



**WOLLONGONG.
GLOBALLY RECOGNISED
FOR IT'S CITY
CYCLING STRATEGY**

Wollongong City Council

Sportsgrounds and Sporting Facilities Strategy 2023-2027





Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which our city is built, Dharawal Country. We recognise and appreciate their deep connection to this land, waters and the greater community. We pay respect to Elders past, present and those emerging and extend our respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who call this city home. We recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the first people to live in the area. We respect their living cultures and recognise the positive contribution their voices, traditions and histories make to the city.



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Lord Mayor's Message

I think it's fair to say that thanks to our experiences in recent years we've a greater appreciation for our city's sportsgrounds and sporting facilities.

The global pandemic saw a refreshed gratitude for our city's open spaces, and then the wet and wild weather of 2021-2022 drew attention to the maintenance of our sporting fields, the passion of sportspeople within our community in their desire to remain active, and highlighted the diversity of sporting codes who use Council's facilities.

It's timely then to present the Draft Sportsgrounds and Sporting Facilities Strategy 2023-2027, which sets out how we will continue to support community sport in all its diversity and active recreation opportunities across Wollongong. This important document builds on the work we've delivered from our previous 2017-2021 Strategy, and takes a critical look at the sporting opportunities we're committed to delivering for our community into the future.

From the 2017-2021 Strategy, we delivered renewed sportsground amenities – a step that looked to address an imbalance in the provision of change facilities for our city's sporting women and girls and improve access to accessible facilities. We've also installed much-needed LED sportsground lighting in key locations like Guest Park, Thomas Dalton Park Oval and Figtree Oval, as examples.

This work will continue in our updated Strategy as we remain committed to collaborate with key stakeholders to provide contemporary amenities for sport, including incorporating accessible and gender equitable features.

The document also includes a focus on catering for the future and existing demands of our sporting community. This includes, for example, the provision of new skate facilities for Wollongong and the northern suburbs and the re-purposing of several under-utilised hard-court surfaces to better cater for popular outdoor activities such as basketball.

The Strategy seeks to strike a balance between the diverse needs and the different expectations of our sporting community with a strong emphasis on supporting grass roots sports. We are proud of the diversity of sporting interests and codes in the city – but it's a challenge to balance equitable access with the community needs, expectations and available land. These are challenges that are not to be underestimated and as a community's we need to be realistic in our expectations of access.

In this Strategy's preparation we've drawn on community feedback, research and case studies to inform its development. We've also been guided by five principles – inclusive and accessible, participation, safe, partnerships and collaboration and sustainable. With 10 key focus areas and a clear set of actions we will use this Strategy to our vision for sport in Wollongong over the next 5 years.

**Wollongong City Lord Mayor
Councillor Gordon Bradbery AM**



Executive Summary

The Wollongong City Council Sportsgrounds and Sporting Facilities Strategy 2023-2027 has been developed to provide strategic guidance for the management and planning of community sports and recreation in Wollongong over the next five years. The availability and effective management of Council's sport and recreation assets will be critical to ensure we can successfully cater for the existing and future sporting demands of our community.

The overall vision of this Strategy is to:

“Provide a diverse range of sustainable, functional infrastructure that supports active, safe and inclusive participation in sport and recreation across the City...”

This Strategy aligns with Council's Community Goal 5 of the Our Wollongong Our Future 2032 Community Strategic Plan, ***“We have a healthy community in a liveable city”*** and will help to achieve the below objectives:

There is an increase in the physical and mental health and wellbeing of our community.

Our community participation in recreation and lifestyle activities increases.

Based on key strategic documents and the Strategy vision, a set of guiding principles have been developed to help provide the overarching direction for the future of sport in Wollongong:

- Inclusive and accessible
- Participation
- Sustainable
- Partnerships and collaboration
- Safe

To help inform the Strategy's Key Focus Areas, Council officers undertook consultation with key stakeholders, including local sporting associations via Council's Sports Facilities Reference

Group (SFRG), local sporting clubs, Council staff and Councillors.

Following a strategic review of Council's key documents and community feedback, a set of 10 key focus areas have been developed. These focus areas will guide the implementation of the Strategy and help to achieve the overarching vision of the document:

- Renew and enhance sports facility infrastructure
- Manage sportsground capacity issues
- Effectively plan and manage sportsground precincts
- Support safe and inclusive participation in sport
- Strategically plan for the development of new sports facilities
- Support female participation in sport
- Cater for emerging and unstructured recreation pursuits
- Strengthen partnerships with clubs and associations and leverage from effective collaboration
- Transition sportsgrounds and sporting facilities toward greater climate resilience
- Attract and support sporting events and tourism

Following public exhibition and endorsement by Council, the Sportsground and Sporting Facilities Strategy 2023-2027 as a key supporting document, will be integrated into Council's Integrated Planning & Reporting framework of plans and documents.

*It is noted that public swimming pools and associated water sports have been excluded from this Strategy, as they will be addressed in the next edition of Council's "Future of our Pools Strategy."

Hockey NSW Representative from Illawarra South Coast Hockey.



Background

Wollongong is the third largest city in New South Wales and the tenth largest city in Australia, with a predicted population increase of 14.47% from 2021 to 2036, representing an additional 32,203 people in the area (ID community). Given this anticipated increase, the supply and effective management of quality sports and active recreation facilities will be essential to support the delivery of community sport and active recreation opportunities across the city.

Sport and recreation activities play a critical role in maintaining the physical, mental and social health of communities. In 2019, 43.6% of those over the age of 16 living in the Illawarra Shoalhaven Health District did not participate in sufficient levels of physical activity when assessed against the 2014 National Guidelines for Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour (SAPHaRI 2019).

Previous Strategy Outcomes

The implementation of the 2017-2021 Sportsground and Sporting Facilities Strategy has resulted in the successful delivery of several key outcomes over the past five years. This includes the renewal and enhancement of supporting infrastructure, including provision of

sportsfield lighting, synthetic surfaces, irrigation and drainage, gender equitable amenities, storage, fencing/perimeter control, hardcourts and outdoor fitness equipment.

- Over \$20 million invested in sportsground and sporting facilities between 2017 and 2021, including:
 - 3 amenities renewals and refurbishments, totalling \$4 million.
 - 1 FIFA Accredited synthetic football pitch
 - Cringila Hills mountain bike park, pump track, bike skills park, totalling \$3.1 million.
 - 12 sportsfield lighting projects
 - 8 irrigation and drainage projects
 - 14 fencing projects
 - 7 outdoor fitness stations
 - 7 storage facilities
 - 3 sports hardcourt surface renewals
 - \$1.3 million in sports grants projects
- An average of \$4.5 million spent each year on sportsground maintenance



Ian McLennan Park, Synthetic Football Pitch.



Illawarra Hockey Centre



Wollongong Bulldogs Women's AFL

Roles and Responsibilities

Council

Whilst the specific role of Council will vary greatly across each project and circumstance, Council's primary role will be to support community and grass-roots sport. It is anticipated Council will work with clubs and associations, to assist in the planning and delivery of community sports infrastructure. Council's key roles include:

- Strategic planning
- Engage relevant clubs and associations to coordinate access to services
- Establish and deliver identified service and maintenance levels for sportsgrounds and facilities
- Provide affordable and equitable access to sportsfields and facilities

- Support clubs and associations with the submission of grant applications for priority projects
- Facilitate Council's annual Sports Grants program
- Coordinate activities of Council's Sports and Facilities Reference Group

Local Clubs and Associations

Local sporting clubs and associations manage the day-to-day delivery of services for their respective sports. This may include the coordination of training and competitions, undertake maintenance of grounds and infrastructure, as well as working with Council to plan facility renewal and upgrades. Local sports associations are responsible for representing the interest of local sporting clubs and have the opportunity to collaborate strategically with Council via the Sports Facilities Reference Group.



