

SPORTS FIELD **PLAN 2016-2026**

The Sports Field Plan has been developed to provide a strategic approach to the management and development of City of Darwin's **17 sporting ovals during 2016-2026**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



CITY OF DARWIN recognises the valuable contribution that sport and recreation make to community health and wellbeing. City of Darwin currently provides and/or facilitates access to a range of sport, recreation and leisure opportunities across the municipality. These add to the culture, lifestyle and character of Darwin as well as enhance the liveability of the city.

This presents an ongoing management challenge for Council which will be exacerbated by anticipated population growth within the region that will continue to drive increasing demand for access to playing fields for a variety of sports and activities. As City of Darwin has no formal role in the planning for future residential growth or specifying requirements for active open space provision, ongoing advocacy and active participation in future NT Government planning will be required in order to influence future open space outcomes.

Council currently provides 17 publicly available active sports reserves which cater for a range of sport activities and clubs. The aim of the Sports Field Plan is to guide the future use, development and management of sporting fields and ovals within the City of Darwin over the next ten years.

In total, the Sports Field Plan outlines strategies and actions grouped under four key themes. A synopsis of the key themes and topics addressed in the Sports Field Plan is presented on the following page.

The main users of Council sports fields in the Dry Season are cricket (47%) and soccer (32%), whilst in the Wet Season the main users are AFL (87%) and soccer (10%).

Sports fields help facilitate physical activity participation; contribute to providing a social focus for the community and influence people’s perception of their neighbourhood. Quality facilities encourage broad community use and contribute to the overall sustainability and wellbeing of the communities in which they live.

In order to identify sports field management and development issues, the methodology for the Sports Field Plan included a staged approach to assessment, analysis and consultation phases. A comprehensive Situation Analysis was conducted which identified that there is evidence of increasing demand for use of Council sports fields and that there is limited capacity, particularly during the Dry Season, to accommodate additional uses.

The ongoing implementation of the recommendations contained in the Sports Field Plan will improve operational management, resource efficiencies, consistency in decision-making and ultimately enhance the liveability of the municipality and contribute to community health and wellbeing outcomes ■

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“Sports fields help facilitate physical activity participation, contribute to providing a social focus for the community and influence people’s perception of their neighbourhood. Quality facilities encourage broad community use and contribute to the overall sustainability and wellbeing of the communities in which they live.



THEME:	IDENTIFIED ITEMS:
Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Category of Facilities » Leasing and Allocation of Sports Fields » Sports Field Capacity
Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Defining Core Sports and Managing Use » Encouraging Multi-Use
Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Asset Maintenance and Renewal » Turf Maintenance » Support Infrastructure » Support Lighting
Policy and Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Policy and Planning Gaps » Functionality Enhancements



The Importance of Sport and Recreation

CITY OF DARWIN currently provides and/or facilitates access to a range of sport, recreation and leisure opportunities across the municipality. These add to the culture, lifestyle and character of Darwin as well as enhance the liveability of the city and are therefore recognised as an important part of a well-balanced lifestyle.

The benefits associated with participating in sport and physical activity have been well documented and include personal enjoyment, social interaction, physical and mental health, personal achievement, community involvement ('social capital'), community resilience and opportunities for expressions of community pride.

Physical activity participation builds self-esteem and positive self-image, enhances life satisfaction and perceived quality of life. Evidence also suggests that regular club-based participation can assist in reducing destructive behaviour and negative social activity, build understanding between diverse cultures and reduce isolation, loneliness and alienation.

Participation in a broad range of leisure activities has the potential to improve physiological and mental health, contribute to personal development, improve wellbeing and assist in social learning (e.g. tolerance, respect, cooperation, leadership). Participation may also assist in the improvement of educational performance and promote

a sense of community belonging.

Quality parks and sports fields provide safe developmental opportunities for children and young people to build social skills and stimulate participation in community life. Recreation facilities are recognised as important physical assets that contribute to providing a social focus and influencing people's perception of their community. Quality facilities encourage broad community use, events, tourism and contribute to overall economic sustainability of the communities in which they exist. Therefore, sport and recreation facilities contribute to physical health, mental health, community connectedness, general wellbeing and economic sustainability ■

DEVELOPMENT OF THE **SPORTS FIELD PLAN** HAS BEEN GUIDED BY THE FOLLOWING CORE **AIM** AND **OBJECTIVES**

Aim

The aim of the Sports Field Plan is to guide the future use, development and management of sporting fields and ovals within the City of Darwin over the next ten years, including consideration of likely facilities and infrastructure required to meet existing and future community needs.

