding participation in sport and the development of sporting infrastructure	Each Council	DET and private schools	A
<b>Devise smart transport and encourage low sports miles</b>			
14. NSROC should facilitate the development of transport plans for regional facilities and association netball facilities to minimise the number of trips by private car (sport miles), and encourage multimode transport through cycleway connections, public transport, park and ride and / or shuttle service	NSROC	NSW Dept Transport	B
<b>CHAPTER 3 - PLANNING AND MANAGING INFRASTRUCTURE AND CARRYING CAPACITY OF GROUNDS</b>			
<b>Increase capacity of sportsgrounds and viability of clubs</b>			
15. NSROC Councils should undertake joint capital works planning for sportsgrounds including the: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ planning and design of new and regional sportsground complexes as suggested in (Actions 17 and 18)</li> <li>▶ assessment of the feasibility of specific sites for synthetic field developments</li> <li>▶ bundling the construction of new grounds, particularly synthetic fields, and the restoration of existing grounds, water and lights and amenity block upgrades as regional projects, and seek state and sports funding</li> <li>▶ quantification of carrying capacity of turf fields to determine sustainable levels of use</li> </ul>	NSROC and each Council	Community, and sports	A <sup>4</sup>  B/C B/C B/C

<sup>4</sup> (implement the planning coordination process)

ACTION	Lead role	External partners	Priority <sup>2</sup>
16. NSROC Councils should individually: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ revise sportsground management plans and develop new facilities utilising the principles outlined above to enhance functionality, ground capacity and club viability</li> <li>▶ incrementally reconstruct turf grounds adding lights and non-potable water supplies as funds become available</li> <li>▶ seek additional use of netball courts in the off-season, and for programs, training, wheelchair / roller sports</li> <li>▶ review options to improve use and minimise damage to turf surfaces, by making sure sharing is between compatible sports</li> </ul>	Each Council	Community, and Sports	B
<b>Develop a hierarchy of, and regional facilities</b>			
17. NSROC Councils should collectively consider developing district / regional facilities across the region including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ One additional association site for netball –long term</li> <li>▶ One all weather athletics centre (including a cross country track) in the long term</li> <li>▶ Softball: two multiple pitch association grounds</li> <li>▶ Hockey: four locations with synthetic hockey pitches (Lane Cove, Ryde, Hornsby Shire, North Sydney and Ku-ring-gai)</li> <li>▶ Soccer: six additional locations with synthetic grounds in the medium term (desirably one per LGA)</li> <li>▶ Select association facilities for rugby union / league (where games can be played at nights) ie where possible one per LGA</li> </ul>	NSROC and each Council	Community, and sports	B/C
18. NSROC Councils should consider the development of multi-code regional facilities. These may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Pennant Hills Park (hockey / netball / tennis)</li> <li>▶ Meadowbank Park (netball / soccer)</li> <li>▶ St Ives Showground precinct (indoor / outdoor sports) / North Turramurra Recreation Reserve</li> <li>▶ New development locations identified by Hornsby Shire and Hunters Hill Council</li> </ul>	NSROC and each Council	Community, and sports	B/C

<b>ACTION</b>	<b>Lead role</b>	<b>External partners</b>	<b>Priority<sup>2</sup></b>
19. NSROC Councils should continue to develop sports code specific plans for the region	Each Council	Sports	B
<b>CHAPTER 4 - PRICING AND OCCUPANCY OF FACILITIES</b>			
20. NSROC Councils should seek to introduce greater consistency in allocation, pricing and occupancy arrangements for sportsgrounds across the region, as per the principles in this chapter	Each Council	Sports	B
21. NSROC should assist member Councils to prepare a succinct set of standard conditions of hire for sportsgrounds	Each Council	Sports	B
22. NSROC Councils should adopt standardised season dates and rest periods between seasons (of two weeks) and region-wide policies on wet weather closures, preseason and off field training	Each Council	Sports	B
23. NSROC Councils should ensure that all users have a current occupancy agreement for use of sportsgrounds, and supply usage data at the end of every season	Each Council	Sports	A
24. NSROC Councils should adopt a consistent approach to charging for synthetic and turf sportsgrounds, based on the cost of ownership	Each Council	Sports	B
25. NSROC Councils should aim to recoup 20-25% of sportsgrounds maintenance costs, in user fees from non profit sports clubs and a higher percentage of costs from users who are commercial enterprises	Each Council	Sports	B
26. NSROC Councils should encourage one-off capital contributions by users on the basis that facilities remain in Council ownership, that in return for the contribution a rental rebate, rent free period or extended tenure is provided and such an agreement is for a finite period	Each Council	Sports	A
27. NSROC should assist Councils to develop a region wide sportsgrounds booking and allocation system, to include invoicing and web entry for sportsground bookings, allocation applications etc. and assist in recording demand for grounds (as per Action 3)	Each Council	Sports	B

<b>ACTION</b>	<b>Lead role</b>	<b>External partners</b>	<b>Priority<sup>5</sup></b>
<b>CHAPTER 5 – FUNDING CAPITAL WORKS&lt; PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT</b>			
28. NSROC assist Councils to cost, develop and implement the regional projects indentified in Chapter 3	NSROC	All stakeholders	B
29. NSROC support member Councils to negotiate funding packages with clubs and other bodies	NSROC	Sports	B
30. NSROC lead the development of regional partnerships with other government agencies, schools, and state and peak sporting bodies to implement elements of this plan	NSROC	All stakeholders	A
31. NSROC to examine opportunities for new regional funding approaches such as a Regional Sports Foundation and other coordinated regional funding mechanisms	NSROC	All stakeholders	A

<sup>5</sup> A (1-2 years), B (2-5 years), C (5-10 years)

## Introduction & background

### What is this Strategy about?

NSROC Councils recognise that organised community sport has an important role to play in sustaining the health and social cohesion of its communities.

This Regional Sportsground Management Strategy is about improving coordination of sportsground management across the region, to deliver greater community benefits.

NSROC Councils have identified an acute shortage of community sports facilities, particularly sportsgrounds. This is set to worsen with continued population growth, and increasing demand for organised community sport.

Funding constraints limit each Council's capacity to meet current and future needs. However, together, through regional planning, co-operation and management of sportsgrounds, more can be achieved.

### How this document is organised?

This document outlines the key issues that have arisen. A summary of principles, regional initiatives, and recommended actions is provided in the executive summary.

In the following pages, challenges and opportunities as well as principles and recommended actions are set out under each of the five key issues.

### How has this Strategy been developed?

This document follows a preliminary discussion paper. The discussion paper was prepared having considered projected participation rates as well as data collected from discussions with participating Councils, clubs and associations, and from site inspections.

@leisure has since compared available demand data and information about the supply of facilities, and analysed resulting issues to provide regional principles and recommended actions.

## Who has been consulted?

Consultation for this project was completed in three stages:

Stage 1: Involved several workshops with Council staff and the preparation of a Discussion Paper. This was released for public comment and submissions were invited. Seventeen submissions were received from sports associations, sports clubs and interested stakeholders. A summary of these can be found in Volume 2. Consultation Findings and Analysis.

Stage 2: Two public forums were held for peak sporting bodies, regional associations and sport clubs. The notes from each of these forums can be found in Volume 2. Consultation Findings and Analysis.

Stage 3: Telephone interviews were undertaken with a variety of Councils, agencies, and peak sporting bodies, sports associations and sports clubs. A full list of these stakeholders is provided in Volume 2. Consultation Findings and Analysis.

## Background

### ■ The benefits of sport

Sport provides a wide range of personal and community benefits through physical and social activity.

Community level sport promotes physical activity, which can reduce obesity and health-care costs. 69% of adult males, 53.2% of adult females and 23.9% of children are currently classified as being overweight or obese in NSW.<sup>6</sup>

In Australia, health costs could be reduced in gross terms, by \$1.49 billion per year; and productivity gains (by making the workforce healthier through increased physical activity) could be as much as \$12 billion per year<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> National Health Survey 2007 – 2008. Published 2010

<sup>7</sup> The Economic Contribution of Sport to Australia. Frontier Economics January 2010.

Other benefits of sport include socialisation and social cohesion. Sport accounts for some 33% of all volunteers in Australia and 26.5% of all volunteer hours. The estimated value of volunteer input to sport in 2006 was \$3.9 billion.<sup>8</sup>

### ■ Policy Context

In 2008, the Australian Government appointed an independent expert panel to investigate ways of ensuring that Australia's sporting system remains prepared for the challenges of the future. The resulting "Crawford" report identified key strategies for Australian sport, including those relevant to community sport:

- ▶ Putting sport and physical activity back into education
- ▶ Building community sport with people (volunteers) and places (facilities)
- ▶ Ensuring Australia's sport system is open to all
- ▶ Sustaining the funding base for sport

These issues are all directly relevant to the NSROC region.

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<sup>8</sup> The Economic Contribution of Sport to Australia, Frontier Economics, 2010

The Government **response to the Independent Sport Panel Report** and new sport policy paper was released in 2010. Australian Sport: The Pathway to Success, focuses on delivering in three key areas:

- ▶ increasing the number of Australians participating in sport for the benefit of the community and sporting success
- ▶ strengthening sporting development pathways, connecting grassroots and high performance sport; and
- ▶ striving for success

One key policy area particularly relevant to NSROC is the National Sport and Education Strategy- associated with schools and sport.

At the state level, The NSW State Plan launched in 2010, indicates a commitment to increase the number of people participating in sporting activities and physical exercise, by 10 per cent, by 2016.

One strategy identified in the plan is to “increase opportunities to share recreational resources with schools, local government, clubs and other bodies.” This is directly relevant to the NSROC region.

Game Plan 2012; NSW Sport and Recreation Industry Five Year Plan is based on the principle that physical activity builds stronger communities, and sport is much broader than traditional team games and competition. The Plan focuses on bringing participants, service providers, funders, and advocates together, in a more effective way, and to ensure the recognized benefits are realised. The plan recognizes the need for new or improved access to facilities, and an increasing number of people playing sport in NSW.

In addition to health and wellbeing of individuals and opportunities for sport to strengthen the community, the plan acknowledges that sport has a significant impact on the economy given the number of industry groups contributing to the sport industry.

The Plan is centred on four key focus areas which underpin the vision of “shaping our community for a sustainable future”, namely:

- ▶ active community
- ▶ new vision for volunteers
- ▶ innovative funding, and a
- ▶ fresh approach to facilities

Appendix 2 outlines the relationships between federal, state and local policy and plans.