Key Challenges

- Ongoing sports facility and sportsground maintenance costs
- Provision of fully-inclusive and gender equitable amenities, which cater to the needs of all participants.
- Availability of land for new sportsgrounds is limited to the West Dapto area
- Climate adaptation and responding to the impacts of significant weather events
- Provision of quality and resilient playing surfaces.
- Expectations associated with Council's involvement in pathways to support elite sports development.
- Escalating costs of sports infrastructure
- Limited availability of external grant funding opportunities to support community sport

Study Approach

- Stage 1: Background research & analysis of participation and trends
- Stage 2: Community & stakeholder consultation
- Stage 3: Analyse feedback and review findings
- Stage 4: Strategic actions

Strategic Setting

Local, state and regional context

A number of key strategic documents have helped shape the development of this Strategy, including publications from local, regional, state and federal government agencies. A list of these key documents has been summarised in the table below.

Level	Strategic Documents
Federal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sport 2030 National Sport Plan • Australian Sports Commission Corporate Plan 2020-24 • Australia's Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines • Play by the Rules
State	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Office of Sport Strategic Plan 2020-2024 • Sport NSW Future Directions 2019-2022 • Her Sport Her Way
Regional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Illawarra Shoalhaven Sport and Active Recreation Plan 2018-2023
Local	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our Wollongong Our Future 2032 Community Strategic Plan • Delivery Program and Operational Plan 2022-2026 • Resourcing Strategy 2032 • Infrastructure Delivery Program 2022-2023 to 2025-2026 • Council supporting documents and master plans

Global context

UN Sustainable Development Goals

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a global strategy agreed by the United Nations General Assembly and form a blueprint to create a sustainable future for everyone. There are 17 interconnected goals for 2015-2030, including four directly relevant to the key focus areas of this Strategy, as shown in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1



Kanahooka Park.

Community Profile and Participation Trends

To help achieve our vision for sport and active recreation in Wollongong, it is important for Council to understand the demographics of our community and key trends in sport participation.

Community profile

ABS 2016/2021 & Community Profile ID

- Total population: 214,657 (ERP 2021)
- Population growth: 23.17% population increase from 2013-41 50,894
- LGA area: 683.8 square km
- Median age: 39 (2021)
- Median weekly household income: \$1,637 per week (compared to \$1,849 for NSW)
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander: 3.2% (2021)
- Ethnic diversity, overseas born: 21% (2021)
- Unemployment rate: 4.9% (equal to NSW) (2021)
- Open space: 2,409 ha
- SEIFA Index of Relative Socio-Economic Advantage and Disadvantage (IRSAD): 989 (2016)



WIN Stadium and Entertainment Centre.

Sport and active recreation trends

The following data and trends regarding sport and active recreation have been extracted from the ActiveXchange SportsEye platform and SPORTAUS AusPlay survey results.

Organised Sports

Sport and physical activity are an integral part of Australia's identity and play an important role in maintaining our physical and mental wellbeing. In 2020-21 88.8% of adult Australian's participated in sport or physical activity at least once per week, with 21% of these doing so through a sports club or association (AusPlay 2021). Overall, participation in sport and physical activity has increased in the last two decades, with more adults participating more frequently compared to 2001 (AusPlay 2021).

According to AusPlay survey results (2021), the top motivators for sports participation across Australia, revolve around physical health/fitness and fun/enjoyment, whilst the most significant barriers for sports participation include:

- Lack of time/too many other commitments
- Poor health or injury
- Wrong age - too old/too young
- Too lazy
- Don't like sport or physical activity
- Unaffordable/access to transport

Dapto Cricket Club Juniors



Illawarra Academy of Sport Rugby League



Top activities for sports club participation in NSW

1. Football (soccer)
2. Golf
3. Tennis
4. Netball
5. Cricket

The following data relating to sports participation in Wollongong has been extracted from the ActiveExchange SportsEye Platform. It should be noted that sports referenced in this section are limited to those available within the platform.

25,995 people in Wollongong participate in sport through a sports club or association (2020/21).

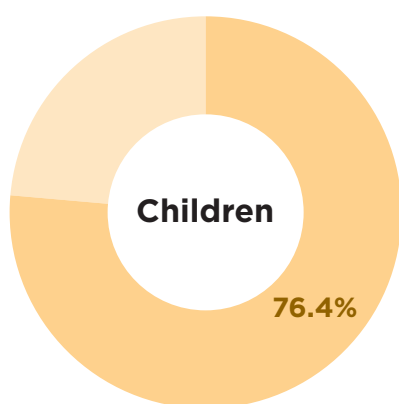


Figure 2. Wollongong sport and physical activity participation rate (at least once per year). Extracted from 2021 AUSPLAY Survey results.

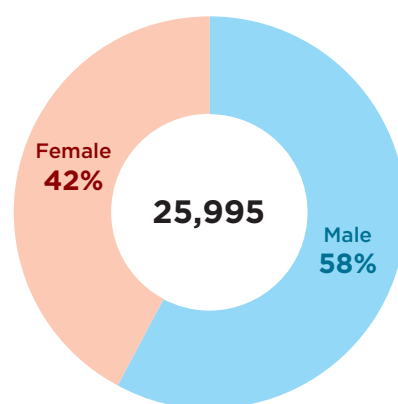
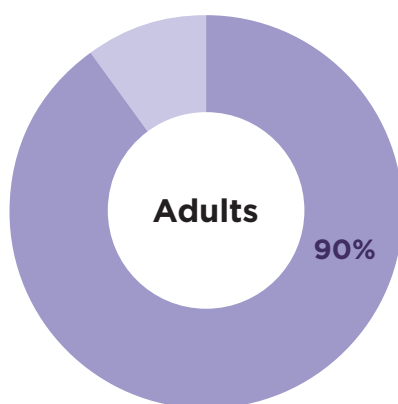


Figure 3. SportsEYE data for total number of sports members in 2020/21.



The Vale Golf Club.

Wollongong Sports Membership

With 9,381 participants, football (soccer) is the most popular sport in Wollongong, consistent with state and national participation trends. Football (soccer) accounts for 36% of all sports club membership, followed by rugby league (14.3%) and netball (7.3%).

It should be noted that the SportsEYE platform does not capture participation numbers for other popular or unstructured sports in Wollongong, including: golf, swimming, skating and cycling.

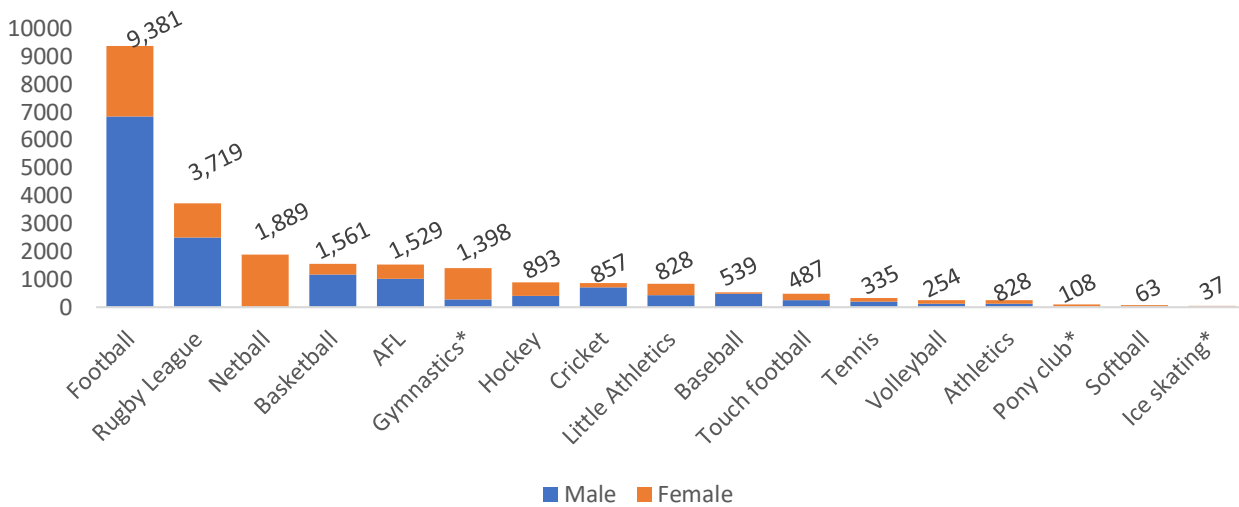


Figure 4. 2020/21 Wollongong membership numbers by individual sport. Extracted from the SportsEYE platform.

*Facilities for these sporting codes will not be addressed as part of this Strategy.



