

**Item No:** C1018(2) Item 5

**Subject:** **OUTCOMES FROM THE PUBLIC EXHIBITION OF THE RECREATION NEEDS STUDY: A HEALTHIER INNER WEST.**

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### **SUMMARY**

Further to the public exhibition of the draft *Recreation Needs Study: A Healthier Inner West*, this report details the outcomes and analysis from the exhibition process, the resulting changes and presentation of the amended final report to be considered for Council's endorsement.

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### **RECOMMENDATION**

#### **THAT:**

1. Council endorse the *Recreation Needs Study: A Healthier Inner West* report;
2. The *Recreation Needs Study: A Healthier Inner West* report is used to inform the development of a Recreation Strategy, Section 7.11 Contributions Plan and other relevant Council planning documents; and
3. All residents and stakeholders who expressed an interest are notified of Council's decision and thanked for their contribution.

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### **BACKGROUND**

The merger of three local government areas to form the Inner West Council over the past two and half years highlighted the need for Council to undertake a study on recreation needs to inform a strategic position for the provision of recreation facilities, services and programs, that includes planning priorities, new Section 7.11 (formerly Section 94) Contributions Plan, recreation programs and services, and asset management for the equitable and relevant allocation of recreation resources to meet the present and future requirements of the local community.

Cred Consulting were engaged to research a range of specific factors relating to local recreation including:

- Strategic document review and development of Engagement Plan;
- Implementation of the engagement with community and stakeholders and presentation of the findings in a Community Engagement Report.
- Quantitative research including condition audits of current recreation and sporting facilities, recreation activity undertaken in the LGA including the streets and streetscape as a recreation resource.
- The development of an informed view of the future recreation and open space needs in the Inner West Council.
- The findings from the analysis of current and future needs including identifying areas of unmet need and the implications for recreation facilities and services.

#### **Community Engagement**

A robust engagement process was an essential component of the project to provide an evidence base to inform future recreation and other planning. An extensive community

engagement process was undertaken from October through December 2017 and targeted engagement with stakeholders continued in early 2018. Promotion of the engagement reached over 17,000 people through a variety of media and over 2,000 people participated in engagement activities through a range of engagement methods. A Community Engagement Report (CER) detailed the outcomes of the engagement process. This report was published on Council's website in April 2018, notification sent to residents who had expressed an interest during the engagement process and a presentation of the CER undertaken at the Sports Forum in April 2018.

Cred Consulting undertook further targeted engagement, condition audits and data analysis throughout the early part of 2018 and the findings were brought together to form the draft *Recreation Needs Study: A Healthier Inner West* report which was presented to Council on 22 May 2018. Council determined that:

1. *Council endorse the draft report Recreation Needs Study: A Healthier Inner West for public exhibition for 6 weeks;*
2. *That the public exhibition is widely promoted and all stakeholders and residents who expressed an interest are notified of the opportunity to provide further input; and*
3. *Following public exhibition, the feedback and amended Recreation Needs Study: A Healthier Inner West be reported back to Council.*

Related items were reported to the meeting of 27 March 2018, when Council considered the resourcing of recreation needs and the potential position of an Office of Sport Coordinator. It was determined that:

1. *Council invest \$65 million in park and aquatic capital facilities over the next three years, subject to the development and adoption of the 2018/2019 Budget;*
2. *Council defer the appointment an Office of Sport Coordinator until after the completion of the Recreation Needs Study;*
3. *The Recreation and Aquatics Service Unit and Office of Sport Coordinator strategically partner with the sporting clubs and key partners to increase participation of girls, women, people from lower socio economic backgrounds and people with disabilities as informed by the Recreation Needs Study: A Healthier Inner West;*
4. *Council progress the Recreation Needs Study: A Healthier Inner West to investigate the need and best location for hockey and netball facilities and a hydrotherapy pool; and*
5. *Council progress the development of the Inner West Sporting Ground Allocation Policy, in consultation with the sporting clubs and that the draft Policy be reported back to Council for adoption.*

### **Public Exhibition**

The draft *Recreation Needs Study: A Healthier Inner West* (RNS) was placed on public exhibition from 15 June until the 27 July 2018. The opportunity for further engagement on the draft report was widely promoted to all internal and external stakeholders and residents. This included direct email, distribution to patrons at Council owned recreation and aquatic facilities, to sporting organisations that use Council facilities through relevant newsletters and hard copies placed at Customer Service Centres.