### ■ Demographics and demand

The NSROC region will be home to 668,000 people by 2036. The total population is expected to increase by 18.6% between 2011 and 2036, at an annual rate of 0.7%.

There is expected to be:

- ▶ a 12% increase in the number of people aged between 5 and 19 years
- ▶ a 15% increase in the number of people aged between 25 and 34 years
- ▶ a 37.8% increase in the number of people aged 65 years and above
- ▶ a daytime population including visiting workers of approximately 750,000

The NSW Metropolitan Strategy identified that the population increase in the region will be provided principally through higher density living. The change in the mix of housing options will increase diversity in the community in terms of age, household type and socio-economic status.

The principal implications for sport of projected population growth and change up until 2036 are as follows:

- ▶ There will be sustained demand for junior team sports (12% growth or 114,500 children in this highest participation age group). This excludes the high number of private school students from outside the region, going to school in the region
- ▶ Middle aged and older adults are an increasing percentage of the regional population and tend to be staying active longer. This group will increase the demand for social, casual “pay as you play” (PAYP), masters sports, and for alternative fitness activities that use sportsgrounds
- ▶ Also, because of the higher level of older adults there will be increasing demand for infrastructure that is physically accessible, as well as more information about suitable opportunities for older adults to participate
- ▶ The visiting working population will add to the demand for sportsgrounds during weekdays

- ▶ Population growth will also generate demand for other outdoor physical and social activity such as dog and fitness training, corporate sports, and trail activities. These, coupled with a major shortage of indoor sports facilities across the region and limited available open space, will exacerbate pressure on sportsgrounds
- ▶ The region is relatively economically advantaged. This means a higher proportion of people are likely to be aware of the benefits of sport, and can afford to travel and play sport

### Physical context

The region has a number of physical attributes that make it unique for sportsground management.

The Northern Sydney Region is bounded to the north; by National and State Parks and to the south; by Sydney Harbour. However, a very small proportion of available open space in the region is dedicated to sportsgrounds.

Most Councils have relatively few sportsgrounds. (An estimated 230 sportsgrounds<sup>9</sup> equating to approximately one ground per 2400 persons.)

The number of grounds tends to influence the range of sports played in each LGA and across the region. The tendency is for each Council to cater to the high participation sports, and those that have been played at the same site for a long time. This may impact on the diversity of opportunities available in terms of different sports, and different types of teams ie masters, females, and people with a disability.

The region has relatively limited available flat land due to topography and established urban development.

A number of playing fields are single grounds with play spaces, shared paths and recreation facilities on the boundary lines. Many sportsgrounds are constructed on drainage ways and former tip sites.

The existing demand for outdoor playing fields cannot be met in the region, nor can the demand for social and family recreation parkland.

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<sup>9</sup> excluding bowls tennis and golf



Sportsgrounds in the region commonly contain bushland or native vegetation, spectacular physical features such as sand stone rock formations, and views of water. These characteristics provide a high level of amenity as well as an opportunity to screen sports lights and noise from adjacent residents. At the same time, these bushland and physical features provide challenges for sportsground design and maintenance activities, and provision of support facilities.

In some cases, topography has been used effectively to enhance a sportsground, for example providing a natural amphitheatre for spectators. In other cases, bushland compromises field size, traffic management and expansion opportunities.

The region has high rainfall compared to the rest of Sydney. This impacts on drainage and the ability of grounds to withstand winter use and potentially assists turf growth in other seasons. It is common practice in the region, to returf goalmouths at the end of every winter season, whereas this is not common in other areas.

# 1. Councils' role in sport

## Challenges and opportunities

Local government subsidises sports in recognition of the range of benefits it delivers to: a) individuals who see it, follow it, play it, and are involved in clubs; and b) the community who benefit from the social, economic and health outputs of sport.

The primary benefits of sport include:

- ▶ individual health and wellbeing benefits associated with the physical and social activity
- ▶ health sector savings and general productivity benefits for the economy from a healthier workforce participating in sport, and
- ▶ social capital benefits of social connectedness generated by clubs and volunteers in sport

Councils need clubs and volunteers to deliver sports competitions, hence it makes sense that Councils support club and volunteer development, and assist clubs to remain viable.

Councils focus on foundation and participation levels of sport development, rather than elite performance. However, it has several key roles in sport. These include:

- ▶ Providing sporting infrastructure
- ▶ Supporting club and sports development and facilitating a child moving from the skill development and school competition environment, to regular competition, and from clubs to representative sport and sport careers
- ▶ Facilitating and encouraging participation in sports by residents and visitors, and ensuring that facilities generate the greatest benefits, given resources available

Therefore, considering these roles in sport, Councils need to be conscious of the availability of:

- ▶ A hierarchy of facilities that suit potential users and the sports played (field sizes, surfaces and the standard of support facilities) and; support foundation and participation, as well as performance levels of sport
- ▶ A range of sports, equitably distributed across each LGA that mean people are likely to be able to participate in a sport of their choice regardless of age, gender, income, ability and cultural background
- ▶ Information to assist in matching the availability of sports clubs, opportunities and facilities, with people who would like to play, volunteer, or be involved in sport
- ▶ Resources for planning and the support of clubs, fundraising, marketing and communicating with sports. These are beyond the traditional administrative role Councils have played in the past

As the pressures on resources of individual Councils and individual sports have increased, there is a need to look to partners in the region, to do more with less.

### ■ The changing relationships between sport and Councils

Across the region a number of sports such as lawn bowls, croquet, golf and tennis, are on private or crown land. Traditionally these have been leased to clubs on the assumption that are exclusively for members, and hence they have operated relatively independently of Council.

Given these historic arrangements, these sports codes rarely developed close relationships with Council, as compared to sports that use Council sportsgrounds. Therefore, Council rarely undertook strategic planning to enhance participation, or infrastructure development for tennis, golf, croquet or lawn bowls.

In recent years, the value of these sports (including the health and wellbeing benefits of maintaining choice for participants and a good depth of competition for each sport) has been better acknowledged.

These assets in many cases have aged, club numbers have declined and the demand for social play has increased. Many leased facilities are also operating relatively independently of each other rather than together or in response to current market demand and player development needs. Hence there is a greater need for Council's involvement in strategic planning for these sports.

## Principles: Councils' role in sport

### ■ Primary role

In accordance with Councils' Charter<sup>10</sup>, Councils' core role in sport should be the planning, provision and management of sporting assets to meet demand from residents. This role includes strategic planning, provision and management of sports infrastructure, as well as marketing of sporting opportunities to all residents.

### ■ Secondary role

Councils have a secondary role to support clubs to be sustainable and to program and manage public infrastructure for the benefits of residents and workers. Without clubs, most Council sportsgrounds would not have sports competitions played on them.

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<sup>10</sup> Chapter 3, Section 8 of the Local Government Act 1993 notes the Councils Charter includes: "to effectively plan for, account for and manage the assets for which it is responsible".

■ **Support to all sports**

Councils’ support of sport should extend to all sports clubs who provide benefits to residents and workers, regardless of whether they are located on private or Council land. However, Councils’ financial support of sports organisations will reflect the organisation or clubs degree of commerciality and their ability to raise revenue, and the potential benefits that can be derived from them.

■ **Emphasis on community sport**

Councils’ primary focus should be on the foundation and participation levels of sport, however these cannot exist without higher competition levels. Therefore, Councils should support sports clubs to serve other competition needs, player pathways and social participation, in recognition that the sustainability of sport relies on all these levels.

■ **Shared funding responsibility**

Councils’ funding responsibility for sport is shared with:

- ▶ The users of facilities (through hire fees, club and association contributions to the cost of infrastructure required for their purposes);
- ▶ The state and federal government, (this is in recognition of the social and economic benefits of sport, and the necessity of Council facilities to serve residents, workers, visitors, and educational institutions without such facilities).

■ **NSROC support to Councils**

NSROC recognises that opportunities for regional co-operation should be explored to minimise the cost, and increase effectiveness of sports infrastructure provision, marketing, and management of facilities.

**Recommended Actions:  
Councils’ role in sport**

■ **Opportunities of a regional approach**

1. NSROC Councils agree to a common regional view about Councils' roles and an approach to community sport, as per principles in Chapter 1
2. NSROC Councils develop a common regional inventory of sportsgrounds and facilities (building on that prepared for this project) for joint regional strategic planning
3. NSROC Councils standardise and collect up-to-date usage data in a regional system to assist planning and more accurately determine the demand for and carrying capacity of grounds
4. NSROC Councils agree that NSROC lead regional co-operation and initiatives, and monitor the implementation of this Regional Sportsground Management Strategy.

## 2. Managing fluctuations in demand

### Challenges & opportunities

#### ■ Changing participation patterns

There are more sports than ever before. Increased numbers of younger and older people are playing sport. Sports are being played in different formats and in both seasons, often over a longer season. These trends are increasing the pressure on sportsgrounds.

There are 15 main field sports played in the region that have a considerable number of players. More than 245,000 people are projected to play outdoor sport in the region in 2036, based on current participation rates. The sports with the highest projected number of participants are soccer, tennis and golf.

The demand for soccer, junior cricket, Australian Rules football, and hockey, already outstrips the supply of facilities in the region. This will be exacerbated by the further loss of fields such as one synthetic hockey field at Ryde.

More people also want to use sportsgrounds for recreation and physical activities. Dog exercising, family games and trail-based activities<sup>11</sup> are competing for time at many sportsgrounds, although these activities may be undertaken in alternative open spaces.

There is an increase in demand for indoor courts as training venues for outdoor field sports and for sports such as indoor soccer / futsal which are experiencing growth. There are also an additional number of indoor sports, and sports such as netball, that are being played indoors.

#### ■ Demand that cannot be met

An increasing number of children will not get to play sport unless: additional facilities are provided for school use; the diversity of sports is maintained, opportunities are relatively equitably distributed, and the cost of sport is kept in reach of most people.

Most sportsgrounds are used to capacity and the demand for weeknight training, and preseason competition and training cannot be met.

Several sports currently train twice a week. In future, training on outdoor playing fields may need to be capped whilst further incentives, scheduling and allocation occurs to provide for off field training. More use of schools, indoor centres, other parks and trails may be required for training purposes.

However, some fields and facilities in the region are not being used to capacity due to their poor condition, or the lack of lights, training or support facilities.

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<sup>11</sup> Due to the increase in demand for trails, some Councils have constructed perimeter paths around sportsgrounds that have meant the sports field sizes have had to be reduced.

### ■ Prioritising use of sportsgrounds

Councils recognise that sportsground are used for both community “organised” sport and informal recreation activities. In many circumstances these multiple uses can be maintained given the lesser impact on grounds, of these activities.