Illawarra United Stingrays.



Illawarra Academy of Sport Basketball.

Organised Sports Participation by Gender

Female

Key trends in female participation

- 10,915 females in Wollongong are members of a sports club, accounting for 42% of all sports members in Wollongong.
- Football (soccer) has the highest number of female participants; however women only equate for 26.69% of all football (soccer) participation.
- Netball has the highest percentage of female participants (>99%).
- Baseball has the lowest proportion of female participants (8.35%).
- Hockey (55.21%), touch football (48.84%), athletics (49.58%) and volleyball (48.13%) have a relatively even amount of female and male participants.
- Netball, hockey and softball are the only three sports with a higher proportion of female participants.

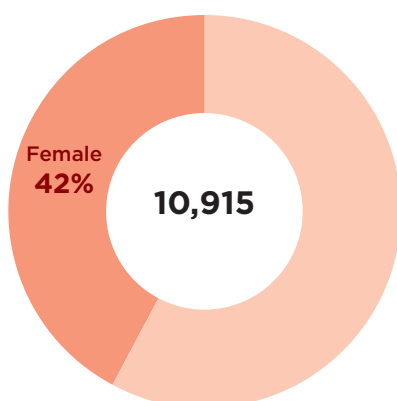


Figure 5. Membership numbers for female sports participants in Wollongong, extracted using SportsEYE.

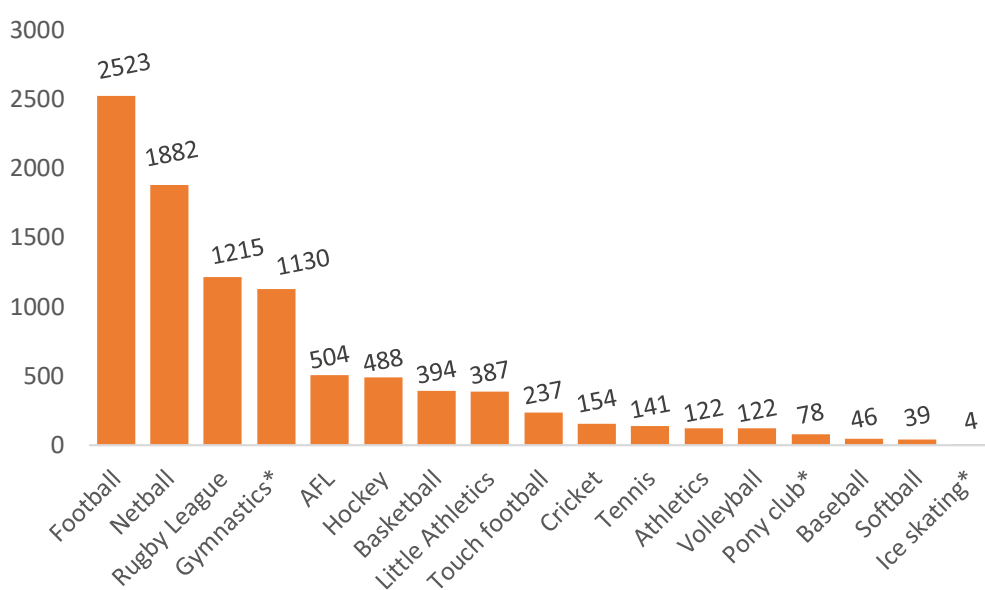


Figure 6. Individual sports membership numbers for female sporting participants

*Facilities for these sporting codes will not be addressed as part of this Strategy.



Illawarra Academy of Sport Hockey.



Illawarra District Netball Association Juniors at Fairy Meadow.



University of Wollongong Women's Football Club.

Male participation

Key trends in male participation

- 15,043 males in Wollongong are members of a sports club, accounting for 57.9% of all members.
- Football (soccer) has the highest number of male participants, followed by rugby league and basketball.
- Baseball has the highest proportion of male participants (91.65%), followed by cricket (80.6%).
- There are a higher proportion of males in all sports except for hockey, softball and netball.

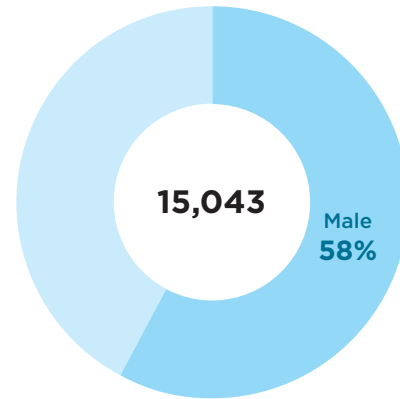


Figure 7. Membership numbers for male sports participants in Wollongong, extracted using SportsEYE.

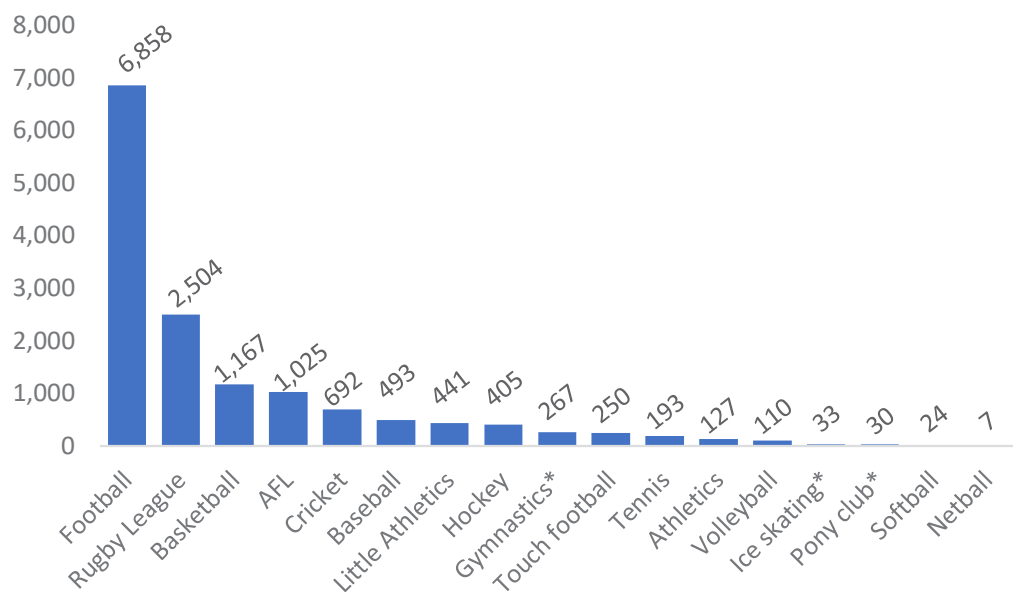


Figure 8. Individual sports membership numbers for female sporting participants.

*Facilities for these sporting codes will not be addressed as part of this Strategy.



Wollongong Lions Junior AFL at North Dalton Park.



Wollongong Vikings Rugby Union Club

Volunteers

Volunteers are essential to ensure the successful continuation of organised sports, with important non-playing roles such as coaches, officials or team managers often taken on by volunteers (SportAus 2021). In Australia, 15.1% of people (over the age of 15) participated in a non-playing role in sport, with the most common role being coach and official (AusPlay 2021). Unfortunately, since COVID-19 and associated restrictions, just 53% of people who volunteered in organised sports before the pandemic, returned to a volunteering role in 2021. Whilst this has significantly increased from just 30% in 2020, volunteers will be essential to help strengthen and rebuild community sport into future years.

Unstructured and emerging sports

In recent years, recreational habits across Australia have evolved, with unstructured and emerging sports and leisure pursuits gaining increased

popularity. Australians have taken to more flexible activities which better suit personal needs (SportAUS 2021). This includes activities such as running, walking or gym exercise and is largely influenced by the prioritisation of health over competition.

Whilst unstructured and emerging sports were gaining increased popularity prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, restrictions on organised sports and rules on physical-distancing, accelerated unstructured sports participation (SportAUS 2022). Australians took to more COVID-safe, or home-based activities, including walking, bushwalking, tennis, pilates, mountain biking and canoeing/kayaking (SportAUS 2022). These participation trends have continued into 2022, as Australians embrace a greater mix of physical activities (SportAUS 2022). The use of online interactive platforms and gaming consoles for physical activity, known as “exergaming”, has also increased in popularity. Since 2019, exergaming has increased 100-fold to 2021, becoming a top 20 activity for Australians over the age of 15.