The public exhibition demonstrated substantial interest from the community and stakeholders with a total of 951 responses received comprising 796 from residents and external organisations in addition to 156 items of feedback from internal Council departments.

Respondents were asked to comment on the 6 themes of the strategic framework proposed to inform the development of the draft Recreation Strategy:

- Theme 1 – Existing gaps in open space and recreation
- Theme 2 – Future demand for open space and recreation
- Theme 3 – Capacity for sports and recreation
- Theme 4 – Inclusion and sharing
- Theme 5 – Connections with nature
- Theme 6 – Streets and laneways for walking, cycling and play

Respondents were also asked if they wish to comment on any of the recommended opportunities and proactively provide any other comments.

Analysis was undertaken on the topics covered in each submission (many submissions included multiple topics) resulting in identification of 969 topics. These have been summarised below to provide a snapshot of the most frequently identified topics under each theme.

#### **Theme 1 – Existing gaps in open space and recreation**

A total of 130 responses were received covering 163 topics. The most frequently mentioned topics were:

Sporting grounds	81
Open space	19
Sporting amenities	11
Footpaths / Trails	10
Play facilities	6

Despite extensive promotion, the initial engagement process in 2017 did not receive the level of interest hoped for from organised sporting groups. The renewed interest from sporting participants and organisations is evident in the public exhibition process with “sporting grounds” being the most frequently mentioned topic by some margin with considerable interest in synthetic turf surfaces and a multipurpose hockey field and sporting amenities.

Also evident in feedback was the importance to the community of retaining and improving open space as well as walking and cycling along footpaths / trails.

#### **Theme 2 – Future demand for open space and recreation**

A total of 128 responses were received covering 164 topics. The most frequently mentioned topics were:

Sporting grounds	55
Open space	47
Multipurpose open space and facilities	16
Footpaths / Trails	7
Sporting amenities	5

As with Theme 1, sporting grounds and open space dominated the majority of responses. It is worth noting the community understands of the importance of multipurpose open space and facilities as a mechanism to deliver on the broad spectrum of recreation needs.

#### **Theme 3 – Capacity for sports and recreation**

A total of 140 responses were received covering 165 topics. The most frequently mentioned were:

Sporting grounds	96
Open space	13
Sporting amenities	8
Multipurpose open space and facilities	8
Footpaths / Trails	5

Unsurprisingly, responses were dominated by feedback on sporting grounds, a key focus of this theme and also an indication of the high level of engagement from sporting groups in the public exhibition process.

#### **Theme 4 – Inclusion and sharing**

A total of 88 responses were received covering 96 topics. The most frequently mentioned topics were:

Sporting grounds	23
Inclusive recreation opportunities	22
Dogs	8
Multipurpose open space and facilities	5
Footpaths / Trails	3

It is encouraging that the need to share sporting facilities and the provision of recreation opportunities for all members of the community was recognised. Dogs were more evident in this theme with views typically polarised which is consistent with previous feedback on this topic.

#### **Theme 5 – Connections with Nature**

A total of 82 responses were received covering 96 topics. The most frequently mentioned topics were:

Greening / Trees	29
Sporting grounds	8
Footpaths / Trails	7
Nature / Adventure Play	6
Biodiversity	5
Informal recreation	5
Open space	5

Responses were more evenly spread under this theme though there was evident support for greening the inner west.

#### **Theme 6 – Streets and laneways for walking, cycling and play**

A total of 86 responses were received covering 127 topics. The most frequently mentioned topics were:

Cycleways / Cycle education	38
Footpaths / Trails	25
Connectivity	14
Greening	10
Streets for recreation	8

This theme was dominated by cycling and walking with cycleways and footpaths / trails being the two most frequently mentioned responses. The importance of creating connections was recognised as well as opportunities to connect with nature through greening.

#### **Comments on Recommended Opportunities (Comments 1)**

A total of 69 responses were received covering 84 topics. The most frequently mentioned topics were:

Sporting grounds	39
Support	4
Sporting amenities	4
Connectivity	3
Roller Derby	3
Open Space	3

The lower overall response in this section may indicate that respondents had adequately reflected their feedback under the earlier themes and much of the feedback reflected a reproduction of previous comments.

#### **Other Comments (Comments 2)**

A total of 62 responses were received covering 74 topics. The most frequently mentioned topics were:

Sporting grounds	21
Open space	10
Support	6
Connectivity	5
Multipurpose open space and facilities	4

As with the comments on recommended opportunities, there was a much lower overall response, possibly indicating that people feel they have been provided sufficient opportunity for input.