Community sport should be a priority over other activities on purpose built sportsgrounds, as many other activities in demand are able to use other open spaces.

Given the existing conflicts in community sport demand for sportsgrounds, there is also likely to be limited options for community sports themselves – for example major sport codes may not be able to play in both seasons.

In effect, the region is facing a situation where the number of potential participants across a number of sports cannot be accommodated. Consequently, priority use policies and allocation arrangements will need to evolve to reflect this carrying capacity.

### ■ Maintaining a diversity of sports

The main sports are likely to dominate at the expense of smaller sports, unless allocation policies prevent this. The larger sports such as soccer and Australian Rules football are growing. They are well organised, often have paid staff, can contribute financially to facility developments and therefore are better able to compete against the smaller sports for players and grounds. As people have to travel further for the smaller sports and the depth of competition reduces, small clubs and sports may become less viable.

Ultimately, if each LGA does not monitor the availability and viability of the smaller sports then there is likely to be a relatively narrow band of field sports played in the region (16 from about 40 field sports<sup>12</sup>). This is not consistent with the principle of providing a diversity of opportunities across the region.

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<sup>12</sup> Excluding water based sports, snows sport, air sports, motor sports, coursing sports and surf sports

Some sports such as rugby league have capped teams elsewhere, to better match availability of facilities and prevent some clubs getting larger and more successful, at the expense of other clubs. This may need to be considered for the sports that are growing, in the region.

### ■ Supporting school and junior sport

The NSROC region has a variety of education facilities including a mix of public and private schools, TAFEs, universities, tertiary institutions. While some schools have on-site sportsgrounds, nearly all schools both public and private in the NSROC region use Council sportsgrounds for training or competition.

There are considerable advantages for Councils, clubs and schools working more closely together to increase junior participation and maximising the value and usage of available facilities.

A number of clubs would benefit from more junior members.

Not all schools are able to offer physical activity and sports to the level beneficial to children’s physical and social development.

The planning and management of sportsgrounds needs to involve schools. Schools are important in establishing foundation skills and children’s exposure to sports competition. Connections between schools and clubs can mean better access for schools to club’s equipment and technical expertise. For clubs access to schools may mean opportunities to grow junior membership and pathways to higher levels of competition.

Schools rely on Council sportsgrounds for school sports and many clubs rely on school facilities for training. There are however some issues in managing that use, and there is increasing demand for shared use of facilities and more opportunities for Councils, schools and clubs in the region to work more closely for mutual benefits.

Schools could be better connected to Council through representation on sports councils or recreation advisory committees.

An inventory of facilities in the region and a centralised booking system may help manage demand and maximise use of grounds where they are available.

There is a significant demand for sportsgrounds from schools. However there are few schools in some areas and many schools have lost their grounds to building development.

Schools sites may provide opportunities for training, social sports and some specific sports such as hockey or small footprint sports like soccer small-sided games. However, major funds may be required to allow community use of schools to provide lights, access to toilets, and surface upgrades.

### ■ Changing formats in sport

Whilst sport will continue to be dominated by clubs, there is a trend away from routine club based competition, toward more programs, midweek, night, social and mixed competition and events based activities. A decline in the club-based forms of some sports is evident in the region, for example: tennis (the greater proportion of the players are now social night players), lawn bowls, and rugby league.

Available grounds will need to be able to be programmed during weekdays and at night. However, this use needs to be managed to protect flexibility, casual use, and so as not exceed carrying capacity of the surface.

Some sports have introduced modifications that make it is easier for Council to deliver infrastructure and manage carrying capacity. Sports have introduced new formats like small-sided games that use smaller fields. Adjustments to schedules such as playing at night can also spread the load.

Some sports have, or are moving from an association (large complex) based format, to home and away competitions, that require a smaller number of grounds (e.g. diamond sports).

Growth is evident in the region for some of new format sports where they have been able to find grounds. This growth includes:

- ▶ social ‘pay as you play’ team sports such as touch football, oz tag / league tag, (however participation is not as high as other areas, where more fields are available)
- ▶ trail and track based sports such as (mountain biking, trail running, BMX etc)
- ▶ personal training / boot camp style fitness, dog obedience, and exercise use of sportsgrounds

- ▶ social and lunch time competitions for workers and tertiary students. Some Councils in the region already provide corporate competitions in business centres ie North Sydney and Willoughby

### ■ **Managing growth and decline in different sports**

Where an outdoor field sport declines, generally it is relatively easy for other sports to take up the space if the original field is a large format sport such as a cricket or rugby league ground.

The growth in other large format sports such as Australian Rules football is problematic as there are few grounds large enough for senior competition, except a senior cricket ground. Soccer can, relatively easily use a rugby ground. Fields used by diamond sports in some areas, have been absorbed by football and cricket codes.

As hockey has moved to synthetic fields, there has been a reduction in the number of hockey fields used in the region. More grounds are needed together to maintain the viability of hockey.

Some bowls and tennis clubs have closed. However, there is a strong indication that the nature of what residents wants from tennis, lawn bowls and golf are not necessarily being delivered by clubs and facilities in the region. There is a high demand for social participation from these sports, but also a need to provide club competition and player pathways to higher competitive levels that may be developed by the peak body.

These higher levels of sport tend to provide the motivation for young people to play, and support the development of the sport.

Councils needs to be concerned for the level and quality of service offered to meet local competition, player pathways and social participation in these and other sports, otherwise the sports will not survive. This does not mean that all clubs and facilities need to meet all levels of competition. With smaller numbers, the number of playing fields located together will make a difference as to what a sport can offer, and how a club can be run, and hence the viability of the club.

Lawn bowls greens that are not required may be used for other sports such as petanque, croquet, bocce, futsal, and training activities. There has been some provision for bocce, and futsal created by the closure of bowling clubs in the region, and likely provision for netball by changing the use of tennis courts.

There are significant benefits of ensuring that sports facilities that are no longer viable for the sport played are retained for other sports and physical activity. Where clubs are opting out or participation is dropping, some Councils are turning sports facilities back into parks (others are becoming residential developments) or facilities for other sports e.g. futsal, bocce, etc.



### ■ State and regional plans for sports codes

NSROC member Councils have been working with sports in the region to prepare sports code plans. A number have been prepared to date. Information from this project has contributed to these plans.

Some sports codes such as tennis, have initiated their own state and regional strategies to: arrest declining numbers; support club development, determine priorities for the upgrade of facilities, and support player development pathways to elite competition.

Councils should encourage other codes to develop such strategies that provide direction at the regional level.

Such strategies may assist Councils in asset planning and in bidding for funds for sportsgrounds improvements.

### ■ Equal opportunities

All sports clubs using NSROC member Council sportsgrounds are being subsidised by those Councils. Therefore, in accordance with the Local Government Act, it is imperative that all people have the opportunity to play sport, and clubs actively include both males and females; people of all ages and abilities; as well as those experiencing social disadvantage.

Sectors of the population typically not well represented in all club sports and that should be encouraged to participate include: females, juniors, people with a disability, and persons aged over 50 years, or those born overseas.

The majority of sports are now played by both genders although there are a number where participation is predominantly one gender or the other. There are some codes in the region, such as soccer; hockey and bowls where there are still separate associations serving male and female players. Golf has recently merged its two separate gender associations.

Separate gender sports associations are likely to create some management inefficiencies. However, some sports feel there are more barriers for women participating and some inequities with respect to resources available for women's sports (as compared to men), and hence feel there is value in having a separate gender association.

Whilst there may well be differences in objectives and resources available to different genders playing sport, experiences from elsewhere tend to suggest that there considerable social and financial advantages of having combined associations.

In some sports such as tennis, lawn bowls; golf and soccer, there are opportunities to increase the proportion of females playing. Women's leisure time is typically more fragmented than men's are; social aspects and scheduling to fit family and work routines are more important than ever. Hence shorter games, social formats, "pay as you play" options and flexible and mid week scheduling may encourage more women to participate in sport.

During the consultation for this project clubs identified that women's teams were not often able to compete for allocations with the large number of men's teams that often have historical associations with grounds.

Grounds traditionally not available to sport on Sundays have recently been made available for women's sport in Willoughby.

#### ■ Sport and transport issues

Some complexes have limited car parking and car access through residential areas. This is compounded by significant vegetation at some sites and difficult terrain.

There is an increasing trend in capital cities for parking to be removed from large parks, however if sports facilities are not within walkable distances from home or public transport there is little incentives for "time poor professionals" to travel to sport in ways other than in the private car.

The nature of some sports competitions, such as netball; mean there are major peaks in traffic congestion around their venues. Rescheduling of games may ease congestion peaks, but can extend traffic activity and impact on residential over longer periods.

The development of key regional sports facilities and increased use of existing local ones, may generate additional private vehicle movements. Transport initiatives (that include car pools, park and ride, and links to public transport) to reduce private car trips and the loss of residential amenity, should be considered for regional facilities.

A high proportion of club participants are in their teens. There are opportunities to increase the number of teenagers travelling to sport by public transport and in car-pools, since direct parent supervision is not required by this age.

## Key Principles: Managing fluctuations in demand

### ■ Do more with less, share more

The carrying capacity of existing sportsgrounds should be increased, as well as additional grounds found to accommodate demand, as there are benefits of increasing the number of people playing sport.

All fields and amenity blocks should be shared, and used in both seasons to maximise the use and value of existing facilities.

### ■ No Net Loss

NSROC member Councils acknowledge that there are significant benefits of ensuring that all land on which sports clubs are located is retained for sport and physical activity purposes. Where this is not possible, equivalent space should be sought.

The quantity of public land dedicated to sport should where possible, be maintained at the current ratio of hectares of, or numbers of sportsgrounds per 1000 head of population.

**■ Prioritise the use of sportsgrounds**

Due to sportsground shortages, the priority users of sportsgrounds should be organised community sports. Informal sport and other recreation and dog walkers should be recognised as secondary users.

As there is an increasing demand for facilities by a wide range of sports, and insufficient facilities for all sports, Council’s priority in allocating grounds should be based on the following:

- ▶ Allocating resources in season to in-season sports (e.g. touch football in summer is a priority over summer soccer)
- ▶ Using specialised sports facilities for their intended use, as a priority, before others (ie using synthetic hockey facilities for hockey before other sports training; teams sports before personal training / boot camp style fitness, and dog use of sportsgrounds)
- ▶ Competition play has a priority over sports training or social recreation
- ▶ On Council managed natural grass playing fields, clubs may be restricted to one night of on-field training, per team, per week, where carrying capacity is likely to be exceeded. Council should assist clubs to train off field for additional sessions and in wet weather

- ▶ During peak time sports competition and training times, personal trainers should be allocated to designated personal training sites that are off-field and in other parkland, “village green” and ancillary spaces

**■ Maintain a diversity of sports**

NSROC member Councils should ensure a range of sports are offered in the region, in preference to just a few large sports, to protect choice for an increasingly diverse population.