Illawarra Academy of Sport.



Holborn Park Skate Plaza.



Beaton Park Tennis Facility.

Cycling and Skate

Since the late 1960's alternative and unstructured sports have been gaining increased popularity across Australia. The introduction of BMX cycling in the 2008 Beijing Olympics, followed by surfing, skateboarding and sport climbing in the 2020 Summer Olympics have further driven increased popularity across these sports.

In February 2021, Wollongong became the first City in the Southern Hemisphere to be labelled a UCI Bike City. The label recognises our long-term commitment to supporting cycling at all levels and was awarded by the Union Cycliste Internationale. Wollongong will host the UCI Road World Championships in September 2022, which will see the world's best cyclists in attendance and bring worldwide media coverage to our city.

Cycling sports and associated infrastructure now form part of Council's Wollongong Cycling Strategy 2030. Some notable projects related to this Strategy include the construction of parkland bike trails across the city, including the Cringila Hills Mountain Bike Park, pump track, bike skills park

and the Illawarra Criterium Track at Unanderra. Following the city hosting the UCI Road World Championships, Council anticipates further growth in this sport.

It is also recognised that there is currently unmet demand for skate opportunities throughout the city. During the life of this Strategy, Council will pursue construction of the Wollongong CBD and northern suburbs facilities, in addition to modular skate elements at Port Kembla and other locations.

Sportsfield surfaces

Given the unique landscape and topography of the city, it is acknowledged that there is limited opportunity for the development of new sportsfields. With this in mind, the importance of providing quality playing surfaces is integral to meet future demands of community sport.

Sportsground drainage and irrigation infrastructure offers a lower cost solution to help improve the quality of grassed playing surfaces. Extended periods of wet weather can significantly

Cringila Hills Mountain Bike Park.



impact sportsgrounds with poor drainage, damaging the quality of the playing surface and increasing the occurrence of rainfall related closures. Similarly, irrigation is an effective way to maintain the quality of sportsgrounds during periods of minimal rainfall. Wollongong Council has successfully implemented irrigation and drainage infrastructure across a number of sportsgrounds, helping to improve the resiliency of playing surfaces during significant weather events.

It is recognised that the use of synthetic turf on sportsfields remains a consideration in highly populated, metropolitan areas, where sportsfield demand often exceeds supply. Over the past decade, technology has provided more durable synthetic playing surfaces, which has permitted greater hours of use to address sportsfield capacity challenges.

Whilst synthetic surfaces are appealing to local sports clubs, due to their ability to meet growing demand and reliability during weather events, high initial capital and renewal costs and community concerns over the impact of synthetic surfaces should be carefully considered. As outlined in the Synthetic Turf Study in Public Open Space Report 2021 published by NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment, these concerns include impacts on the local environment, loss of open space and impacts on the amenity of the local community.

The Report also notes a number of alternative approaches to synthetic turf, including:

- Improvements to natural turf design
- Improved data collection and analysis for facility owners
- Managing use
- Hybrid turf options
- Advancements in synthetic design (alternative construction materials and methods)

- Utilisation of spaces and siting considerations

Noting these alternative approaches, Council will give careful consideration to the following when planning and upgrading sportsfield surfaces:

- Site suitability
- Community values
- Open space access and amenity
- User demand and surface capacity
- Investigations of options and implications
- Lifecycle costs
- Health impacts
- Local climate/environmental conditions
- Environmental impacts
- Sports-specific priorities
- Planning pathway and funding options

Active Kids Voucher Data (2021)

In 2019, the median annual cost of all organised sport or physical activity for children in Australia was \$649, significantly higher than that of all previous years (Reece et al. 2019). The Active Kids Voucher program therefore plays an important role in lowering these costs for parents and families across Wollongong.

- Vouchers since start of program (as at January 2023): 165,686
- Population uptake: 66% of eligible population (2022)
- 48% female & 52% male (2021)
- Top activities: (2022)
- Female → swimming, dance, soccer
- Male → soccer, swimming, rugby league

Current supply of sports facilities

Wollongong City Council currently has 67 sports venues, equating to 332.8 hectares of land or 13.2% of Council's open space. These sports venues are made up of the below:

4 x Athletics tracks (one synthetic)

11 x AFL fields (8 senior/3 junior)

6 x Baseball diamonds

16 x Basketball courts
(7 outdoor/9 Indoor)

48 x Cricket wickets (7 turf/41 synthetic)

85 x Football (soccer) fields (49 senior)

4 x Hockey fields (2 Indoor/2 Outdoor)

77 x Netball courts (25 grass/52 sealed)

9 x Outdoor fitness stations

28 x Rugby League fields
(16 senior/12 junior)

6 x Rugby Union fields

5 x Skateparks

5 x Softball diamonds

1 x Synthetic football (soccer) field

90 x Tennis courts

8 x Touch football Oztag fields

The distribution and hierarchy of sportsgrounds across the city is represented via the map in appendix 1.

Kerryn McCann Athletic Centre.



Strategy Framework

Strategic approach

To work toward achieving our Vision, we will need to align our priorities to projects that are strategically important to the success of sport and active recreation in Wollongong. This will ensure our priorities align with Wollongong's current and future sport and active recreation trends, as well as sportsground hierarchy facility standards and maintenance requirements.

Wollongong City Council previously adopted the Planning-People-Places Strategy to guide the provision, development and management of open space, recreation and community facilities in the Wollongong LGA until 2027.

The Framework that Planning-People-Places adopted was:

**One City,
Three Districts,
Ten Planning Areas**

As per this supporting document, the implementation of Council's Sportsgrounds and Sporting Facilities Strategy will be guided by Council's integrated planning approach, which looks at sporting needs and demands in accordance with the three planning districts.

The structure of this approach is outlined in the table below:

Planning Districts	Planning Areas	Suburbs
Northern	1	Coalcliff, Darkes Forest, Helensburgh, Lilyvale, Maddens Plains, Otford, Stanwell Park and Stanwell Tops
	2	Austinmer, Clifton, Coledale, Scarborough, Thirroul and Wombarra
	3	Bulli, Reidtown, Russell Vale, Woonona
	4	Balgownie, Bellambi, Corrimal, East Corrimal, Fairy Meadow, Fernhill, Mount Ousley, Mount Pleasant, Tarrawanna and Towradgi
Central	5	Wollongong CBD
	6	Coniston, Gwynneville, Keiraville, Mount Keira, Mangerton, Mount St Thomas, North Wollongong and West Wollongong
Southern	7	Cordeaux Heights, Farmborough Heights, Figtree, Kembla Grange, Kembla Heights, Mount Kembla, Nareena Hills and Unanderra
	8	Berkeley, Cringila, Kemblawarra, Lake Heights, Port Kembla, Primbee, Springhill, Warrawong and Windang
	9	Brownsville, Dapto, Kanahooka and Koonawarra
	10	Avondale, Cleveland, Dombarton, Haywards Bay, Horsley, Huntley, Marshall Mount, West Dapto, Wongawilli and Yallah

Vision Statement

“Provide a diverse range of sustainable, functional infrastructure that supports active, safe and inclusive participation in sport and recreation across the city...”

Guiding Principles

The following set of Guiding Principles have been developed to help provide the overarching direction for the future of sport and recreation across the city. This will ensure Council’s sport and recreation priorities align closely to those throughout State, Federal and Local Strategic documents, as well as key participation trends across Wollongong.

Principle	Description / Objective
Inclusive and accessible	Ensure our future facilities cater for participants of all abilities and genders, so all feel supported and encouraged to participate and engage in sport and active recreation.
Participation	Encourage active involvement in sport and recreation opportunities by reducing associated barriers to participation in structured and emerging recreation pursuits, to support players, officials and volunteers.
Safe	Existing and proposed recreation facilities and services support safe participation, with consideration to sport facility guidelines, child safety policies, maintenance schedules and crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED) principles.
Partnerships and Collaboration	<p>Collaborate effectively with a variety of key stakeholders, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Government agencies• Illawarra Academy of Sport• Local sporting associations and clubs• Businesses• Schools <p>To support community participation, athlete development and other shared outcomes and events.</p>
Sustainable	<p>Current and future sport and recreation facilities support long-term sustainability, with particular consideration to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Whole of life costings and financial feasibility;• Availability and demand of Council resources;• Existing and future needs/demands of the community;• Changing trends in sport and active recreation;• Optimisation of existing community infrastructure• Environmental Sustainability and climate adaptation initiatives



North Dalton Park Regional Sports Centre.