#### **Key Findings**

Despite extensive promotion, the initial engagement process in late 2017 did not receive the level of interest hoped for from organised sporting groups. The public exhibition process demonstrates a significantly higher level of engagement from sports participants and organisations with sporting grounds being the most frequently mentioned topic and considerable interest in synthetic turf surfaces and a multipurpose hockey field. Many responses indicated the preferred location of a future multipurpose hockey facility in the north of the LGA with many mentioning the Rozelle railyards as a potential site. This will be further explored through the development of the Recreation Strategy.

The majority of feedback was consistent with the recommended opportunities identified in the draft RNS and did not necessitate many changes to the draft final report. The process also helped highlight items which were discussed in the body of the draft report but which had not translated through into the 'Recommended Opportunities' section.

While the feedback from the public exhibition did not result in many changes to the final draft report, the scale of feedback, along with the Community Engagement Report will be a significant determinant in the prioritisation of actions in the draft Recreation Strategy.

In conjunction with the Community Engagement Report, the feedback from the public exhibition will be used to prioritise actions in the development of the Recreation Strategy.

#### **Changes to the draft *Recreation Needs Study: A Healthier Inner West***

The following list summarises key changes made to the RNS as a result of the public exhibition process:

- Inclusion in recommended opportunities of improved lighting based on community engagement outcomes;

- Inclusion in recommended opportunities of consideration of recurrent maintenance costs during design and increased maintenance resourcing as a result of new facilities;
- Inclusion in recommended opportunities of further investigation of netball needs and facilities;
- Reference to Gymnastics included in existing recreation facilities as well inclusion in existing and future needs;
- Inclusion in recommended opportunities of outdoor exercise equipment at appropriate locations;
- Inclusion in recommended opportunities to review the provision of dog off leash areas in Ashfield;
- Inclusion in recommended opportunities of continuation and growth of bushcare programs;
- Increased reference to facilitation of running in recommended opportunities;
- Include reference to biodiversity features in signage;
- Increased reference to inclusive design in recommended opportunities;
- Inclusion in recommended opportunities for promotion across all target population groups;
- Increased emphasis on inclusive public toilet facilities in recommended opportunities;
- Strengthened reference to passive recreation in recommended opportunities;
- Inclusion of community gardens in recommended opportunities;
- Change of description of small parkland areas from 'Urban Landscape Amenity' to 'Pocket Park'.
- Inclusion in the body of the report of reference to the social benefit of volunteers and noting the significant numbers involved in organised sport;
- Broaden recommendation for laneway use to consider public art and multiple use; and
- Inclusion of worker population in future recreation needs.

The public exhibition indicated that there was some confusion as to the 6 themes and the intention and distinction between each. A description of each theme has been added to clarify this as follows:

Theme 1 - Address existing gaps in open space and recreation facilities

*Addressing the undersupply of open space and recreation facilities (for the current population) through new facilities.*

Theme 2 - Plan for future demand for new open space and recreation facilities

*Planning for new open space and recreation facilities to meet future demand resulting from population growth.*

Theme 3 - Increase capacity of existing recreation facilities

*Getting more from what we have by improving the quality and function of existing open space and recreation facilities to increase capacity to address current undersupply and future demand.*

Theme 4 - Streets and laneways for walking, running, cycling and play

*Reimagining our streets and laneways as recreation spaces to increase access to recreation opportunities.*

Theme 5 - Inclusion and sharing

*Supporting increased use and access to recreation opportunities for diverse community members. Encouraging sharing of open space and recreation facilities for a range of users and uses.*

Theme 6 - Connection with nature



*Providing opportunities to connect with nature, improve health and wellbeing and addressing climate and heat impacts.*

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The order of the themes in the final document has been changed from the draft public exhibition report so that Theme 3 (Increase capacity of existing recreation facilities) is followed by Theme 4 (Streets and laneways for walking, running, cycling and play), as they both relate to increasing the capacity of what we have rather than the provision of new facilities. Specifically, Theme 4 focuses on increasing the capacity of streets to provide for recreation.

All the above changes are reflected in the amended final RNS attached to this report (**ATTACHMENT 1**).

Given the quantity of response from the community and stakeholders, the quantity of changes proposed to the final draft RNS are proportionately low with many changes as a result of multiple responses on the same item. The relatively low number of changes is indicative that the coverage of recreation needs in the final report closely matches community and stakeholder needs.

