



# MEETING THE FUTURE NEEDS OF FOOTBALL IN NSW: A PARTNERSHIP APPROACH

A REPORT TO THE NSW GOVERNMENT OUTLINING A  
FACILITIES INFRASTRUCTURE SOLUTION FOR FOOTBALL





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# 1. Introduction

FOOTBALL IS THE  
MOST POPULAR  
SPORT IN NSW  
WITH 765,000  
PARTICIPANTS,  
AND A REGISTERED  
PLAYER BASE 22%  
LARGER THAN ALL  
OTHER FOOTBALL  
CODES COMBINED

It's a sport for all ages, with 21% of children aged 5-14 playing football in NSW, a greater number than the other winter outdoor sports combined, eg AFL, rugby league, rugby union, netball and hockey. Almost one-quarter of registered players, some 64,000, are female.

Football faces real challenges at all levels of the game to access enough facilities of the right quality to play, especially in regional areas. The football community is reliant on facilities that are largely provided by Local Councils, who own, maintain and develop sites and their facilities. Many of these are over-used, in poor condition and demand often outstrips supply. Significant investment is required to improve the quality and quantity of facilities to maintain current playing numbers, and this situation will worsen as the population continues to grow.

Facilities not only enable growth in the game, they also enable broader community development. Ensuring communities have adequate spaces where people can actively and safely engage in sport and recreation can provide improved social, health, educational and cultural outcomes for all.

Investment in football facilities infrastructure is vital to ensure these benefits continue, and help the State Government achieve a number of its goals as outlined in the ten year plan 'NSW 2021'. This report identifies the areas where facilities are lacking, where on a regional level the population isn't being serviced, and proposes a wish list of facilities infrastructure needs to assist the NSW Government in its long-term planning and investment program through the Rebuilding NSW plan.

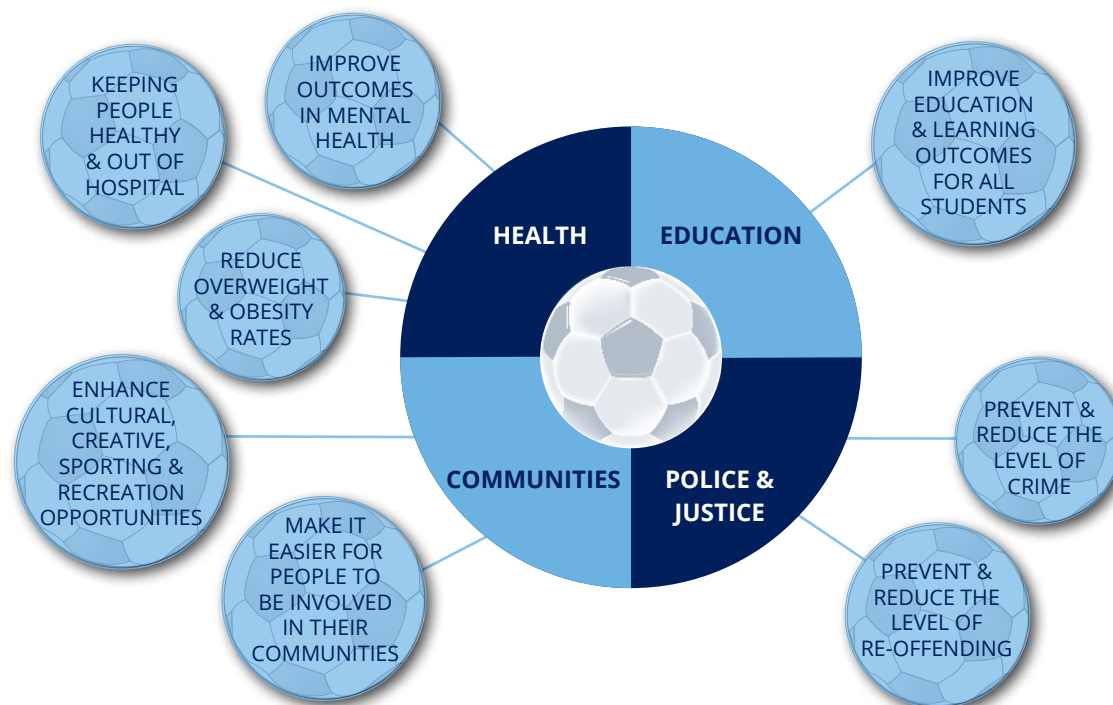


## 2. NSW 2021



'NSW 2021: A plan to make NSW number one' is the state government's 10-year plan to rebuild the economy, provide quality services, renovate infrastructure and strengthen the local environment and communities.