North Dalton Park Sheffield Shield.

Sportsground Hierarchy

Organised sport is conducted at a number of different levels from juniors, seniors, masters, to national and international levels. Each level has a facility standard that is influenced by state, national and international sporting organisations. To assist with the strategic prioritisation of projects, each project

must align with the sportsground hierarchy identified in this Strategy.

The following table provides a guide to the standard of facilities required for each level of competition and forms the basis for future facility developments and renewals.

Hierarchy	Facility Standard
International / National	<p>International, national and state facilities are the highest-level facilities capable of hosting international events and competitions, national leagues, and state or national team training centres.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Conforms to national technical standards• Fully enclosed to control access and generate revenue• Provides gender equitable facilities and fully inclusive amenities for competitors and officials for multiple teams or local events competitions• Provides lighting for high level competition, training and broadcasting• Provides covered spectator seating and amenities• Irrigation and drainage capacity to maintain turf surfaces• Grounds are fully maintained and functional with no deterioration• Off-street parking for participants and spectators.
State / Regional	<p>International, national and state facilities are the highest-level facilities capable of hosting international events and competitions, national leagues, and state or national team training centres.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Conforms to state technical standards• Enclosed to control access and generate revenue• Provides gender equitable facilities and fully inclusive amenities for competitors and officials for multiple teams or local events competitions• Provides lighting for competition and training• Provides limited spectator seating and amenities• Irrigation and drainage capacity to maintain turf surfaces• Grounds are fully maintained and functional with no deterioration• Off street parking for participants and spectators



Illawarra Hockey Stadium.

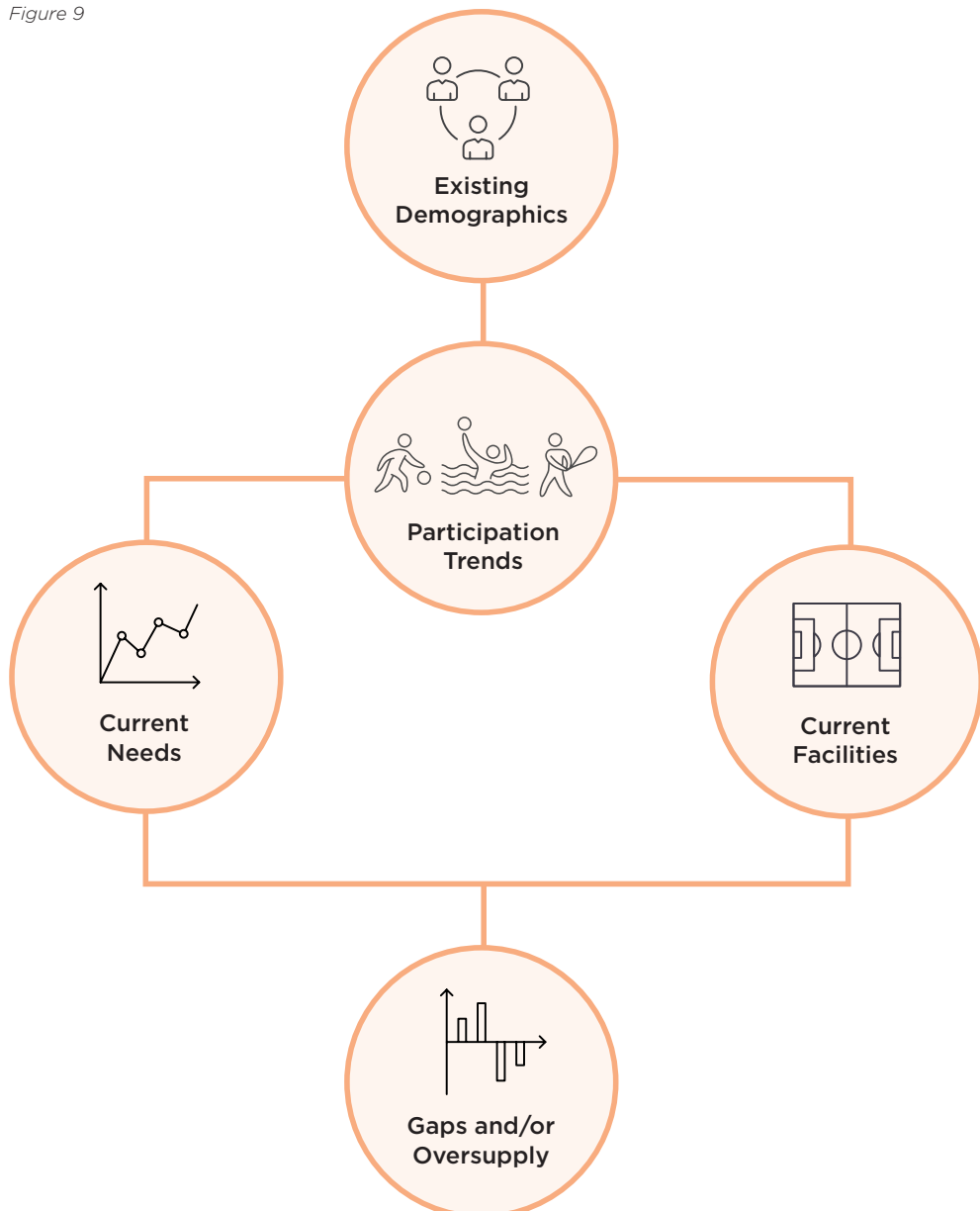
Hierarchy	Facility Standard
District	<p>District facilities cater for association competition, hosting local finals or acting as a central venue for regular competition for multiple clubs and/or teams. They comprise a mix of recreational, competitive and program formats.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conforms to codes general technical specifications for senior and junior competition • Is a multi-sport venue with shared gender equitable amenities • Provides lighting for some competition and training purposes • Maximises land use and design • Irrigation and drainage capacity to maintain turf surfaces • Off street parking available
Local / community	<p>Local facilities service the needs of the local community and sporting clubs for home and away fixtures, social sport, training activities and participation programs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides senior and modified grounds to encourage maximum participation • Is a multi-sport facility • Maintained to provide safe playing conditions • Provides basic amenities • Council determines land use and allocates to provide maximum efficiency

Determining strategic priorities

The methodology Council will use to guide our priorities includes:

1. Identify the impact of shifting demographics and trends in sport participation for the long-term provision of sporting facilities;
2. Assess the existing distribution and supply of sportsground facilities to help determine the future facility needs of sporting organisations;
3. Identify opportunities to more effectively provide, develop and manage sports facilities in partnership with sporting associations and other parties;
4. Increase the effectiveness of facility provision by identifying potential multi-use facilities and develop partnerships; and
5. Utilise a set of criteria and decision model to prioritise sports infrastructure renewal and development.

Figure 9



Prioritising sportsground infrastructure

The renewal and provision of new amenities, lighting, irrigation/drainage, storage, fencing and court resurfacing projects will be prioritised with careful consideration to elements of the following assessment framework.

Criteria	Rationale
Cost & feasibility	Consideration of site constraints, preliminary cost estimates and funding sources.
Site hierarchy / Strategic alignment	Strategic alignment with sport and Council key supporting documents (i.e. Strategies and Master Plans).
Age & condition	The remaining life of the asset and risk of failure, or condition of playing surface.
Demand	Participation numbers of clubs/teams using site and/or evidence of increased participation following project works.
Inclusive	Support female participation and improved accessibility.
Multi-use	Projects which will benefit multiple sports and groups. With consideration to levels of competition played at site (e.g. Senior men's/women's, juniors) and other sporting codes.
Need	The impact of the proposed infrastructure, with consideration to existing facilities, benefit to existing users, increased training opportunities.
Site suitability	Existing supporting infrastructure, including amenities, parking, accessibility, lighting, fencing, drainage/irrigation.

