



# INNER WEST COUNCIL

## Sporting Grounds Allocation Policy

### Discussion Paper May 2018

#### Introduction

The Inner West Council has resolved to develop a Sporting Grounds Allocation Policy. The purpose of this Policy is to contribute to a Healthier Inner West by encouraging active sports participation. The Policy will also establish eligibility and the selection criteria to allocate sporting grounds.

The objective of this Discussion Paper is to provide further information on the principles which will inform the development of the Sporting Grounds Allocation Policy. It also raises questions to which Council requests comments and feedback.

#### Background Information

The following background information and statistics highlight the issues which need to be addressed and managed by the Sporting Grounds Allocation Policy.

- The Inner West has 28 sporting grounds
- In the winter season, within the sporting grounds, there are 38 senior fields and five junior fields
- In the summer season, within the sporting grounds, there are 29 senior fields and one junior field
- There are currently 46 clubs currently utilising sporting grounds for seasonal sport
- Ideally, the sporting grounds should have a total maximum capacity of 1,047 hours per week, this is an average of 29.1 hours per sporting ground.
- Currently, across the Inner West, the sporting grounds are used for a total of 1176 hours per week in winter. This is an average of 32.7 hours per week.
- This means that the sporting grounds are currently being utilised at an average 112% of their capacity. That is, they are already being over-utilised.
- Ideally, the sporting grounds would be rested for three weeks between the summer and winter season and for three weeks between the winter and summer season.
- Council currently rests the sporting grounds for one week between the summer and winter season and for one week between the winter and summer season.
- All sporting grounds must be rested for one day per week (generally Mondays)

## Recreation Needs Study

Council is researching the current and future recreation needs of the Inner West Council area. This is a separate, but related project. This study will inform the development of Council policy and strategy to address existing needs and forecast for additional population and increasing densities as a result of new development. Council defines recreation as a broad spectrum ranging from unstructured activities like picnics, walking the dog and playing in parks to organised sport and everything in between.

Further information on this project is available on Council's website:

<https://www.yoursayinnerwest.com.au/recreation-needs-study-myurbanplaygroundinnerwest>

## Principles

Principles will form the foundation for the development of the Sporting Grounds Allocation Policy. These principles were presented to the Sports Forum on the 9 April 2018 where it was generally agreed by those present that they were appropriate. The principles include:

- Transparent
- Equitable
- Consistent

## Transparent

Principle	What this means
Published Policy, adopted by Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The Policy will be developed in conjunction with the sporting clubs and following robust community engagement.</li><li>• The Policy will be adopted by Council, who will take the feedback and comments from the sporting clubs and community into consideration.</li><li>• The Policy will be published on Council's website and available to all sporting clubs (and other hirers of Council Grounds).</li></ul>
Clear, consistent and accessible information on allocations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• There needs to be a clear and consistent process for the submission of applications for the various users, including the sporting clubs, schools, universities and others.</li><li>• The methodology for determining allocations will be clearly stated and outlined in the Policy.</li><li>• It is likely that this methodology will include weighted criteria such that application scores are compared to determine which applications result in an allocation.</li><li>• These criteria will be based on the equity principles below.</li><li>• At the start of each season, the seasonal allocations will be published on Council's website (this will not include casual hirers).</li></ul>
Encourage collaboration between Council and the	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Council encourages clubs to collaborate with each other. Should two or more clubs put forward a</li></ul>

clubs; and between the clubs themselves	<p>proposed sharing arrangement of a sporting ground, Council will give this consideration.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clubs are allocated grounds for the fixed summer or winter season only. Clubs who have been allocated grounds and do not require them for the entire period (e.g. if teams do not make finals or the ground is not allocated as a finals venue) should advise Council as soon as possible so the potential hirer in the following season can potentially start training earlier. This is also dependent of any maintenance that needs to be done.</li> </ul>
Open acknowledgement of capital contributions through increased tenure and/ or reduced fees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Council recognises and encourages recreation organisations to contribute to the development and/ or upgrade of sporting facilities by providing incentives.</li> <li>Capital contributions may be made by individual clubs or by the sporting Associations.</li> <li>The size of the capital contribution will determine the size of the increased tenure and/ or reduction in fees. This will be on a sliding scale.</li> <li>The proposal will be reported to Council, who will make the final determination as to whether to accept the capital contribution.</li> <li>Clubs who are unable to make capital contributions can still apply for seasonal allocations.</li> </ul>