It is acknowledged that interventions may be needed to keep a diversity of sports in the region, and to ensure facilities enable a good depth of competition.

**■ Provide for an increasingly diverse population**

In the allocation of sportsgrounds, Councils should give priority to clubs serving people of all ages and abilities, and gender-neutral sporting organisations.

Councils should also encourage sports to adopt new formats that: a) allow more people to participate, and b) respond to the demand for sport without routine commitment of training, and that suits people’s busy schedules.

**■ Promote<sup>13</sup> available sports opportunities**

NSROC Councils acknowledge that there may be additional capacity in some sports facilities that could be matched with compatible use through promotion. Good information about what and where these facilities are and what suitable uses will be necessary to support targeted marketing.

<sup>13</sup> Promote in this context assumes strategic matching of available resources with target groups, communication and product development, and pricing to encourage participation



Sport marketing is a responsibility that should be shared with clubs and peak sporting bodies. However, Councils must engage in complementary promotion of facilities.

To increase the return on Council's investment in infrastructure, and ensure facilities are used to capacity and not over used; NSROC Councils should play a role in promotion, as well as monitoring sportsground use.

Council promotion will ensure residents benefit from infrastructure provided, that facilities are used as intended, and that individuals as well as clubs are able to match their requirements with opportunities available.

Promotion of sport in the region should focus on:

- ▶ Where sports are played
- ▶ Existing clubs and what they offer
- ▶ Matching available opportunities with suitable and target groups' needs
- ▶ Diverting demand away from over used facilities

### ■ Develop partnerships with schools and clubs

NSROC should drive the development of stronger relationships between schools, clubs and Council.

Such partnerships co-ordinated at a regional level, will pay health and wellbeing dividends. These benefits include: more school children learning and playing sports through assistance by clubs, and playing sport close to home; at school or a local club, better utilisation of school facilities (that may not be currently used after school); school access to Council facilities, and clubs growing junior participation.

### ■ Plan strategically with sports codes

NSROC supports Councils working with individual sports codes to develop codes plans for the region.

NSROC encourages the peak sports bodies to work closely with Councils and clubs in the region to: assist with the regional planning of facilities, provide for player pathways to higher levels of competition and social participation opportunities, and to enhance club viability.

### ■ Devise smart transport and encourage low sport miles

All new (especially regional and association level) sportsground developments should be supported by smart transport initiatives that include:

- ▶ car pooling
- ▶ park and ride programs, and
- ▶ public transport access

This will help to reduce private car trips and the environmental impact of these, and the loss of residential and / or environmental amenity.

## Recommended Actions: Managing fluctuations in demand

### ■ Prioritise use of sportsgrounds

5. NSROC Councils should adopt a regional “priority of use” policy when there is competition to use playing fields, based on the principles noted above
6. NSROC Councils should extend assistance to clubs to develop off-field training schedules and implement the one team; one on-field night training priority (where Councils are not doing this)
7. NSROC Councils should ensure all available sports opportunities in the region are well promoted to residents by clubs and Councils

### ■ Maintain a diversity of sports

8. NSROC Councils individual policies should protect a diversity of sports in the region and promote the small sports to ensure they can be sustained, along with facilities that enable a good depth of competition in the region

### ■ Plan strategically with sports codes

9. NSROC should facilitate and co-ordinate the preparation of a regional bowls, tennis and golf strategy
10. NSROC Councils should at the end of every season monitor the range of sports, and the number of clubs and players across the region (see Action 3)
11. NSROC Councils should, in partnership with peak bodies, monitor sports facility’s and clubs “health” in providing for local competition needs, player pathways and social participation opportunities

### ■ Develop partnerships with schools

12. NSROC should progress a “schools initiative” in collaboration with the Department of Education and Training, School Sports Associations and private schools, to facilitate a stronger relationship between schools, clubs and Council in delivering sports opportunities. This initiative should:
  - ▶ develop sports facilities on schools grounds for joint use
  - ▶ match club needs for training with available indoor and schools grounds

- ▶ connect clubs to schools to support sports development
  - ▶ better match schools needs with Council sportsgrounds, and
  - ▶ involve schools in Council sport planning activities
13. NSROC Councils should facilitate regular communication with schools (including private schools) regarding participation in sport and the development of sporting infrastructure

### ■ Devise smart transport and encourage low sports miles

14. NSROC should facilitate the development of transport plans for regional facilities and association netball facilities to minimise the number of trips by private car (sport miles), and encourage multimode transport through cycleway connections, public transport, park and ride and / or shuttle services

### 3. Planning & managing infrastructure and the carrying capacity of grounds

#### Challenges and opportunities

##### ■ The supply of sportsgrounds in the region

There has been an overall decline in the availability of sportsgrounds due to urban development, and building works on school grounds.

Few new sportsgrounds are likely to be provided in future – even on brownfield sites. Several new sportsgrounds are being planned because of land swaps or redevelopments. These include Bedlam Bay in Hunters Hill (which is being transferred from National Parks); the North Turramurra Recreation Area and St Ives Showground precinct lands in Ku-ring-gai; and Old Mans Valley and the Old Dairy site in Hornsby Shire.

The lack of supply of sportsgrounds is compounded by the lack of indoor sporting facilities. Only two new indoor facilities are likely to come online in the region in the medium term. Joint use of indoor school facilities for sport is compromised by scheduling conflicts, exams use etc. Realistically, indoor school venues only tend to provide for one-off and overflow sports training.

Drainage and soil conditions are major issues in the region as a large number of fields are in drainage ways, on landfill sites, or along waterways. These need to be reconstructed regularly and drainage improved.

The condition of amenity blocks is generally only average. Councils have limited funds, so priority is generally given to upgrading fields that are critical to competition, rather than to upgrading amenity blocks. However, the design and condition of amenity blocks limits who can use them. Many would not comply with access, building or sports codes' requirements, or offer adequate canteen and storage facilities. These things affect the viability of clubs.

The carrying capacity of fields needs to be increased, otherwise additional grounds and training venues will be required to sustain potential demand.

##### ■ Increasing sportsground capacity

There are some opportunities to increase carrying capacity of existing sportsgrounds. These include:

- ▶ increasing the quality of turf through more intensive management and replacement programs
- ▶ ensuring all grounds are used in both seasons
- ▶ providing all facilities with lights
- ▶ negotiating access to school sites
- ▶ enabling flexible use through design (provision of fields at the same grade, ie removal of boundary fences and positioning of lights)
- ▶ seeking additional use of netball courts (these are only used 40% of the time and could be used for programs, training, wheelchair and roller sports)
- ▶ enhancing the appeal and quality of facilities at some more remote grounds

- ▶ selectively providing synthetic surfaces where appropriate

Further work is required to quantify the carrying capacity of individual fields across the region.

Where fields and courts can withstand additional use, utilisation may be increased through the following means:

- ▶ Use transportable goal posts for soccer, (those complying to Australian Standards (e.g. AS 4866.1 2007)) and hockey to deal with preseason, and juniors
- ▶ Spreading use and programming during the day
- ▶ Provide incentives such as price to encourage clubs to reschedule competitions away from peak times, and to share more
- ▶ Communicate with users to better identify trends in demand and supply and plan facilities to respond to these
- ▶ Develop and manage school sites for community use (and other partners)

### ■ Lighting of sportsgrounds

The demand for night midweek, social sport and competition and training is increasing. However, a number of fields and courts in the region do not have lights.

Competition lights are advantageous for sports for training and catch up games etc.

Use of sportsgrounds at night can be monitored and restricted by controlling lights - unlike during the day.

Sports lighting standards have increased in recent years and many existing lights would not be compliant.

Lights and night activity on sportsgrounds – especially night competition, needs to be planned carefully to minimise impacts on adjacent residents. However there is also demand for lights from other recreational users such as dog walkers and joggers.

It should be noted that the carrying capacity of many grounds might be exceeded if night recreation use is in addition to existing sports use.

Councils therefore need to focus lighting upgrades on sportsgrounds that are underutilised or can be upgraded to accommodate increased use and those that do not immediately abut residential areas.

### ■ Water and turf management

Most Councils in the region are harvesting water, installing bores, and trialling new turf species or spreading recycled organics on turf to increase turf growth and decrease water requirements.

Systems to remotely turn off irrigation and lights are also being installed when funds become available.

Water harvesting and subsurface irrigation works have been partly funded by Section 94 funds across the region. However, due to capping, and constraints on how these funds can be used, funding for such works is likely to be scarcer in the future.

Before capacity gains are likely on turf grounds additional research is required to identify exact use and individual field's capacity. This issue warrants further investigation on a regional basis, to embrace work that has been done and provide further guidance about specific fields and regional turf management strategies.

### ■ Configuration of grounds

Multiple ground sports facilities are cheaper per field for Council to provide and service, and they are logistically more efficient for users and sports to operate, than single grounds.

The design of any future facilities should increase economies of scale, and convenience for users by having multiple fields.

Where possible, the focus of new developments should be on achieving more multiple ground venues per code, and delivering several large sports complexes (possibly from brownfield developments), to serve growth sports such as soccer.

Multiple grounds also enhance club viability by allowing larger clubs to form and alleviate logistical issues created by having to use multiple sites.

A basic amenity block can serve two to four sportsgrounds. If there are multiple grounds supported by a modest but functional shared amenity block, that meets all code requirements, clubs can grow. Larger clubs can provide greater depth of competition, are more cost effective to run and need less support facilities per field than the same number of fields across multiple sites.

Progressively providing more multi-field grounds per code that meet the codes standards, in preference to multiple locations for one code may allow for some single grounds to be migrated to unstructured uses, personal trainers or smaller sports.

Car parks should in future, be designed on the perimeter or outside reserves, rather than taking up valuable parkland.

### ■ Synthetic surfaces

Synthetic surfaces are commonly seen as an option for increasing sportsground capacity. However there are a variety of costs and benefits of synthetic surfaces that need to be considered.

The main benefit of synthetic surfaces is that they typically may be used 20 -30 hours more a week (or 1200 more hours a year) than a turf playing field. They are also more flexible in terms of "all year" play, training than grass sportsgrounds.