Objectives

- To identify and investigate the facility needs of the community for eligible field sports occurring within the Darwin municipality, in particular the high-use sports of AFL, cricket and soccer.
- To provide Council with a strategic approach for current and future planning and the provision of infrastructure for field sports activities occurring on land controlled by City of Darwin.
- To increase the capacity of Council to provide sustainable services and facilities which will likely result in an increase in participation by residents in physical activity, thereby enhancing their health and wellbeing.

Methodology

In order to identify sports field management and development issues, the development of the Sports Field Plan included assessment, analysis and documentation for three key areas:

1. Strategic Context – to ensure the Sports Field Plan aligned with Council's strategic goals and community needs.
2. Methodology – to ensure the Sports Field Plan adopted a staged approach to assessment, analysis and consultation.
3. Situation Analysis – to ensure there was a comprehensive review and audit of existing assets, demands and trends.

Defining Council's Role

Council's role in sport and recreation provision will vary depending on the issue/s being addressed. In general, Council's role will fall into one of the following four categories:

PLAN:

- Facilitate planning, development and renewal of leisure facilities, services and opportunities to address identified (current and future) community needs.

PROVIDE:

- Support the provision of leisure facilities, services and programs to meet the needs of the current and future community.

PARTNER:

- Work in partnership with government (i.e. Territory and Federal), Peak Sporting Bodies, clubs, community groups and other stakeholders as appropriate (e.g. schools and educational institutions) to ensure that leisure facilities, programs and services meet the needs of the current and future community.

ADVOCATE AND INFORM:

- Advocate to other levels of government and relevant stakeholders regarding issues and opportunities that are likely to impact on sport, recreation and leisure facilities or services in the City of Darwin.
- Provide information to the community regarding the range of leisure opportunities available to residents, including promotion of the health and wellbeing benefits of physical activity participation.

Guiding Principles

The following principles have been endorsed by Council to guide decision-making and strategic directions for sports field management and planning.

1. Council is committed to maximising community participation in sport and recreation by the provision of a network of sporting grounds, ovals and parks.
2. Council has adopted a hierarchical approach to the management and maintenance of these assets, specifically:
 - » Regional
 - » District
 - » Local
3. Council will only enter into leasing arrangements for these assets with Peak Sporting Bodies.
4. Council will retain management responsibility for allocating hours of use for its sport and recreation assets.
5. Council will encourage the informal and mixed use of its sport and recreation assets.
6. The allocation of sport and recreation assets will aim to optimise the available resources and maximise flexibility in use through identifying activities that are best suited to individual reserves.
7. Turf maintenance will be informed by the hierarchy of Council's sport and recreation assets.
8. Asset maintenance and renewal of Council's sport and recreation assets will be based on asset class.
9. Council will establish fees and charges for the use of sport and recreation assets on the basis of pricing principles outlined in Council Policy No. 019 – Fees and Charges.
10. Capital contributions for the development of Council's sport and recreation assets will only be considered from Peak Sporting Bodies.

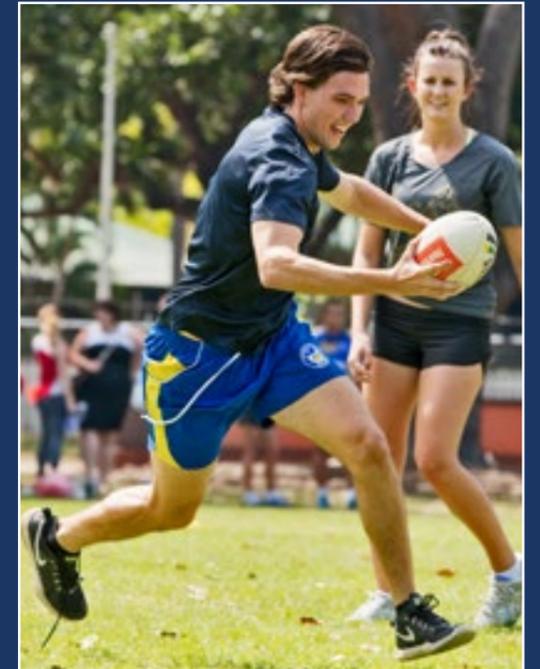


Sports Field Plan

Based on the results from the situation analysis, site assessments and consultation undertaken both internally and externally with key stakeholders, a range of sports field management and development items were identified. The items have been grouped under the following four themes:

- » Management
- » Use
- » Infrastructure
- » Policy and Planning

Recommended strategies and actions have been identified to address each specific item and to form an overarching policy framework to guide future management and development of City of Darwin's sports fields.