## Equitable

Principle	What this means
Priority given to community-based Inner West clubs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Council recognises that active sporting grounds are in high demand and priority access will be given to Inner West residents</li> <li>Priority will be given to community based clubs (ie. non-profit organisations).</li> <li>Priority will be given to clubs which are based in the Inner West.</li> <li>Priority will be given to clubs which have the majority of members based in the Inner West.</li> </ul>
Acknowledge historical access to grounds and the important role of clubs within the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Council recognises that sporting clubs provide community building benefits.</li> <li>Priority will be given to clubs which can demonstrate strong ties to the local community (eg. Community groups, local schools, etc.)</li> <li>Council will recognise clubs with a strong history at particular facilities, consistent membership demand and commitment to the local community.</li> <li>Priority will be given to clubs which have historically accessed a particular sporting ground.</li> <li>A history of compliance with all terms and conditions of hire is essential.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• sporting clubs and associations are instrumental in increasing positive social, cultural and economic benefits and developing community leaders. Participation levels are therefore a factor in the level of benefit to the community.</li> <li>• If a Club has declining membership, their hours of access may be decreased.</li> </ul>
Responsive and accessible to support new and emerging sports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council will be responsive to the recommendations of the Recreation Needs Study: A Healthier Inner West.</li> <li>• Where a new and emerging sport can demonstrate that they have a plan for the ongoing success of their Club for a number of years, Council will endeavor to accommodate their needs.</li> </ul>
Encourage diversity of sports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council will allocate grounds to encourage a diversity of sporting codes.</li> <li>• The allocation of sporting grounds will not be based solely on club membership numbers.</li> </ul>
Support sports for juniors, women, people from culturally diverse communities, people with disability and people from a lower socio-economic background	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As per the recent Council resolution, Council will 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.</li> <li>• The allocation of grounds to encourage participation by juniors, women, people from culturally diverse communities, people with disability and people from a lower socio-economic background in active sports is highly regarded when assessing applications.</li> <li>• The allocation of grounds where clubs demonstrate increasing numbers of women, people from culturally diverse communities, people with disability and people from a lower socio-economic background in positions coaching, leading, instructing, decision makers, officials and administrators at all levels is highly regarded when assessing applications.</li> <li>• The allocation of sporting grounds will not be based solely on club membership numbers.</li> </ul>

## Consistent

Principle	What this means
Aligned with Council's Community Strategic Plan and the Recreation Needs Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council will be responsive to the recommendations of the Recreation Needs Study: A Healthier Inner West.</li> <li>• Council will be responsive to the community's objectives and goals as outlined in the Community Strategic Plan.</li> </ul>

<p>Promote sustainability and longevity for clubs, allowing for longer term planning.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greater certainty will be provided to the clubs, allowing for increased sustainability and longevity. This increased certainty includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The methodology for determining allocations will be clearly stated and outlined in the Policy.</li> <li>○ Priority will be given to clubs which have historically accessed 'home' sporting grounds.</li> <li>○ Open acknowledgement of capital contributions through increased tenure and/ or reduced fees</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Should Council obtain new sporting grounds or upgraded sporting grounds, access to these new facilities will be via an advertised Expression of Interest.</li> <li>• In allocating sporting grounds, Council gives consideration to the user's reliance on Council facilities for the Club's ongoing viability as well as access to alternative facilities.</li> <li>• Traditional summer sports will be given priority in summer and traditional winter sports will be given priority in winter.</li> <li>• Priority will be given to those clubs who are playing in competitions during the season above those clubs training for the following season.</li> </ul>
<p>Harmonisation of fees and charges</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are different fees and charges currently applied in the areas of the former Ashfield, Leichhardt and Marrickville Councils.</li> <li>• Council will seek to harmonise these fees and charges, such that the same fee is charged across the Inner West. It is noted that there is no intention that the fees and charges will be at commercial rates. They will remain subsidised.</li> <li>• It is noted that the harmonisation of fees and charges may need to be introduced in increments over a number of years.</li> <li>• There will be a further engagement process around the harmonisation of fees and charges.</li> </ul>
<p>Sporting grounds managed to maximise long term usage (minimise over-use)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council will restrict sporting ground use in order to maintain safe field conditions and minimise maintenance during and at the end of each season.</li> <li>• Council determines if the facility is appropriate and safe for the proposed use, including sporting grounds, training areas and other facilities.</li> <li>• Council staff will determine when sporting grounds must be closed for wet weather.</li> <li>• Clubs are encouraged to rotate their training/ drill areas within the sporting grounds to reduce wear and tear, e.g. By moving goal mouths. Council staff can work with the clubs on potential options to facilitate this.</li> <li>• The sporting grounds will be closed for a minimum of one week between seasons. This is dependent on maintenance and works to be done. Clubs will be made aware of the closure dates before the season commences.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sporting grounds will be closed on one day per week. Mondays are recommended.</li> <li>• Council expects the sporting clubs to respect the allocations process. Clubs must not utilise the grounds if they do not have an approved allocation. Clubs must act in accordance with the Principles of the Policy. Repeated breaches may make the Club ineligible for future allocations and/ or subject to fines.</li> </ul>
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## Application Process