Synthetic fields don't need to be sited in parks. Sometimes necessary fencing and associated infrastructure can alienate remaining parkland. Synthetic fields can be provided on sealed bases, and hence can be put on brownfield sites, former car parks and in urban settings etc.

The provision of synthetic surfaces on sites that are more remote, little used or with low quality turf, can turn around a poor image and bring high use, life, night activity and focus to such areas.



However, synthetic fields require higher capital outlays every 7-10 years while turf grounds require higher regular recurrent (maintenance) cost outlays, and their life can be almost indefinite. However, over a 10-25 year period the cost of ownership of a synthetic field is roughly the same or slightly more than that of a turf sportsground (if turf surfaces are maintained and routinely reconstructed to the level necessary to keep them in peak condition).

If synthetic grounds are used more frequently than they are designed for, then the deterioration rate and cost of maintenance increase and useable life decreases.

Natural turf fields are sometimes more flexible because the field footprint and line markings can be more easily changed. On the other hand, synthetics provide uniform and predictable playing surfaces all year round, although synthetic turf is generally hotter in summer and harder to play on.

Natural turf needs more water for maintenance, however they are not a heat sink and have a smaller carbon footprint than synthetic fields. The disposal of used synthetic surfaces is a major environmental problem.

Some synthetic fields need water for play, and for cleaning.

Considerable planning is required to ensure synthetic fields are sited where they are suitable for high use (especially at night), and any impact on residential amenity of lights and traffic can be minimised.

Budgeting for the cost of resurfacing, cleaning, grooming, shade, drinking water, and possible water harvesting is needed in conjunction with the capital outlay for synthetic surfaces. With extra and more sessional use by different users, a good booking service is also required.

Synthetic fields are a priority for hockey in the region. They are a requirement of the sport, and the sport is likely to decline due to lack of places to play. Schools may be good sites for synthetic pitches as they can be used during the day by schools, and afterhours by clubs. Synthetic hockey grounds can also accommodate training for other sports.

Some synthetic grounds are needed in the region especially for training and preseason games, to sustain the demand for soccer and arrest a future decline in hockey.

Regular turf ground reconstruction and enhancement projects will only deliver small gains in capacity. Therefore, additional synthetic and indoor training venues will be required to complement good quality turf fields and sustain demand.

Select sites for synthetic fields should be identified across the region, for both hockey and soccer, now, before development opportunities reduce further.

All things being equal in terms of establishment and maintenance costs, the overriding advantage of synthetic surfaces is the increased capacity of up to 1200 hours of use more per field per year than grass surfaces. This additional capacity has a high value in the region and brings direct and indirect benefits to the community.

Given the limited open space and high land values in the NSROC region, synthetic fields must become a major part of the sportsground landscape of the region.

■ **A hierarchy of sportsgrounds, and regional facilities**

The development of a hierarchy of facilities for each sport across the region, and key selective regional facilities, will provide economies of scale, better service provision, avoid duplication, maximise funding streams, and minimise operational costs.

There are opportunities and advantages in developing a suite of joint regional level facilities that can:

- ▶ Ensure the higher level needs of sports codes are met in the region
- ▶ Provide pathways for local residents to other levels of sport,
- ▶ Reduce travel time and cost, especially for young people wanting to play at high levels
- ▶ Reduce possible duplication between facilities in different LGAs
- ▶ Provide for tournaments that generate economic benefits for local businesses and clubs
- ▶ Be funded from a regional initiative, not just the host Council

Regional facilities can be defined as those that are:

- ▶ Large scale complexes with multiple codes, regional or municipal level sports facilities that are provided together (e.g. Pennant Hills Park) or
- ▶ Single code facilities with a large number of playing fields / courts

Regional facilities may provide:

- ▶ for regional and higher competition needs for more than one LGA, at the one site
- ▶ a degree of management presence
- ▶ shared management of synthetic grass or hard court surfaces
- ▶ a multimode transport plan to reduce private car trip and minimise impact on residents
- ▶ a combined booking system for events and training
- ▶ an ability to service spectators
- ▶ opportunities to tap into regional and state funding sources, and higher profile revenue streams (e.g. naming rights), which may not possible at other venues

**Key principles: Planning and managing infrastructure**

■ **Complement the supply of sportsgrounds with indoor facilities**

- ▶ NSROC member Councils recognise the relationship between indoor and outdoor sports, and the lack of supply of playing fields is compounded by the lack of indoor sporting facilities in the northern Sydney region
- ▶ The carrying capacity and viability of existing fields will need to be increased, as well as other venues for training provided

■ **Increase sportsground capacity and viability**

Councils should seek to:

- ▶ Determine the specific carrying capacities of fields in the region
- ▶ Incrementally increase the quality of turf through more intensive management and regular reconstruction programs to increase capacity of underperforming grounds
- ▶ Ensure all grounds and courts are used in both seasons
- ▶ Ensure all grounds have access to non-potable water for irrigation

- ▶ Enable greater flexibility of use of facilities in future and where possible, by provision of multiple field complexes, provision of fields at the same grade, without boundary fences and by positioning of lights
- ▶ Ensure all multiple sportsgrounds complexes have lights on all fields especially courts
- ▶ Acknowledge the importance of design of facilities to club viability, through providing multiple ground complexes supported by one shared amenity block and canteen, onsite training facilities that can accommodate large clubs, and meet all code requirements
- ▶ Whilst it is acknowledged that amenity blocks may not be as high priority as the provision of playing surfaces, planning to provide modest, functional amenity blocks that meet all code requirements should be undertaken in conjunction with field improvements, even if they cannot be funded at the same time

### ■ Plan synthetic fields

- ▶ NSROC Councils acknowledge synthetic fields are not suited to all sports, and all sites.
- ▶ Synthetic fields are required to substantial increase user capacity.
- ▶ Due to the significant upfront and ongoing investment required, development of synthetic fields should be preceded by: feasibility, siting and design, and management assessments
- ▶ As a priority, consider locating synthetic fields: adjacent to a train station and / or on a bus route, in brownfield or school sites, off reserves well suited to growing good quality turf, where car parking may be available after business hours, and not abutting residences

### ■ Devise a hierarchy of facilities and develop regional facilities

- ▶ NSROC Councils acknowledge the value of a select number of jointly developed regional facilities in line with the hierarchy for each sport and located across the region for sports such as, netball, tennis, hockey, softball / baseball, athletics, soccer and Australian Rules football.

## Recommended Actions: Planning and managing infrastructure

### ■ Increasing capacity of sportsgrounds and viability of club users

15. NSROC Councils should undertake joint capital works planning for sportsgrounds across the region including:

- ▶ the planning and design of new and regional sportsground complexes
- ▶ the assessment of the feasibility of specific sites for synthetic field developments
- ▶ bundling the construction of new grounds, particularly synthetic fields, and the restoration of existing grounds, water and lights and amenity block upgrades as regional projects, and seek state and sports funding
- ▶ quantification of carrying capacity of turf fields to determine sustainable levels of use

16. NSROC Councils should individually:

- ▶ Revise future sportsground management plans and develop new facilities utilising the principles outlined above to enhance functionality, ground capacity and club viability
- ▶ Incrementally reconstruct turf grounds adding lights and non-potable water supplies as funds become available
- ▶ Seek additional use of netball courts in the off-season, and for programs, training and wheelchair and roller sports
- ▶ Review options to improve use and minimise damage to turf surfaces, by making sure sharing is between compatible sports

### ■ Regional facilities

17. NSROC Councils should collectively consider developing district facilities across the region:

- ▶ One additional association site for netball in the long term

- ▶ One all weather athletics centre (including a cross country track) in the long term
- ▶ Softball: two multiple pitch association grounds
- ▶ Hockey: four locations with synthetic hockey pitches (Ryde, Hornsby Shire, North Sydney and Ku-ring-gai)
- ▶ Soccer: six additional locations with synthetic grounds in the medium term (desirably one per LGA)
- ▶ Select association facilities for rugby union / league (where games can be played at night) ie where possible one per LGA

18. NSROC Councils should collectively consider the development of multi-code regional facilities. These may include:

- ▶ Pennant Hills Park (hockey / netball / tennis)
- ▶ Meadowbank Park (netball / soccer)
- ▶ St Ives Showground (indoor / outdoor sports)
- ▶ New development locations identified by Hornsby Shire and Hunters Hill

19. NSROC Councils should continue to develop sports code specific plans for the region

## 4. Pricing and occupancy of facilities

### Challenges and opportunities

#### ■ Comparisons between NSROC Councils

There are similarities and differences in the pricing and allocation of grounds by Councils in the region.

Unlike in many other LGAs, clubs in the NSROC region are being charged by the hour, due to high demand and limited supply of facilities.

An increasing number of informal users are using grounds, such as fitness and dog trainers. During the consultation for this project, clubs suggested that these groups do not always have to pay for use of grounds.

In most cases, ground fees distinguish between major grounds with turf cricket wickets and those without turf wickets. Most fee structures separate fees for individual codes and for different seasons. Some Council's fee structures have rates for users from outside the LGA, especially schools. Daytime and nighttime are typically charged separately to reflect peak and low use times, and lighting costs. Some Councils charge for lighting on top of a general hiring rate.

School use is generally not charged (except carnivals / private schools, and schools outside the LGA) however North Sydney Council charges local schools a fee, and Lane Cove Council plans to introduce fees for schools in 2011.

Councils offer discounts for upfront payments and in some cases for juniors.

Local context tends to determine the nature of permit and licence arrangements. As some Councils have few facilities, agreements are often relatively informal and reflect local conditions.

In some Council's conditions of use are very detailed and other Councils do not have these documented.

#### ■ Basis for pricing of sportsgrounds

In most cases, there is no identifiable policy basis for fees charged. Councils have just added CPI over the years, although there is some benchmarking so fees are relatively similar. @leisure's analysis has found that in most cases fees charged are approximately 20-25 percent of the cost of ground maintenance.

In most Councils, hirers are not aware that they are being subsidised by up to 80 percent, and therefore it is unlikely that the value of what clubs receive for their fees is acknowledged. (Although Ryde's Management Plan does outline the subsidy for each association and club).

Price is a marketing activity. It can be used as an incentive to: increase occupancy at nonpeak periods; divert demand away from high quality facilities; share facilities, and to increase participation among certain groups who are less willing to pay.