NSW 2021 is a plan for change with 32 goals and 180 targets, and the government is working with community and business to respond to the challenges and opportunities faced, and to achieve the goals that have been set. The plan will provide Football with the opportunity to align its activities with those of the State Government, assisting in the meeting of goals in a number of key areas.



FOOTBALL'S APPEAL AS THE MOST POPULAR SPORT IN NSW MAKES IT A VEHICLE TO SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT OF HEALTHY AND INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES, PROVIDING IMPROVED SOCIAL, HEALTH, EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL OUTCOMES FOR ALL.



## REBUILD THE ECONOMY

1. Improve the performance of the NSW economy
2. Rebuild State finances
3. Drive economic growth in regional NSW
4. Increase the competitiveness of doing business in NSW
5. Place downward pressure on the cost of living
6. Strengthen the NSW skill base

## RETURN QUALITY SERVICES

### TRANSPORT

7. Reduce travel times
8. Grow patronage on public transport by making it a more attractive choice
9. Improve customer experience with transport services
10. Improve road safety

### HEALTH

11. Keep people healthy and out of hospital
12. Provide world class clinical services with timely access and effective infrastructure

### FAMILY & COMMUNITY SERVICES

13. Better protect the most vulnerable members of our community and break the cycle of disadvantage
14. Increase opportunities for people with a disability by providing supports that meet their individual needs and realise their potential

### EDUCATION

15. Improve education and learning outcomes for all students

### POLICE & JUSTICE

16. Prevent and reduce the level of crime
17. Prevent and reduce the level of re-offending
18. Improve community confidence in the justice system

## RENOVATE INFRASTRUCTURE

19. Invest in critical infrastructure
20. Build liveable centres
21. Secure potable water supplies

## STRENGTHEN OUR LOCAL ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITIES

22. Protect our natural environment
23. Increase opportunities for people to look after their own neighbourhoods and environments
24. Make it easier for people to be involved in their communities
25. Increase opportunities for seniors in NSW to fully participate in community life
26. Fostering opportunity and partnership with Aboriginal people
27. Enhance cultural, creative, sporting and recreation opportunities
28. Ensure NSW is ready to deal with major emergencies and natural disasters

## RESTORE ACCOUNTABILITY TO GOVERNMENT

29. Restore confidence and integrity in the planning system
30. Restore trust in State and Local Government as a service provider
31. Improve government transparency by increasing access to government information
32. Involve the community in decision making on government policy, services and projects



### 3. Importance of Football

'THE WORLD GAME' OF FOOTBALL IS AUSTRALIA'S MOST POPULAR SPORT WITH 1.96 MILLION PARTICIPANTS ACROSS THE NATION

NSW is the biggest state, containing some 765,000, or 39% of the total. There are more than 291,000 registered players in NSW, and one in every 25 residents a registered player. Football is by far the most popular sport in the State, with 22% more players across the state than the other NSW football codes of rugby league, rugby union and AFL combined.



#### NSW PLAYER STATS COMPARED

##### Registered Outdoor Players 255,717

- AFL NSW 72,960
- Rugby League 96,041
- Rugby Union 42,000
- Cricket NSW 108,000
- Netball NSW 112,401
- Tennis NSW 41,405

FNSW has **22%** more players across the state than other NSW football codes **combined**



# 3.1 Season Participation Highlights



FOOTBALL IS A  
GAME FOR ALL  
AGES, FROM  
UNDER 6s  
TO OVER 45s,  
WITH 58% OF  
PLAYERS AGED  
5-14, AND 31%  
PLAYING 'ALL  
AGE' SENIOR  
FOOTBALL.

Female participants represent 22% of the 291,000 registered players.

In NSW 21% of all children aged 5-14 play football, a greater number than the other winter outdoor sports combined eg AFL, rugby league, rugby union, netball and hockey.