Theme: Management

Item: Category of Facilities

Establishment of category based management of sports fields, linked to facility maintenance and infrastructure, provides opportunities to maximise capital and operational resource efficiencies, as well as assisting in managing community expectations through improved consistency in decision-making.

This approach supports athlete pathway development/participation opportunities and links facility and maintenance standards to the operational requirements of each sport/activity.

Strategy and Actions

- Category based management plan.
 - Utilise the table of sports field categories and definitions to determine development and service levels: (see next page)

CATEGORY	DEFINITION	CLASSIFICATION
Regional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional facilities will be built and maintained to a premier standard based on the needs of specific sports/ activities. Regional facilities cater for training and competition for teams in elite level competitions and may have the capacity to host Territory or National standard fixtures. Regional facilities are designed to service people from within the City of Darwin and beyond due to their level of specialisation, uniqueness or standard of competition being played. Gated venues to allow ticketing. Turf maintenance to accommodate elite competition levels of use. 	Gardens Oval One
District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> District level facilities principally cater for people from within the City of Darwin, and will accommodate senior and junior training and competition. District venues provide the “headquarters/home” facility for individual clubs. District sports fields regularly host competition games which results in significantly higher usage than local ovals. Incorporate a suite of community facilities to encourage informal use and physical activity participation. Turf maintenance to accommodate high levels of use. 	Gardens Oval Two Nightcliff Oval Bagot Oval Kahlin Oval Malak Oval
Local	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local sports fields generally provide for communities within walking distance. Local sports fields are built and maintained to stakeholder and user group requirements. Local level sports fields primarily cater for senior training and junior training and competition. Incorporate a suite of community facilities to encourage informal use and physical activity participation. Local ovals can be used as “headquarters/home” facilities for individual clubs to provide them with an opportunity for growth. Turf maintenance to meet stakeholder and user group requirements. 	Anula Oval Chrisp Street Oval Dinah Beach Oval Fannie Bay Oval Jingili Oval Moil Oval Nakara Oval Tiwi Oval Wagaman Oval Wanguri Oval Wulagi Oval



Theme: Management

Item: Leasing and Allocation of Sports Fields

In order to ensure the guiding principles can be effectively implemented, including encouraging informal and mixed use of sport and recreation assets, Council retains management responsibility for the allocation of sports fields. The allocation process ensures equitable access for sports clubs, peak bodies and informal community use.

Leasing arrangements do not preclude access for casual and informal community use. Council hires out ovals and other open

space assets across the municipality on a casual basis through the Customer Services department.

Council may not be in the best position to assess the relative merits of one club versus another when it comes to determining which group will be offered leases or allocation of playing fields at each reserve. The respective Peak Sporting Body is better placed to guide allocations to individual clubs in line with their own development objectives.

Strategies and Actions

- Council to only enter into leasing arrangements for selected sports field facilities with relevant Peak Sporting Bodies.
 - » Negotiate new leases directly with relevant Peak Sporting Bodies as appropriate.
 - » Improve definition/clarity of asset maintenance and renewal responsibilities for leased assets through any new leases.
- Council to retain management responsibility for allocating its sport and recreation assets and playing fields.
 - » Seasonal applications for individual reserves are to be submitted by Peak Sporting Bodies following consultation with their respective clubs.

Theme: Management

Item: Sports Field Capacity

The review of existing sports field usage highlighted that there is growing demand for access to Council sports fields, during both Wet and Dry Seasons. Overall demand for Wet Season bookings has increased and whilst Dry Season

allocations remain comparable over the last two years, this reflects the limited capacity of a number of existing reserves to accommodate additional use rather than a lack of growth in demand.

Strategies and Actions

- Continue to pro-actively manage reserve allocations to minimise potential for overuse of turf sports fields.
 - » Where practical, increase the spread of reserve allocations more evenly across all sports fields having regard to realistic carrying capacity of natural turf surfaces, in particular pre-season training and post-season games.
 - » Ensure allocation of high use reserves, particularly Regional and District standard reserves that cater for the highest levels of competition, allows for an adequate non-use buffer period between seasons to allow for appropriate turf maintenance, renewal and management (generally a minimum two-week break between seasons, in particular Gardens Oval One and Nightcliff Oval).