Unstructured and emerging sports infrastructure

Renewal and provision of new unstructured and emerging sports infrastructure, including skate parks, mountain bike/pump tracks, outdoor exercise stations and basketball courts may also consider the application of the above framework.

The site selection for new skate facility infrastructure will also consider the application of industry-based standards and will consider the three planning districts and 10 planning areas. The aim of this approach is to ensure a balanced distribution of facilities across the city.

In relation to the provision of skate facilities, Council also utilises an industry-based skate facility selection criteria – Courtesy of Convic Skateparks Pty Ltd:

- Physical site conditions and technical considerations
- Access/transport
- Natural surveillance, security and safety
- Proximity to amenities (water, toilets, shade, food & drink)
- Impact on existing facilities, adjoining uses and users
- Distance from housing (minimum 50m) & incompatible land use
- Management and maintenance issues
- Context and amenity
- Consistency with strategic objectives



Cringila Hills, Pump Track.



Cringila Hills Mountain Bike Park.



King George V Oval, Basketball Court, Port Kembla.

Sports and Facilities Reference Group

Council has a community reference framework that it uses to allocate funds from the Sports Facilities Reserve through its sports planning process. That framework is centred on the notion of “One Sport, One Voice”.

The Sports and Facilities Reference Group (SFRG) operates under a charter (Appendix 2) with one representative from women in sport, emerging sports, people with disability and each peak sporting body. Three Councillors also form part of the group, with one Councillor nominated as chair of the group.

The importance of the retention of the “One Sport, One Voice” framework through the peak associations and their representation on SFRG is seen as critical to maintain the strategic focus on citywide sports development. The SFRG meets quarterly to discuss the issues and trends associated with each respective sporting body.

A key objective of the SFRG is the annual Wollongong City Council Sports Grants Program. The Program sees applications for funding from individual clubs in consultation with the peak body of the sport, to be assessed by representatives of the SFRG, under a predetermined set of criteria. Projects are objectively evaluated and provided a ranking, which in turn may inform future operational and capital funding through Council’s Sports Reserve Fund.



Illawarra Hockey Centre Outdoor Synthetic Pitches.

Engagement & Communication

Consultation outcomes and key themes

During 2021-22 we worked directly with local sporting representatives and groups to develop the draft Vision, Guiding Principles and Key Focus Areas that would guide and inform this Strategy. These were shared with the general community, to demonstrate what Council is committed to achieving and ensure Council's strategic direction for sport reflected community needs. Engagement ran from 18 October to 15 November 2021 and as part of this engagement, information was also provided to the community regarding the scope and purpose of the Strategy.

There was generally positive support for the Vision and Guiding Principles and the Key Focus Areas, with the community acknowledging they were a well-founded and comprehensive approach to support delivery. The areas most strongly supported by the community included:

- supporting female participation in sport
- catering for emerging and unstructured sports and recreation pursuits particularly for young people
- strengthening partnerships and collaborations (especially with sporting clubs)
- attracting and supporting sports events and tourism.

The community provided further suggestions and ideas on how these could be considered in implementation such as:

- improved accessibility to quality sporting opportunities through accessible and inclusive infrastructure and amenities
- prioritising inclusive and equitable access to sport through licence allocation

- establishment of multi-use grounds, and sports centres for local and competition use
- broadening partnerships with local communities, schools, business and elite sporting groups
- allocation of resources to support female participation in sport

In developing the Strategy, consideration was also given to existing data from previous community consultation opportunities including the 2032 Community Strategic Plan, which both reflected and reinforced similar themes.

Community feedback also helped to refine our key focus areas and guiding principles and directly informed the strategic direction and actions of the Strategy.



Wollongong Lions Junior AFL.

Strategic Direction & Actions

A suite of high-level actions have been developed for each of the key focus areas in this Strategy. The implementation of these actions will contribute to achieving the Strategy vision and will help address the current and future sporting demands of our community.

A number of key supported actions will be in our Delivery Program and Operational Plan for resourcing and implementation.

Funding for the implementation of actions within this Strategy will be subject to approval through our annual budgetary and planning processes. Additional feasibility assessments, external funding applications or partnerships may be necessary for large scale projects.

Effective and collaborative implementation of the actions identified in this strategy will ensure that we can cater for the existing and future demands of sport and active recreation in Wollongong.



King George V Oval.

1

Renew and enhance sports facility infrastructure

Many of Council's existing sports facilities are ageing and no longer meet the contemporary needs of sport, including gender equitable and inclusive facilities. The sustainable renewal and enhancement of this infrastructure is imperative to ensure all participants feel safe, included and adequately catered for when playing sport.

- 1.1** Continue to collaborate with key stakeholders to provide contemporary amenities for sport, incorporating accessible and gender equitable features and storage facilities that are consistent with the sportsground hierarchy.
- 1.2** Continue to invest in the programmed renewal of sportsfield lighting, incorporating LED lighting and innovative technologies.
- 1.3** Work with stakeholders to plan for the renewal and provision of new hard court playing surfaces, including netball, tennis and basketball facilities.
- 1.4** Progress the staged realignment of the outdoor netball courts at Fred Finch Park, Berkeley.
- 1.5** Maintain the provision of existing and future turf and synthetic cricket wickets to align with the sportsground hierarchy and needs of current and future participants.
- 1.6** Ensure Council's sports grants program continues to support and enable sports planning priority projects.
- 1.7** Incorporate operational, maintenance and whole of life costings in the renewal and provision of new sporting infrastructure.
- 1.8** Work with Illawarra Sport Stadium to advocate for the funding of the stadium extension to cater for unmet need.

2

Manage sportsground capacity issues

With an increase in sports participation across the community, the effective use and management of sportsgrounds is important to Council, local sporting organisations and the broader community; however the ability to provide access to new green field sites is limited. To help manage sportsground capacity issues, Council's approach will consider lighting, drainage, irrigation, shared sportsfield use and provision of more resilient playing surfaces.

- 2.1** Ensure equitable allocation of sportsgrounds while encouraging the development of multipurpose facilities.
- 2.2** Strategically identify and activate under-utilised sportsfields with lighting.
- 2.3** Consider the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment, Synthetic Turf Study in Public Open Space Report 2021 and the findings of the NSW Chief Scientist & Engineer review of the Report during sportsfield planning and development.
- 2.4** Encourage shared use of sportsfields by reviewing policies, considering new licence arrangements and when formulating Plans of Management (POM's).
- 2.5** Prioritise the ongoing allocation of funding for the implementation of irrigation and drainage infrastructure at highly utilised sportsgrounds.
- 2.6** Collaborate with Department of Education and private entities to identify underutilised facilities which could be used for community sport activities.

3

Effectively plan and manage sportsground precincts

With consideration to the significant demand of sportsgrounds in the local area, it is important Council adopts a holistic and sustainable approach when planning for new, or managing existing sportsground precincts. This involves clearly identifying the role of clubs, associations and Council during the upgrade, renewal, maintenance or operation of facilities. In addition, Council's hierarchal classification system, Australian Standards and relevant sports specification guidelines will work to inform facility standards and service level requirements. Supporting infrastructure should be considered as part of sportsground precinct planning, to ensure that facilities cater for the needs of all participants.

3.1 Ensure all lease and license agreements have a clearly defined and consistent approach to roles and responsibilities, with consideration to facility upgrades, renewal, maintenance and operation.

3.2 Ensure all new and renewed facilities are constructed in accordance with Council's Hierarchy system, Australian Standards and sport specific facility guidelines.

3.3 Adopt a holistic approach (master planning) during the renewal and construction of sports facilities, with consideration to convenient connections to external walking and cycling networks, public transport, car parking, signage, pathways, storage, fencing, lighting, drainage and irrigation requirements.

3.4 Finalise Land Title requirements for the transfer of private land occupied by Russell Vale Golf Course.

4

Support safe and inclusive participation in sport

Incorporate the principles of safety and inclusiveness in the upgrade of ageing, non-compliant infrastructure, and actively promote accessible and inclusive participation in sport.