Commercial sports enterprises and fitness trainers provide an important service to people who may not want to play team sports or join a sports club. Some other sports enterprises may target users, Council or clubs that can deliver services when clubs etc are unable to use small spaces not required for other activities. However, their regular use of sportsgrounds may contribute to turf damage. Most NSROC Councils charge trainers and have, or are preparing policies about personal trainers use of grounds. If trainers were happy using other fit-for-purpose spaces off sportsgrounds that don't cost anything over and above parkland to maintain, Councils may be able to encourage their use in areas where carrying capacity is not an issue.

For other services, such as the hire of community halls, most Councils differentiate charges between users that are commercial entities or not for profit. Similarly, fees for sports organisations that are not for profit and incorporated associations could be distinguished from those for businesses providing sport and commercial sport franchises.

If Councils charged commercial sports providers the full cost of use this may be too high to encourage residents to use these services.

In this case, Councils could provide commercial sports providers with a smaller subsidy (say 65%) rather than the 80-75% subsidy currently received by clubs. This still recognises the value of what commercial sports providers are delivering especially for some groups who cannot easily play club sports.

As many of the personal trainers and non-club providers use smaller spaces or fields than clubs, and typically are being charged based on the number of participants, costs could be proportionally less than team sports who use larger field formats and have large numbers of users per session.

### ■ Pricing of synthetic grounds

At present, users of synthetic grounds pay the capital costs of provision, and a hire fee, as well as ongoing maintenance costs. Whereas users of turf grounds typically only pay a proportion of maintenance costs.

Most Councils now utilise government grants to fund synthetic fields, where as grants may not be as freely available for the development of new turf surfaces.

An increasing proportion of grounds will have synthetic surfaces. Hence, Councils will need to determine whether they take on the maintenance of synthetic grounds, or whether users should undertake maintenance tasks. Councils will also need to determine a consistent basis for how users are charged, (assuming that synthetic grounds will not necessarily be leased for exclusive use by one code in future).

As synthetic fields generally have a higher total cost of ownership over 10 years,<sup>14</sup> it may be beneficial to consider charging users of synthetic surfaces on a similar basis to those using natural turf sportsgrounds. For example, users of both field types might pay for the cost of ownership after the initial provision. This cost would reflect lifecycle costs over the facility's life, averaged per year. Users who do their own maintenance could receive a rebate, in the same way as this may occur with turf fields.

### ■ Differential pricing for residents

Some Councils currently differentiate between residents and non-residents (ie Ryde) when charging for sportsgrounds. However, typically the number of residents who travel out of their LGA for sport, especially to regional facilities is likely to be similar to the number travelling into an LGA.

Differential pricing for residents and non-residents may add to the Council's administrative burden and may not be significant in discouraging use or raising revenue. A more effective management tool may be to give local residents priority of use, even if residents and non-residents are charged the same.

During the consultation for this project, associations said they should be able to use a ground anywhere in the region and not be disadvantaged by price.

### ■ One-off capital contributions by users

More Councils are accepting one-off club contributions for development and maintenance works. Councils expect these will increase to significant amounts.

At present, there is little consistency in how one-off club contributions are dealt with, except that clubs typically assume once they have contributed, that they have additional rights, especially security of tenure.

One-off club contributions to maintenance or capital improvements should be encouraged to elevate facilities to an agreed standard, or to maintain them to a level above what is financially possible for Council. In some cases, sports have paid substantially more to continue to have access to facilities that are more expensive to maintain. For example: cricket clubs in Hornsby Shire elected to pay additional funds to continue to use turf wickets, rather than play on lesser quality synthetic wickets.

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<sup>14</sup> In 2008 SportsTurf Consultants estimated the total cost of ownership of a soccer ground (provision, maintenance and replacement) to be higher for synthetic fields over 10 years (~\$23,000 per year more) & 25 years (~\$16,000 per year more, than an equivalent natural turf field.

### ■ **Occupancy agreements and conditions of use**

There is a general trend away from leasing sport facilities, toward providing licenses which are for non exclusive use, where sharing can be more easily facilitated.

Councils could use their occupancy agreements to provide incentives for better management and distribution of resources, as well as to encourage clubs to meet specific sports objectives, and use targets. Consistent conditions of use in user agreements can also provide incentives to ensure regional principles are met.

### ■ **Sport seasons and training periods**

There are opportunities to standardise policies on the length of seasons, pre-season training, competition and grading days, and wet weather arrangements across the region, as these are problematic. Standard conditions would alleviate inconvenience to associations that play across the whole region, and assist in consistently managing use issues.

Grass fields require at least two weeks rest and maintenance between seasons, and this rest time needs to be standardised across the region.

To reduce the pressure on grounds Councils could assist clubs to produce an alternative training plan as part of the conditions of occupancy. Such a plan would determine off-field training that a club will provide once a week, or in wet weather. Off-field training activities might include use of pools, gym, trails, beaches, circuit training, spin classes etc., or the use of other off-field spaces such as pitch surrounds on multi-field grounds, school grounds, and hard court tennis courts (for netball training).

A standard regional ground closure / wet weather policy would also assist sportsground management. Individual Councils would still decide which grounds are to be closed and when. This information could be posted on a regional web site and Council info line.

Seasonal hirers could be given some free use (say two weekends) on the basis of possible future ground closures, and no further refunds being made other than make up games.

Some Councils do not allocate grounds on Sundays. There is a tendency elsewhere for women and juniors to play on Sundays. This allows private school students to play in community competitions. Sunday use may provide females and emerging sports with space they may not otherwise be given. It may spread use across two days and provide consistency for sports associations who play across multiple LGAs.

In the context of current demand and the value of sport, it would be beneficial if more grounds could be used on Sunday. However, in some instances no Sunday use may be required on select grounds, especially where carrying capacity is being exceeded, and in suburbs where open space is limited and specific grounds are poor quality or less suited to sport.

A regional policy on seasonal changeovers, and school allocations, and standard conditions of hire is recommended, as these will benefit all parties.



Some Councils allocate their grounds to an association who then determine the fixture and where clubs play. It was suggested during consultation that if associations allocate grounds, they might not follow the same equity principles as endorsed by Councils. Conditions of hire can enshrine these principles.

Some clubs identified that they would prefer to develop “home grounds” and local player bases and take more “ownership” of facilities in return for development works. There are some advantages of this model for Councils, although it may create more work for Council administrators.

Other associations identified that they would like more information about all facilities across the region. This could be helpful to determine grounds that suit their needs when ones they use are being redeveloped. There are advantages as discussed previously in this report, of preparing a regional inventory and booking system that could be used by or viewed by all parties.

## Key principles: Fees, charges and occupancy agreements

### ■ Basis for pricing of sportsgrounds

- ▶ The capital costs for new facilities should generally be shared by the state and / or local government, and the recurrent marginal costs<sup>15</sup> should be paid for by those who choose to use them
- ▶ Users should not be required to pay both hire fees and capital costs of a facility, if it that facility can be used by the public for recreation, or shared by other sports at other times
- ▶ The basis of fees for use of grounds shall be a percentage of maintenance or ownership costs. Council will seek to subsidise the cost of clubs using sportsgrounds, by 75-80%
- ▶ The costs of replacing sports surfaces shall be planned for, in both grass and synthetic surfaces, and average costs including these, shall be factored in to user charges

<sup>15</sup> Marginal costs in this case are those over and above the cost of providing the asset for community use ie to fly a kite. They are the costs of providing the surfaces suitable for specialised sports competition, over and above maintaining the space as general parkland for example.

- ▶ The use of sportsgrounds by not-for-profit or volunteer based spaces should be subsidised more than commercial sports enterprises.
- ▶ Fees and charges should provide incentives to clubs to train off-field, and to share facilities
- ▶ Price incentives can also be used to encourage use of low grade fields, and price penalties can divert demand away from high grade facilities ie turf wickets
- ▶ Users shall pay for the proportion of use allocated, or if unwilling to share; full use
- ▶ Grounds should be graded to reflect quality, junior / senior size and price
- ▶ Seasonal and casual use rates should be available for all grounds
- ▶ Prices for using amenities and lights for a season should reflect energy used
- ▶ Grass and synthetic surfaces should be priced using the same system, if these are not exclusively used by one group and are available for shared use
- ▶ The basis of fees charged should be promoted to clubs, in order that they understand and acknowledge the value of what they receive
- ▶ Costs for the whole year should, for equity and simplicity purposes be averaged over the whole year. Therefore summer and winter season users should generally pay the same

**■ One-off capital contributions by users**

- ▶ Should users wish to have a higher quality of facility than Council can afford, they may contribute to the capital costs of upgrade works
- ▶ One-off capital contributions by users should only be allowed on the basis that ownership remains with Council; use continues to be shared, and any agreement has a sunset clause
- ▶ Contributors may be rewarded by a rental rebate, a rent-free period, or a term of occupancy sufficient to amortize investment
- ▶ Should the demand change for a sportsground or amenity block over time and a one-off contribution has been made by a user, (or relocation be required due to unforeseen circumstances) Councils should endeavour to find equivalent facilities for the contributors use, if required

**■ Occupancy agreements and conditions of use**

- ▶ Sportsground use should generally be licensed (not leased) to ensure sharing and flexibility of use by social, private and club use
- ▶ NSROC Councils should examine options for either a centralised or standardised sportsground booking system, to provide a good base for regional usage data, to serve regional associations and social users better and provide an equitable and transparent allocation process
- ▶ Community sports clubs should have priority of use of sportsgrounds, over commercial hirers
- ▶ Ground closures should be decided by Councils and uploaded to a central website for the region, each week
- ▶ Summer and winter seasons, and grass sportsgrounds rest time between each, shall be standardised across the region. In principle a minimum of two weeks rest between seasons should be provided
- ▶ Should there be competing demands for the same facilities, allocation priorities shall be given to clubs with: female or mixed gender, junior and masters teams and those that include people with a disability

- ▶ Where possible, because of the importance of sport and physical exercise to children, all Councils should adopt a policy of free daytime use for public schools in the region, pending the outcome of the schools partnership project. However schools may be required to pay a bond / or only be allocated some grounds. School's use of turf wickets and grounds for zone competitions carnivals will attract a fee
- ▶ Occupancy agreements should specify Councils' sports objectives, and outline the roles and responsibilities of both parties in plain English
- ▶ Occupancy agreements will provide incentives to share, and manage demand
- ▶ All users shall be required to provide specific usage data to Council at the end of each season
- ▶ User groups shall be required to have consistent amounts of public liability across the region, for example \$10 million

**Other suggested general conditions of use of playing fields may include:**

- ▶ sharing facilities and costs
- ▶ no subletting, use only as licensed
- ▶ protection of grass and trees from vehicles and events damage, and no play when fields are wet