Theme: Sports Field Use

Item: Defining Core Sports and Managing Use

Requests are regularly received by Council for use of reserves for a variety of sports and activities; however, not all sports/activities are suited to all reserves due to site constraints or characteristics. Some reserves are being used for sports/activities that are not well suited to the location/venue due to spatial constraints, playing field configuration, existing facilities, infrastructure and possible amenity impacts.

Furthermore, at present there is limited flexibility in the location of goal posts/goal infrastructure. This potentially limits the ability

to alter sports field layouts to accommodate a variety of uses and spread wear and tear across turf surfaces. Three forms of goal infrastructure need to be considered: permanent goal installations, sleeves for semi-permanent goals and portable goals. Permanent goals and semi-permanent goals are favoured as these maximise resource efficiencies and public safety. Compliance with the requirements for the individual sport, operational capability and user/public safety are key considerations in determining preferred goal infrastructure.

Strategies and Actions

- Identify which sports are best suited to individual reserves in order to help improve allocation processes, certainty of use, maintenance activities and overall resource efficiencies.
 - » In consultation with stakeholders, identify which reserves are best suited to which sports/activities.
 - » Review existing field configurations and goal post infrastructure in order to achieve compliance and identify opportunities to maximise flexibility of use.
 - » Ensure that field configurations and goal post infrastructure meet the requirements of both junior and senior users of sporting ovals.



Item: Encouraging Multi-Use

Multi-use reserves maximise opportunities for resource efficiencies and community outcomes, including shared use of facilities, social gatherings and participation in a range of sports or activities. Council's sporting fields are characterised by a number of single oval and single use venues, many of which are spatially constrained which further limits their usage flexibility. This situation is exacerbated by a general lack of consideration for mixed gender use, specifically female and family-friendly change rooms, club rooms and associated infrastructure.

Strategies and Actions

- Maximise opportunities for shared use of sport facilities and infrastructure.
 - » Ensure the future design of sport pavilions and support infrastructure maximises opportunities for shared use flexibility, adequate storage and the needs of female sports participants.
 - » Implement a staged program to improve storage facilities at District and Local reserves based on assessment of priority needs.

Theme: Infrastructure



Item: Asset Maintenance and Renewal

Effective asset maintenance and renewal is a significant challenge for many Local Government Authorities, particularly having regard to the vast scope and variety of assets maintained across the City of Darwin. Appropriately, Council’s asset management planning has initially concentrated on high risk assets and buildings.

However, site inspections have confirmed varying asset standards and conditions for a variety of recreation assets on active reserves. Whilst these are generally not deemed as high risk assets, they nevertheless require pro-active planning to guide future maintenance, renewal and replacement works in order to continue to effectively service the recreation needs of the community.

Strategies and Actions

- Establish Asset Management Plans for all classes of open space assets and facilities on Council’s active sports reserves to guide asset maintenance and lifecycle renewal requirements and priorities.
 - » Establish Asset Management Plans for recreation and open space assets.

Item: Turf Maintenance

Turf maintenance standards and practices for active recreation should be based on desired outcomes, facility standards and the requirements of specific sports. Managing the wear and tear on turf surfaces requires opportunities for turf repair, rest and renewal works. Pro-active forward planning for turf renewal needs to be considered in order to protect and preserve these important community assets.

In developing turf maintenance standards, it is acknowledged that Council is not responsible for turf cricket wickets/tables or general sport line marking. These tasks will remain the responsibility of relevant Peak Sporting Bodies and/or individual clubs. It is also acknowledged that the capacity of turf surfaces is heavily influenced by prevailing environmental conditions which are largely beyond the control of Council’s management.

Strategies and Actions

- Develop turf maintenance standards linked to the proposed reserve hierarchy.
 - » Establish sports field maintenance standards and operational service levels to align with Regional, District and Local competition and training requirements.
 - » Ensure turf maintenance and irrigation operations maximise environmental sustainability and conservation principles.

Item: Support Infrastructure

In addition to ongoing asset maintenance and renewal, there is a range of infrastructure that supports the sporting use of each reserve. Core facilities such as public amenities, club rooms, storage facilities, goals, drainage, signage, spectator seating, bicycle racks, shelter, shade trees, fencing and car parking all contribute to the functionality of the reserve and capacity to meet community needs.

There is likely to be growing demand for the provision of club room facilities at key reserves, particularly if Football Federation Northern Territory establishes a new local competition. This will result in demand from clubs to establish home venues, including access to social spaces, kiosk facilities and club memorabilia displays.