4.1 Provide natural and built shade at all sporting facilities.

4.2 Ensure that perimeter control interventions are renewed or installed at key locations.

4.3 Incorporate Council's Child Safe Policy and Child Safe Standards into all lease and licence agreements.

4.4 Ensure all new sporting facilities and upgrades to existing, incorporate the principles of universal design and comply with access legislation including continuous accessible paths of travel to amenities, accessible parking and seating.

4.5 Work with sporting groups to facilitate 'Come and try' inclusion days.

4.6 Continue to support the Illawarra Academy of Sport to deliver program opportunities for targeted groups.

4.7 Ensure all new infrastructure supports the needs of referees, umpires and volunteers.

5

Strategically plan for the development of new sports facilities

Strategically plan for the provision of new sporting facilities and precincts, including those in the West Dapto catchment area.

5.1 Continue planning for the provision of new sportsgrounds and sporting facilities in the West Dapto catchment area, with a focus on district level sportsgrounds.

5.2 Ensure West Dapto Development Contributions Plan, Chapter D16 of Wollongong DCP, and the West Dapto Open Space Technical Manual are key informing documents in the provision of new and renewed local and district level Open Space and Recreation infrastructure for West Dapto Urban Release Area.

5.3 Continue to collaborate with AFL ACT/NSW and Cricket NSW to plan and deliver the Darkes District Sports Park and Community Hub.

5.4 Continue to plan for the West Dapto (Cleveland) Community Leisure and Recreation Precinct,

5.5 Work collaboratively with Local and State Sport Organisations and nearby LGA'S in the hierarchical planning of sports facilities in the Wollongong LGA.

5.6 Explore opportunities with the NSW Government to establish Regional Sporting Hubs and sub-hubs at key locations.

5.7 Continue to plan and deliver the implementation of the Beaton Park Master Plan.

5.8 Consider multipurpose or co-located facilities prior to the construction of new facilities.

5.9 Engage the local Aboriginal community during the planning and development of new sportsfield sites to inform the design of culturally safe spaces and to appropriately incorporate local Aboriginal culture, history and connection to place.

5.10 Use sports participation data to make informed decisions when planning for sports facility upgrades and renewals.

6

Support female participation in sport

Support the participation of females in sport, by engaging female participants and administrators, to achieve more equitable access to amenities, sportsgrounds and venues.

6.1 Encourage sporting clubs and associations to review the current allocation and scheduling of training and competition to support female participation.

6.2 Prioritise the renewal and provision of new facilities to better accommodate female participation in sport.

6.3 Finalise improvements to Guest Park, as a training facility for the Illawarra United Stingrays and provide in principle support in their planning for a home ground location.

6.4 Collaborate with local clubs and associations to pursue new and innovative approaches to generate funding for facilities to support female participation.

6.5 Promote and provide opportunities for greater representation of women on Council's Sports and Facilities Reference Group.

6.6 Identify and pursue grant funding opportunities which encourage female participation in sport.

6.7 Pursue legacy opportunities associated with the FIFA Women's World Cup 2023.

7

Cater for emerging and unstructured sport and recreation pursuits

Provide infrastructure aimed at supporting unstructured or emerging sport and recreation pursuits, including the provision of skate/scooter/BMX facilities, outdoor basketball courts and outdoor exercise equipment.

7.1 Provide opportunities for affordable exercise pursuits through the construction and renewal of outdoor exercise equipment and outdoor 'ninja warrior' style obstacle courses.

7.2 Provide additional opportunities for affordable unstructured recreation through the construction of multipurpose hard courts, half-courts and rebound walls.

7.3 Repurpose under-utilised hard courts to better cater for a wider variety of sporting and active recreation pursuits.

7.4 Provide opportunities at Cringila Hills Mountain Bike Park for external providers to deliver formal sporting, educational and recreational cycling services.

7.5 Continue to collaborate with the community on the development and maintenance of parkland bike trails.

7.6 Provide access to sportsgrounds and facilities for unstructured and/or emerging sports, including but not limited to disc golf, ultimate frisbee and parkour.

7.7 Progress the planning and development of the Wollongong City Centre, Northern Suburbs and Port Kembla skate facilities.

7.8 Ensure that the planning of skating facilities incorporates best practice principles in determining priorities and sites.

7.9 Explore suitable locations for the installation of skate features, modular pump tracks and mobile skate facilities.

7.10 Plan for the provision of off-beach outdoor volleyball opportunities at key locations across the city.

8

Strengthen partnerships with clubs and associations and leverage from effective collaboration

Promote active collaboration between Council, local clubs, local associations and state sporting organisations to pursue grant funding opportunities for priority projects.

8.1 Review and consider private and public partnership ventures to assist in the development of sporting infrastructure in accordance with relevant legislation requirements.

8.2 Ensure regional facilities meet the required standards to host major regional, state or national level competitions, events and/or training.

8.3 Explore partnerships with public and private education providers and school Infrastructure NSW to explore shared-use opportunities.

8.4 Support sporting groups and associations to identify grant opportunities that align with this Strategy and relevant Plans of Management and provide guidance through the application process.

8.5 Review the Sports and Facilities Reference Group Charter and membership to ensure broader representation.

8.6 Continue to collaborate with key stakeholders to pursue opportunities to enable mountain biking access to escarpment areas consistent with environmental and planning legislation.

9

Transition sportsgrounds and sporting facilities towards greater climate resilience

Manage, maintain and construct sportsgrounds and sporting facilities in accordance with Council's Sustainable Wollongong 2030, Climate Change Adaptation Plan and Climate Change Mitigation Plan 2020 to encourage greater climate resilience across Council sportsgrounds and sporting facilities. Council will need to carefully consider the use of natural turf, synthetic or alternative surfaces to address climate related impacts.

9.1 Implement Council's Urban Greening Strategy during the planning and construction of new facilities and precincts.

9.2 Plan for the provision of resilient playing surfaces, through innovative processes including enhanced drainage, recycled water irrigation and where appropriate, synthetic or hybrid surfaces at key locations.

9.3 Improve sustainability and reduce carbon emissions from the operation of sportsgrounds and sporting facilities consistent with key actions within Council's Sustainable Wollongong 2030 and Climate Change Mitigation Plan 2020.

9.4 Utilise sustainable sportsground maintenance and management practices to minimise impacts of climate change on the quality of sportsfields.

9.5 Ensure sports events that occur within the city are conducted in accordance with Council's Sustainable Events Guidelines.

10

Attract and support sporting events and tourism

Collaborate with a range of key stakeholders, to actively attract sporting events and tourism opportunities within the region.

10.1 Ensure Council's regional sports facilities are provided with appropriate infrastructure to support the hosting of regional, state and national sports events.