- ▶ no dogs off-lead, no glass, all rubbish to be placed in receptacles
- ▶ protection of the turf through appropriate footwear in preseason, no use when fields are closed, and one night training on field per team unless otherwise negotiated
- ▶ clubs being responsible for managing first aid at the facility, and holding all necessary health and safety and working with children certificates and training

### Recommended Actions: Fees, charges and occupancy agreements

20. NSROC Councils should seek to introduce greater consistency in allocation, pricing and occupancy arrangements for sportsgrounds across the region, as per the principles in this chapter
21. NSROC should assist member Councils to prepare a succinct set of standard conditions of hire for sports grounds
22. NSROC Councils should adopt standardised season dates and rest periods between seasons (of two weeks) and region-wide policies on wet weather closures, preseason and off-field training
23. NSROC Councils should ensure that all users have a current occupancy agreement for use of sports grounds, and supply usage data at the end of every season
24. NSROC Councils should adopt a consistent approach to charging for synthetic and turf sportsgrounds, based on the cost of ownership
25. NSROC Councils should aim to recoup 20-25% of sports grounds maintenance costs, in user fees from non for profit sports clubs and a higher percentage of costs from users who are commercial enterprises
26. NSROC Councils should encourage one-off capital contributions by users on the basis that facilities remain in Council ownership, that in return for the contribution a rental rebate, rent free period or extended tenure is provided, and such an agreement is for a finite period
27. NSROC should assist Councils to develop a region-wide sportsgrounds booking and allocation system, to include invoicing and web entry for sportsground bookings, allocation applications etc. and assist in recording demand for grounds (as per Action 3)

## 5. Funding capital works as well as planning and management

### Challenges and opportunities

#### ■ High need for capital investment

With additional sportsground demand, increasing construction and maintenance costs, rate caps and Section 94 contribution caps, NSROC Councils will have limited capital to undertake major works to existing sportsgrounds, as well as provide new facilities.

Additional synthetic surfaces on sportsgrounds will require additional capital funds for construction and replacement every seven to ten years.

Ongoing funds are required for remedial work on sportsgrounds due to many being provided on land susceptible to flooding and subsidence. The cost of maintaining these in good condition will be higher than grounds that have been well constructed on unencumbered land. Similarly, in order to meet demand many grounds are being used longer than that which can sustain good quality turf. Goalmouths are commonly returned between seasons on soccer grounds.

#### ■ Major capital work projects

Major capital works required on sportsgrounds as identified by NSROC Councils in this plan include:

- ▶ reconstruction of sportsgrounds, (typically because of subsidence or poor drainage or surface condition)
- ▶ upgrade of amenity blocks
- ▶ provision of new / improved lighting, and
- ▶ provision of synthetic surfaces
- ▶ new facility developments

Tennis or netball courts resurfacing or upgrades are not included in these categories, as these upgrades tend to be the responsibility of the relevant club or association.

Based on Councils' estimates of works and likely regional facilities and extrapolating probable costs based on local examples, some \$64 million dollars is likely to be required to address known lighting, basic amenity block upgrades, ground reconstruction and likely synthetic surfaces required in the region over the next 5-10 years.

#### ■ Funding sources and options

In NSW the main sources of funds for capital projects available to local government for sport are:

- ▶ Council capital works and asset management programs
- ▶ Philanthropic trusts / foundations etc
- ▶ Developer contributions
- ▶ Naming rights, or sponsorship funds
- ▶ Government grants
- ▶ Lease fees, such as from telecommunication towers
- ▶ A recreation reserves fund set up using fees and charges and rentals from sportsgrounds
- ▶ Partnerships / joint ventures with service clubs and users

- ▶ Peak sporting body funds
- ▶ Funds from gaming machines: Local clubs may channel considerable CDSE funds into sport
- ▶ Special rates levied by Council

Several Councils in the region have, or are seeking to introduce a rate levy for sport / recreation infrastructure works. Approval by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal is now required for this to occur, due to rate capping.

The possibility of establishing a NSROC Sports Foundation should be investigated that would look at opportunities to work with licensed clubs in the region to channel funds into regional initiatives or the development of infrastructure in the region.

The NSW Government does not have a sizeable ongoing or specific local grant program for sports capital works projects or planning. In previous years the NSW Sport and Recreation Facility Grant Program has provided funds up to \$200,000 for successful capital projects.

The State Plan, launched in 2010, indicates a commitment to increase the number of people participating in sporting activities and physical exercise, by 10 per cent, by 2016. One strategy identified in the plan is to “increase opportunities to share recreational resources with schools, local government, clubs and other bodies.”

Game Plan, NSW Sport and Recreation Industry Five Year Plan launched in the 2006 identified innovative funding as a key issues and the goal of “To provide sustainable funding from government and non-government sources”.<sup>16</sup> Key strategies in this plan include:

“1. Target non-traditional sources of funding from the wide range of service providers to the sport and recreation industry” and

“3. Target relevant government agencies to co-fund or leverage specific activities or projects.”

Actions included “Undertake an audit of specific projects to determine co-funding opportunity e.g. Health, Community Services, Education etc.”

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<sup>16</sup> Game Plan 2012: NSW Sport and Recreation Industry Five Year Plan 2006

In NSROC, there may be opportunities for further joint Council and school sports facility developments. The schools initiative proposed as part of this plan should identify opportunities for joint developments. These joint projects are likely to involve more indoor developments than sportsgrounds. The possibility of maintaining and redeveloping sportsgrounds on school sites when schools close, should also be pursued.

In Victoria there are a number of sport and state government funding partnerships created to develop local facilities (e.g. Victorian football / netball grants, Strengthening the World Game grants for synthetic football pitches etc.) These initiatives should be pursued in NSROC.

### ■ Capital contributions by users and sports codes

Greater capital contributions by clubs or sports codes may now be required to provide for the improvement of amenities. Clubs have contributed to projects in the region in a small way in the past. Clear policies about management of club capital and recurrent funding will be required to overcome perceptions about ownership and exclusive use, and to introduce sunset clauses to agreements.



These issues are discussed in Chapter 4.  
Fees, charges and occupancy agreements.

Consultation with private sector providers during the preparation of this plan indicated there is an interest in investing in sports facilities in the region.

Consultation with peak bodies for this project found some sports associations and peak bodies are maintaining Council grounds to provide a higher quality of ground than Council can provide. In the case of AFL at some sites in Queensland, Councils provide funds to the AFL equivalent to what they would spend maintaining a ground to a local level, and AFL maintain the surface to a regional level. This type of arrangement may be an option for several codes, at select sites across the region.

### ■ Planning and resourcing this plan

Apart from capital, a number of the management issues raised in this plan assume ongoing facilitation, administration and planning work subsidised by Councils.

In NSW, recreation and sports planning roles in Local Government are not as well resourced as in other states such as Western Australia and Victoria, and in the NSROC region, not all Councils have a dedicated recreation planner position.

If Councils accept the shift in sports roles to include additional planning, marketing, and sports development, additional resources may be required. Increased planning and management time to increase performance of facilities, as well as seeking funds for infrastructure will necessitate additional human resources for sport.

Seeking funds from the range of sources identified earlier in this chapter may be a considerable task, involving multiple parties. This function could be partly met through provision of regional resources for specific projects, the procurement of specific funds, or the task could be delivered or co-ordinated regionally.

## Key principles: Funding capital works, planning and management

### ■ Resource regional funding co-ordination

- ▶ NSROC member Councils should consider creatively packaging funds from multiple sources to fund sports facility improvements, and regional projects
- ▶ NSROC Councils should share the responsibility of developing resources such as a sportsground inventory, GIS, and booking system that assist in capital works planning and management of sportsgrounds
- ▶ Continue to pursue opportunities for joint developments with schools to increase student's participation in sport and provide access to more facilities for club sport (as part of the schools initiative)

■ **Seek contributions from government**

- ▶ Councils are not able to secure sufficient funds to provide for necessary sportsground infrastructure without state and federal government assistance
- ▶ NSROC should seek a partnership with federal and state governments (and in conjunction with sports such as soccer, tennis, AFL and hockey) to develop sporting infrastructure across the region
- ▶ The health and wellbeing benefits of supporting sport in the region, and reference to the State Plan and the NSW Sport and Recreation Industry Five Year Plan should be emphasised in these partnerships
- ▶ Council should ensure sportsground usage and club participation data is collected to be able to justify capital funds spent

■ **Seek contributions from users**

- ▶ Contributions will be encouraged from users and sports codes to meet their facility needs. Clear policy should set out expectations of clubs and Council to manage such contributions, as noted in Chapter 4
- ▶ NSROC member Councils should also consider corporate sector sponsorship options to upgrade facilities, and investigate opportunities of partnerships with private sports providers

**Recommended actions: Funding capital works, planning and management:**

28. NSROC assist Councils to cost, develop and implement the regional projects identified in Chapter 3
29. NSROC support member Councils to negotiate funding packages with clubs and other bodies
30. NSROC lead the development of regional partnerships with other government agencies, schools, and state and peak sporting bodies to implement elements of this plan
31. NSROC to examine opportunities for new regional funding approaches such as a Regional Sports Foundation and other coordinated regional funding mechanisms

## 6. Appendices

### Appendix 1. Potential demand for sports

The demand for sport is a reflection of a number of social and locational characteristics. The size of the population and demographic characteristics (such as age, gender, income and ethnicity) of the population will influence demand for sport, as will the availability and quality of facilities, clubs and how these are marketed.

It has not been possible to obtain membership and participation data for all sports in the region. This data is a measure of expressed demand.

In this instance the expressed demand for sport is likely to be less than the potential demand due to the relative advantage of the population in the region, and lack of available grounds.

In order to determine the potential number of players in each sport in the region, state participation rates have been compared to projected population figures for the region. This analysis is very simplistic as many factors influence local demand for sport. An example of this is the strength of rugby union, as compared to rugby league, which is likely to be influenced by the presence of a number of private schools in the region.

#### ■ Data sources

The projected population data used in the demand analysis for this project have been sourced from NSW Statistical Local Area Population Projections, Department of Planning NSW, 2010.

Sport participation rates have been sourced from Exercise Recreation and Sport Survey<sup>17</sup>, as well as the Children's Participation in Culture and Leisure Activities<sup>18</sup> for New South Wales.

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<sup>17</sup> Exercise, Recreation and Sport Survey, SCORS 2009

<sup>18</sup> Children's Participation in Cultural and Leisure Activities, ABS 2010

Organised sports participation rates have been applied to population projections for each municipality and provided as a total for the region, to provide a broad indication of the market potential for individual sports.