To help ensure that the principles above are met, there must be a clear and consistent application process for the sporting clubs.

At the moment, Summer applications are due to Council in July. Winter applications are due to Council in January. Council then has a month to review and issue allocations. Some Clubs have expressed that they would prefer that the allocations process occurs earlier for planning purposes.

Currently, sporting clubs make a direct application to Council. Consideration could be given to involving the relevant sporting Associations in the application process. For example, they could be required to counter-sign or approve the Club applications.

## Allocation Determination

At the moment, Council staff determine the sporting ground allocations. It is proposed that this will be in accordance with the new Policy to be adopted. However, this could potentially be managed differently.

For example, an Allocation Committee could be established. Committee membership would include sporting club representatives. To ensure equity, Committee membership would need to represent the different sporting codes. The Committee may also include nominated Councillors. Should this be the preferred option, a Terms of Reference would need to be developed for the Committee. Staff could make recommendations to the Allocation Committee, who would make the final determination on Allocations.

The positive attribute of an Allocation Committee means that the determination is made by a group of people with different perspectives. The negative attribute is that there may be perceptions of bias by some representatives who represent particular sporting codes. Further, this would be additional work for clubs that are run by volunteers.

Another option would be to allocate a total number of hours at various sporting grounds to a particular sporting code and then allow the relevant Association to determine the total number of hours and locations allocated to each Club.

The positive attribute of this is that this would allow the Associations to best allocate the grounds to suit the draw. The negative attribute is that the Associations may not wish to play this role and it may slow down the decision making process. Clubs will lose the capacity to organise their own training schedules. Some Associations are not local to the LGA.

Another option would be to have all Allocations formally determined by Council. Staff could make recommendations to Council, which would make the final determination.

The positive attribute of the decisions being made by Council is that this is an open and democratic process, with the decision made by democratically elected Councillors. The negative attribute of the decisions being made by Council is that it may slow down the decision making process. It also makes it more difficult to make adjustments to the allocations, if needed.

## **Areas for Discussion**

This section raises questions on Sporting Grounds Allocations in the Inner West. We encourage sporting clubs to provide us with their views on how we can manage the challenging issue of sporting ground allocations. These are questions which Council would like your feedback on, but these questions are suggestions only.

Questions for consideration:

1. Do you agree with the Principles outlined in this Discussion Paper?
2. How well do the proposed Principles balance the needs of different sporting clubs in accessing the sporting grounds?
3. Are there any additional Principles which need to be considered in developing the Policy?
4. What specific issues do you expect to be addressed in the Policy?
5. How could the proposed Policy be made easier to understand?
6. Where there are repeated breaches of the Allocations Policy, and Clubs have been provided with suitable warnings, what would be an appropriate penalty (eg. monetary, loss of future seasonal allocations)?
7. What is the preferred night of the week for the rest day/ night for the sporting grounds (eg. Monday)?
8. How many weeks/ months in advance of the relevant upcoming season should the allocations process occur?
9. Should the relevant sporting Association be involved in the application process (eg. counter-sign or approve the Club applications)?
10. Should staff continue to determine sporting ground allocations or should this be managed differently (eg. through an Allocations Committee, by determination of the Association or by recommendation to Council)?

## Where to From Here?

The following diagram illustrates the process to develop the Sporting Grounds Allocation Policy.



## Comments and Feedback

Council welcomes your comments and feedback on the Sporting Grounds Allocation Policy Discussion Paper, particularly addressing the questions above.

Please address your comments to the Parks Planning & Engagement Team:  
**[parks@innerwest.nsw.gov.au](mailto:parks@innerwest.nsw.gov.au)**

Please provide your comments by **25 June 2018**.