10.2 Provide in principle support to establish a home ground location for a national baseball league team in the city.

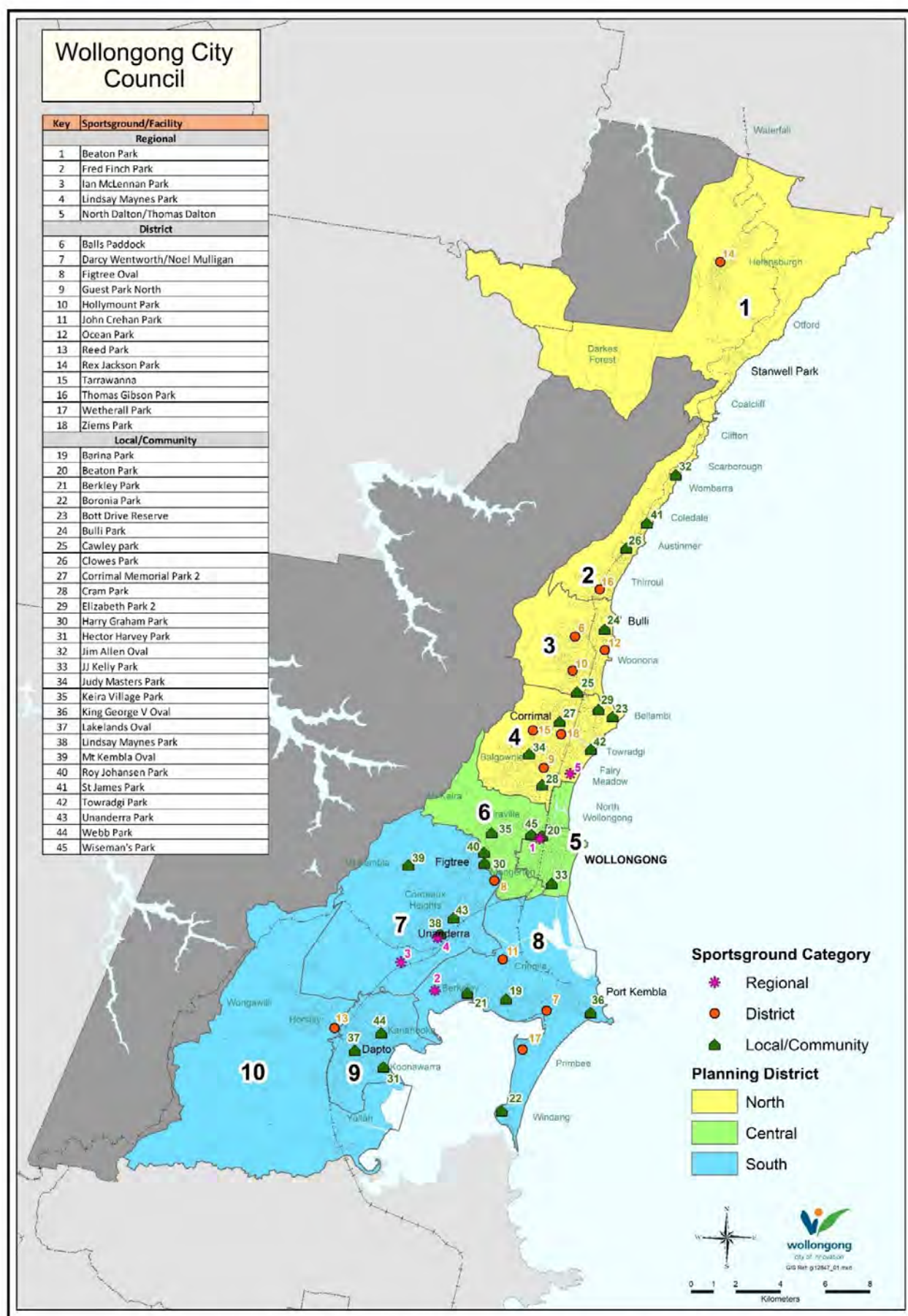
10.3 Support and develop sports legacy events, such as the UCI Road World Championships 2022.

10.4 Continue to partner with key stakeholders to host and facilitate events to create awareness and encourage participation in sports.

10.5 Pursue grant funding for sports infrastructure to attract and support events in the city.

10.6 Continue to advocate to the NSW State Government for detailed planning and redevelopment of the Illawarra Sports Entertainment Precinct, to provide an international standard sports facility for the city and region.

Appendix 1



Charter: Sports and Facilities Reference Group

1 Introduction

The Sports and Facilities Reference Group has been established to provide advice to Council on policies and strategies which relate to the implementation of the Sportsground and Sporting Facilities Strategy. The focus of the Sports and Facilities Reference Group is to assist Council in working towards the identification of priorities for sport and sporting infrastructure. The Sports and Facilities Reference Group comprises people interested in furthering these aims.

2 Authority

The Sports and Facilities Reference Group will provide advice, feedback and support to Council in developing, implementing and monitoring policies and strategies which relate to the implementation of the Sportsground and Sporting Facilities Strategy.

The Sports and Facilities Reference Group does not have decision making authority, the power to bind the Council, nor the power to incur expenditure.

3 Responsibilities and Functions

The responsibilities and functions of the Sports and Facilities Reference Group are to -

- Review and monitor Council's Sportsground and Sporting Facilities Strategy;
- Develop, review and monitor the Sportsground and Sporting Facilities Strategy which assists Council in the identification of priorities for sport and sporting infrastructure;
- Consider the cumulative effects of Council's decisions on identification of priorities for sport and sporting infrastructure; and
- Provide advice to Council on strategic projects and Council policies related to, or that may impact on the implementation of the Sportsground and Sporting Facilities Strategy.

4 Priorities

The immediate priority of the Sports and Facilities Reference Group is to:

- Provide strategic advice and input relating to the development of Council's Sportsground and Sporting Facilities
- Strategy and policies;
- Contribute to the master planning process of regional and district level facilities;
- Provide advice and assist in facilitating Council's Sports Grant process;
- Assist in the implementation of the Sportsgrounds and Sporting Facilities Strategy;
- Identify opportunities for the city to attract and secure major sporting events; and
- Participate in discussions regarding emerging sport and recreation related trends/topics and their impact on sport.

Other priorities will be determined by the Reference Group from time to time.

5 Composition of the Reference Group

The Sports and Facilities Reference Group is to be made up of:

- Three (3) Councillors
- One (1) representative from the NSW Office of Sport;
- One (1) representative of Illawarra Academy of Sport;
- Minimum of 10 members with Council Officers requesting nominations from the peak bodies and major sporting associations that utilise Council sporting facilities and grounds from each of the following sporting associations:
 - AFL;
 - Athletics;
 - Baseball;
 - Basketball;
 - Cricket;
 - Football;
 - Hockey;
 - Netball;
 - Rugby League;
 - Rugby;
 - Tennis; and
 - Touch Football.

Charter: Sports and Facilities Reference Group

- The Sports and Facilities Reference Group is to also include representatives from each of the following groups:
 - Women in Sport (1)
 - Emerging Sports (2)
 - Access for people with Disability (1)
 - Other peak sporting bodies specifically using Council's grounds and sporting facilities
- Non-Voting Members to include:
 - Manager Property and Recreation;
 - Recreation Services Manager;
 - Recreation and Open Space Project Officer; and
 - Sportsground Coordinator.

The Chairperson will be appointed by Council from the Councillor representatives.

Vacancies that occur on the Sports and Facilities Reference Group will be filled by public advertisement and selection by Council.

Council's Manager Property and Recreation will attend Reference Group meetings as an ex-officio member and will provide professional advice to the Reference Group. Other Council staff, Government officers, advisors or individuals may be invited to attend meetings from time to time to provide expert advice, information or presentations in relation to the Reference Group's business. These individuals will act as ex-officio members.

Representation to the Reference Group will be sought through direct correspondence being forwarded to sporting Associations.

6 Term Of Appointment

Term of appointment is to be for the term of the 2021-2024 elected Council, subject to attending 70% of the scheduled meetings.

7 Obligations Of Members

Members of the Sports and Facilities Reference Group, in performing their duties, shall:

- Act honestly and in good faith;
- Participate in the work of the Reference Group;
- Perform their duties in a manner that ensures public trust in the integrity, objectivity, and impartiality of the Reference Group;

- Exercise the care, diligence and skill that would be expected of a reasonable person;
- Comply with the Reference Group's Charter; and
- Comply with Council's Code of Conduct.

8 Meetings

Meetings will be held quarterly with an online option available, except where no business has been identified.

A quorum will consist of half the nominated sports representatives of the Sports & Facilities Reference Group plus one (1).

Meetings will be chaired by the Council appointed chairperson. If the chairperson is absent from a meeting, the first business of every such meeting is to elect a chairperson from the members present to preside over such meeting.

The Reference Group has an advisory role to Council and will make recommendations by consensus. In the absence of consensus, advice from the Reference Group may be presented with supporting and dissenting views of Reference Group members.

Meeting agendas will be distributed at least one week prior to the meeting.

9 Reporting

The minutes of meetings will be provided to Councillors and Council's Executive Management for information. Minutes will also be distributed to all members.

Advice and decisions of the Reference Group relating to specific Council projects will be reported to Council as part of the project reporting process.

Any matters arising that require a separate decision of Council may be reported to Council at the discretion of the Manager Property and Recreation.

10 Evaluation and Review

A review of the Reference Group will be undertaken every 12 months to ensure the purpose, membership and operation of the Reference Group is effective and to make appropriate changes.



From the mountains to the sea, we value and protect our natural environment and will be leaders in building an educated, creative, sustainable and connected community.

We value and protect our environment

We have an innovative and sustainable economy

Wollongong is a creative, vibrant city

We are a connected and engaged community

We have a healthy community in a liveable city

We have affordable and accessible transport



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