There is a variety of existing fencing materials, designs and provision across existing reserves. Asset renewal is

required in order to improve the standard, consistency and functionality of reserve fencing. Reserve fencing will need to respond to the characteristics and requirements of each individual site. In general, perimeter reserve fencing to allow ticketing will be a security fence or similar, playing field boundary fencing (where required) should be chain mesh with top and bottom rail, and restriction for unauthorised access to reserves (i.e. to manage vehicle access) should be recycled plastic bollards or similar. Site responsiveness may support variation from these fencing types, particularly having regard to functionality and visual impact.

Support infrastructure can also be of a sport-specific nature. Cricket practice wickets or nets, sight screens and goal netting are examples. These items improve functionality of sporting ovals and assist in the training and development of players.

Strategies and Actions

- Ensure Council ovals provide adequate infrastructure to support the core needs of sports users (e.g. amenities, change rooms, kiosk facilities and storage facilities).
 - » Work with Peak Sporting Bodies and relevant stakeholders on a case-by-case basis to upgrade and improve sport pavilions to allow clubs to establish reserves as home venues, having regard to likely demand for club rooms, storage, kiosk, amenities, etc.
- Implement a program for systematic asset renewal of reserve and playing field fencing to improve functionality, safety, amenity and consistency.
 - » Implement the upgrade and renewal of reserve fencing to address prioritised needs.
- Ensure adequate sport-specific infrastructure is available at Council ovals to improve functionality and provide opportunities for informal use.
 - » Work with Peak Sporting Bodies and relevant stakeholders on a case-by-case basis to provide both informal and sport-specific infrastructure to promote physical activity participation and address identified community needs.

Theme: Infrastructure

Item: Sports Lighting

There is growing demand for the provision of sports lighting on Council-managed sports reserves to increase the use of sports fields. Sports lighting is likely to play an increasingly important role in accommodating additional uses, managing allocations and maximising participation opportunities.

Strategies and Actions

- Support installation of sports training lights to help increase the capacity of reserves to accommodate additional uses and spread hours of availability.
 - » In partnership with relevant Peak Sporting Bodies and clubs, support the provision of training lights on a case-by-case basis, having regard to site conditions, constraints and demonstrated demand.



Theme: Policy and Planning

Item: Policy and Planning Gaps

Council must continue to advocate to other levels of government and relevant stakeholders regarding issues and opportunities that are likely to impact on the provision and demand for sport, recreation and leisure facilities.

Whilst this Plan has a primary focus on sports fields under Council control or management, it is acknowledged that there may be opportunities to pursue partnerships with other sports field providers (e.g. schools and educational institutions) to facilitate community access to playing fields, particularly where Council facilities may be unable to accommodate additional demands.

There are opportunities to improve strategic planning and policy direction for a broader range of recreation and open space provision beyond existing sports fields.

Strategies and Actions

- Actively influence the planning for community sport and recreation facilities in new and emerging residential communities.
 - » Advocate to the NT Government for pro-active planning for the development of new sports fields to cater for expected residential growth and population increases.
- Explore partnerships with other providers for possible establishment of shared use facilities.
 - » Explore opportunities for possible joint use agreements with local schools for community access to playing fields.

Item: Functionality Enhancements

There are opportunities to improve the functionality of a number of reserves to enhance their appeal and capacity to service community needs; in particular, vehicle, pedestrian and bicycle access, circulation, parking, safety and disability access.

There is opportunity to improve guidelines for strategic investment and partnerships for the development of community sport facilities. Capital contribution should be sought through Peak Sporting Bodies for their clubs and groups in relation to recreation assets, facilities and infrastructure development.

Strategies and Actions

- Establish Master Plans for Council's active recreation reserves to guide future development and infrastructure provision.
 - » Develop Master Plans for individual sporting ovals.

- » Ensure Master Plans consider opportunities to improve the functionality of each site, in particular vehicle, pedestrian and bicycle access, parking, circulation, informal use, safety and Universal access. Implement capital infrastructure improvements as funds become available.
- » Ensure Master Plans consider opportunities for stakeholders to change the classification of individual ovals to meet their requirements (i.e. Local to District).
- Actively engage with stakeholders to facilitate capital contributions and funding sources for infrastructure improvements.
 - » Liaise with Peak Sporting Bodies, Government Departments and Agencies as appropriate in order to explore funding opportunities for facility improvements.



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