The absence of regional participation data from these sources, as well as regional and municipal sports membership data, is a considerable limitation to the demand analysis and therefore projections should only be used with caution, and as a general guide to potential participation, all things being equal.

#### Exercise Recreation and Sport Survey Standing Committee on Recreation and Sport (SCORS)

This survey collecting sport and physical activity participation has been conducted throughout Australia each year since 2001.

A limitation to the ERASS data is the definition of participation. A survey respondent is counted as a participant if they played any sport, as little as once in the previous year.

The data collected only relates to participation of people aged 15 years and older.





In addition, the participation statistics combine data for all age groups over 65 years and a number of like activities that are not practical to use for determining specific facility requirements. Examples of this include the combination of all cycle codes, ice sports and surf sports into one category. Not all sports are included.

### **Children's Participation in Cultural and Leisure Activities, ABS**

The Australian Bureau of Statistics has captured data on children's participation in leisure and cultural activities in 2000, 2003, 2006 and 2009. The data highlights participation undertaken outside of school hours at a national level for children aged 5 to 14 years. The key limitation of this data is that it does not capture a wide range of sports, and where sports are captured, they do not include "unorganised participation".

For some sports such as tennis, this is misleading, as organised participation in tennis is less than unorganised.<sup>19</sup> Note figures used in the following tables for children are based on participation rates for Australia, as a whole as activity specific participation rates for organised sports is not available at the state level.

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<sup>19</sup> Organised participation is defined as participation in an activity that is organised by a sport or recreation club or association.

### Population projections by age group

The following table (Table 1.) contains the population projections for the NSROC region from 2011 – 2036.

The total population for NSROC is expected to increase by 18.6% between 2011 and 2036, at an annual rate of 0.7%.

There is expected to be a:

- ▶ 13.1% increase in the number of people aged between 5 and 14 years
- ▶ 15% increase in the number of people aged between 25 and 34 years
- ▶ 37.8% increase in the number of people aged 65 years and above

**Table 1: Projected population in NSROC (2011 - 2036)<sup>20</sup>**

Age groups	Population projections						Change	
	2011	2016	2021	2026	2031	2036	% 2011 - 2036	% 2011 - 2036
<b>0-4 years</b>	30,980	31,950	33,360	34,430	35,680	36,980	6,000	19.4%
<b>5-9 years</b>	32,510	32,910	33,760	34,760	35,810	37,040	4,530	13.9%
<b>10-14 years</b>	33,480	34,570	35,010	35,520	36,550	37,620	4,140	12.4%
<b>15-19 years</b>	36,280	36,910	37,650	37,940	38,530	39,600	3,320	9.2%
<b>20-24 years</b>	42,740	43,860	44,310	44,740	45,560	46,510	3,770	8.8%
<b>25-29 years</b>	39,960	42,270	43,400	43,610	44,410	45,800	5,840	14.6%
<b>30-34 years</b>	39,210	41,260	42,930	43,790	44,290	45,240	6,030	15.4%
<b>35-39 years</b>	41,520	41,270	43,280	44,480	45,570	46,220	4,700	11.3%
<b>40-44 years</b>	41,430	42,270	42,100	43,760	45,040	46,230	4,800	11.6%
<b>45-49 years</b>	41,220	40,760	41,470	41,100	42,810	44,120	2,900	7.0%
<b>50-54 years</b>	38,470	39,070	38,630	39,030	38,840	40,560	2,090	5.4%
<b>55-59 years</b>	33,480	35,660	36,160	35,590	36,090	36,090	2,610	7.8%
<b>60-64 years</b>	30,240	30,320	32,200	32,490	32,140	32,740	2,500	8.3%
<b>65-69 years</b>	22,950	27,240	27,400	28,980	29,370	29,240	6,290	27.4%
<b>70-74 years</b>	17,670	21,120	25,070	25,320	26,950	27,520	9,850	55.7%
<b>75-79 years</b>	14,270	16,350	19,620	23,380	23,980	25,820	11,550	80.9%
<b>80-84 years</b>	12,590	12,270	14,200	17,160	20,760	21,710	9,120	72.4%
<b>85+ years</b>	14,740	16,750	17,840	20,050	24,100	29,910	15,170	102.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>563,800</b>	<b>586,700</b>	<b>608,400</b>	<b>626,100</b>	<b>646,500</b>	<b>668,800</b>	<b>105,000</b>	<b>18.6%</b>

<sup>20</sup> NSW Statistical Local Area Population Projections, Department of Planning NSW, 2010

### Potential participants by sport

In order to determine likely number of fields to accommodate the potential numbers of participants for each sport in 2036, potential participation in each sport (everything being equal) have been devised using available participation rates for organised sports for children under 15 yrs of age and persons over 15 years.

The sources of data are separate for each age group. These have been added and multiplied by projected demographic data for the region. There are considerable limitations to the data and these assume that for example that 2010 participation rates will be maintained up until 2036. These projections are best thought of as potential participants if clubs and facilities are available to allow people to play.

Typically, these figures would be compared to current memberships however; region wide sports membership data is not available for NSROC.

Table 2. outlines projections for the total number of potential participants in the main outdoor field sports for NSROC, 2011-2036.

**Table 2. Potential number of organised participants by the main sports in NSROC, 2011-2036**

Sport	2011	2016	2021	2026	2031	2036
	Potential Number	Potential Number	Potential Number	Potential Number	Potential Number	Potential Number
Athletics	3,776	3,891	3,995	4,094	4,220	4,360
Aust. Rules football	4,120	4,274	4,413	4,534	4,678	4,837
Baseball	1,400	1,462	1,519	1,564	1,615	1,672
Croquet <sup>21</sup>	225	235	243	250	258	268
Cricket Outdoor	9,971	10,347	10,689	10,984	11,333	11,719
Golf <sup>22</sup>	42,010	43,865	45,564	46,928	48,460	50,158
Hockey	7,657	7,970	8,257	8,495	8,768	9,072
Lawn bowls <sup>23</sup>	9,335	9,748	10,125	10,428	10,769	11,146
Netball <sup>24</sup>	14,285	10,370	15,283	15,699	16,196	16,746
Rugby League <sup>25</sup>	10,023	10,370	10,683	10,966	11,309	11,690
Rugby Union <sup>26</sup>	6,535	6,823	7,088	7,300	7,538	7,802
Soccer Outdoor	33,618	34,851	35,967	36,946	38,114	39,408
Softball	3,267	3,412	3,544	3,650	3,769	3,901
Tennis <sup>27</sup>	43,362	45,176	46,833	48,197	49,756	51,483
Touch Football	17,737	18,520	19,238	19,814	20,461	21,178

<sup>21</sup> Croquet projected participation rate was determined by using the 2009 NSW Croquet memberships and the Department of Planning 2009 population projections as no data is available through ERASS

<sup>22</sup> Includes unorganised and organised as both require use of a course

<sup>23</sup> No children's participation data is held for children in lawn bowls

<sup>24</sup> This figure may include some netball played indoors

<sup>25</sup> Rugby league is unlikely to meet this potential (which is considerable higher in NSW than the rest of Australia) due to the strength of Rugby Union on the North Shore. The potential number of players for the sport is more likely to be that shown for Rugby Union and vice versa

<sup>26</sup> The potential participation rate in Rugby Union is likely to be considerably higher than the state average, due to the number of private schools on the North Shore, and is likely to be that shown for Rugby League.

<sup>27</sup> Includes unorganised and organised tennis, as both require use of a court. Unorganised participation tennis is however larger than organised.

## Sportsgrounds to meet potential demand

The following table outlines the number of grounds required to meet the potential projected number of sports participants in 2011 and 2036. Note: the number of potential participants may be considerably more than currently playing, due to the lack of places to play, for example.

The number of grounds required to meet the potential participation has been projected by identifying the average number of competition players that can be sustained on a ground / court, and applying this to the projected potential number of participants. This number of facilities has then be compared to the number of fields / courts known in NSROC to determine likely additional facilities desirable.

These figures should be used with caution, as there are a number of limitations to the data and generalisations made.

Table 3. Sportsgrounds required to meet potential demand for organised sport, 2011 and 2036

Sport	Projected participants			Fields / courts				
	Capacity per field / court <sup>28</sup>	Potential participants 2011 <sup>29</sup>	Potential participants 2036	Existing NSROC <sup>30</sup>	No. to meet potential 2011	Additional to existing 2011	No. to meet potential 2036 <sup>31</sup>	Additional to meet potential 2036
Athletics	200	3,776	4,360	12	19	7	22	10
Aust. Rules football	120	4,120	4,837	6	34	28	40	34
Baseball	70	1,400	1,672	42	20	-22	24	-18
Cricket	90	9,971	11,719	165	111	-54	130	-35
Croquet	150	225	236	28	2	-26	3	-25
Golf <sup>32</sup>	3,000	42,010	50,158	14	14	0	17	3
Hockey	300	7,657	9,072	8	26	18	30	22
Lawn bowls <sup>33</sup>	200	9,335	11,146	-	47	-	56	-
Netball <sup>34</sup>	100	14,285	16,746	187	143	-44	167	-20
Rugby League	80	10,023	11,690	10	125	115	146	136
Rugby Union	80	6,535	7,802	39	82	43	98	59
Softball	70	3,267	3,901	8	47	39	56	48
Soccer	200	33,618	39,408	210	168	-42	197	-13
Tennis <sup>35</sup>	140	43,362	51,483	664	310	-354	368	-296
Touch football	80	17,737	21,178	14	222	208	265	251

<sup>28</sup> These figures are highly variable and dependant on quality of facilities etc. they have been estimated considering average club size, number of players per game, game length, nature of competition etc, and allow for training sessions

<sup>29</sup> These figures were obtained by multiplying the projected population of 2011 with the latest participation rates for each sport. Participation rates and population projections were obtained from Children's Participation in Cultural and Leisure Activities, Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2010; Exercise, Recreation and Sport Survey, Standing Committee on Recreation and Sport, 2010; NSW Statistical Local Area Population Projections, Department of Planning NSW, 2010

<sup>30</sup> Obtained from inventory information provided by Councils

<sup>31</sup> ibid

<sup>32</sup> Includes unorganised and organised as both require use of a course

<sup>33</sup> No children's participation data is held for children in lawn bowls. It was not possible to obtain the number of greens in the region.

<sup>34</sup> This figure may be inflated as it may include indoor netball

<sup>35</sup> Includes unorganised and organised as both require use of a court

## Appendix 2 – Policy context

The following diagram illustrates the relationships between federal, state and local sports policy and plans.