The feedback also highlighted numerous operational items or matters related to current projects and these have been passed onto the relevant areas of Council to be followed up. There were also multiple suggestions for actions and projects which will be considered in the development of the Recreation Strategy.

**Current projects and programs**

It is worth noting that throughout the development of the draft RNS and public exhibition process, a number of initiatives have been undertaken concurrently which are consistent with the needs identified in the RNS. Relevant items include:

- Recreation Programs
  - Women and girls (Mums Get Active, Girls Get Active)
  - Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities – noticeably programs targeting refugees and activating the Welcome Refugee Centre;
  - Seniors activities – Council currently has a total offering of 169 program opportunities for seniors per week and development of a brochure is underway to promote this to a wider audience;
  - Free fitness classes for the community in parks at two locations across the LGA.
- Skate activities – three events have been scheduled at Sydenham Green skatepark in October 2018 plus a series of clinics targeting female skaters funded through the Recreation Grants program;
- Investigations have commenced with NSW Department of Education on potential access to school facilities for community recreation;
- Sportsground Allocation Policy – this was recently reported to Council and has been endorsed for public exhibition;
- Review of management options for Annette Kellerman and Fanny Durack Aquatic Centres;
- A project to investigate the feasibility of synthetic turf at locations across the inner west;
- Design and delivery of multipurpose courts at Richard Murden Reserve;
- Development and adoption of the Greenway Master Plan;
- Investigations for a regional skatepark in the north of the LGA;
- Delivery of Waterfront sporting ground at Callan Park; and
- Plan of Management and Master Plan for Marrickville Golf Course.

While the development of the Recreation Strategy is underway, a number of projects delivering on identified needs in the final RNS have been included in staff work plans for 2018/19:

- Development of the Recreation Strategy;
- Play Streets pilot program;
- Nature Play Space pilot program;
- Development of a centralised booking system;
- Activation of skateparks through events and promotion;
- Review of the management of the Robyn Webster Sports Centre;
- Improved information on and promotion of recreation opportunities in the inner west, especially to CALD communities;
- Harmonisation of fees and charges for parks and sporting grounds;
- Development of a Parks Plans of Management Strategy to prioritise their review and development; and
- Plan of Management and Master Plan for Dulwich Hill Parklands.

**Office of Sport**

Council has resolved to investigate an Office of Sport to partner with sporting clubs to achieve increased participation in sport and in particular among target groups identified in the RNS. A separate report will be prepared for Council's consideration on this matter.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

A part of the project a report was completed by Jones Lang La Salle providing an analysis of the recreation needs identified in the RNS and indicative costs for land acquisition for potential open space, community facilities and sporting grounds upgrades including synthetic turf. This will inform the development of the Recreation Strategy which will develop a 10 year plan of prioritised and costed actions and projects across Council including capital costs and increased maintenance, operational and long term renewal costs. This will inform the future 4 year Delivery Programs, Asset Management Plans and the Long Term Financial Plan.

**OTHER STAFF COMMENTS**

Extensive engagement has been undertaken with internal staff throughout the RNS project including a Project Working Group made up of key internal stakeholders and extensive liaison with a broad cross section of relevant areas of Council during the early phases of the project and once again through the more recent public exhibition period.

**PUBLIC CONSULTATION**

A robust engagement process was an essential component of the project to provide the evidence base for future planning. An extensive community engagement process was undertaken from October through December 2017 and targeted engagement with stakeholders continued in early 2018. Promotion of the engagement reached over 17,000 people through a variety of media and over 2,000 people participated in engagement activities through a range of engagement methods.

Further opportunity for input has been provided through the public exhibition process with the community and stakeholders demonstrating substantial interest with a total of 796 responses from residents and external organisations.

**CONCLUSION**

The independent *Recreation Needs Study: A Healthier Inner West* takes a holistic view of the recreation spectrum and presents a detailed analysis of the current recreation landscape in the Inner West, emerging trends and issues, and an extensive range of recommended opportunities.



The extensive level of engagement with the community and stakeholders has provided a robust evidence base to inform future planning across Council and the identification of recreation needs in the final report closely matches those identified by the community and stakeholders. The ongoing engagement of key internal teams through the Project Working Group has ensured that needs identified in the final report will readily transfer into future planning documents, notably the 7.11 Contributions Plan (formerly Section 94) and the Recreation Strategy.

**ATTACHMENTS**

1. [↓](#) Recreation Needs Study: A Healthier Inner West - Final Draft Oct18