39% PLAY MODIFIED OR 'SMALL SIDED' GAMES





Football is played by young and old, the whole year round. From MiniRoos for U6s to eleven-a-side for adults on full size pitches, to indoor Futsal and Summer football. It's a game the whole family can play 12 months a year.

The reach of football extends into the broader community, with a number of programs in the State aimed at encouraging participation and inclusiveness for all.

Football4All develops special needs football programs offering skills, drills, activities and modified games designed especially for players with a disability, and creates a support network for volunteers, coaches, parents and players involved in special needs football.



The Indigenous Football Development Program aims to provide increased football resources, reduce the barriers and increase participation opportunities in the local community. The recent successful Nations of Origin tournament helps promote reconciliation within communities by engaging Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and people of non-Aboriginal decent.

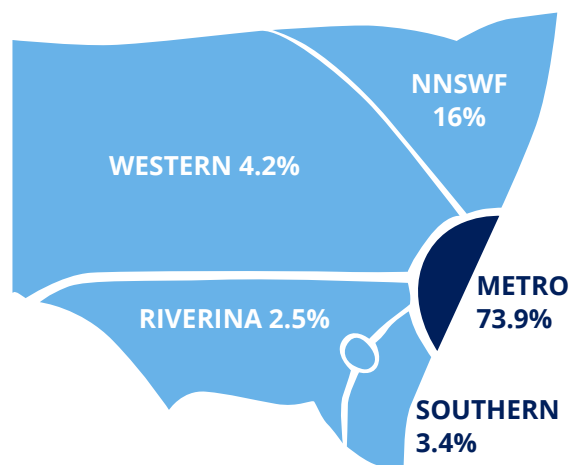
The importance of football can be seen in the many benefits it offers to:

- Develop education, skills and values that build personal, social and leadership capability that can lead to reduced crime, health, safety, education and social risks.
- Promote healthy and active lifestyles through regular physical activity reducing health risks to individuals. Football can play a big part in reducing overweight and obesity rates in children and adults.
- Promote inclusivity and grow communities to foster community based mentoring reducing cultural, gender and socio-economic barriers.



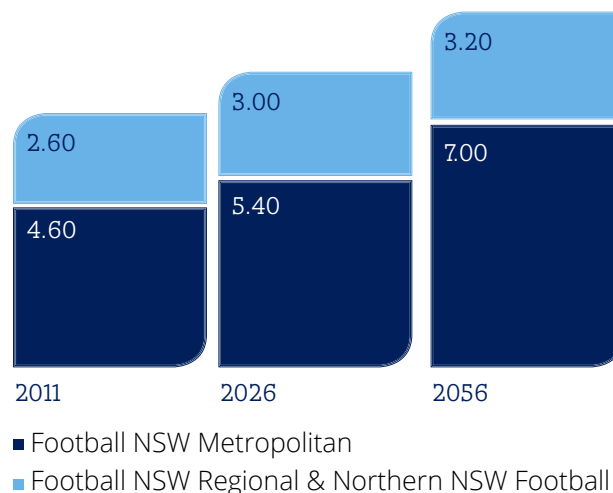
## 3.2 Population Growth and the Facilities Gap

The population of NSW is 7.2 million. By 2056 it is estimated that it will grow to 10.2 million. The Greater Sydney region alone comprises 64% of the population and will account for the majority of future growth, seeing it almost double from 4.6 million to 7 million.



In NSW, there is state average of one pitch per 3,545 head of population and 125 players per pitch. There are significant local variations to these ratios, but they provide the current Statewide benchmark.

**Population Growth - NSW (Millions)**



The following extrapolation provides an indication as to the extent of new pitches required and the associated facilities needed to meet this demand:

- NSW Population currently 7.2 million
- Estimated 8.4 million by 2026 (17% increase in 12 years) or the equivalent of 339 new pitches will be required (equating to 28 new pitches per year)
- Estimated 10.2 million by 2056 (42% increase in 42 years) or the equivalent of 846 new pitches will be required (equating to 20 new pitches per year)



BY 2056 IT IS ESTIMATED THE POPULATION OF NSW WILL BE 10.2 MILLION



## 3.3 Current State of Facilities

Across the associations, zones and clubs in NSW, there are 917 sites at which football is played that include 2,031 pitches, the vast majority of which are natural turf. These facilities are largely provided by local Councils, who own, maintain and develop sites and their amenities.

The facility challenges faced by rural, regional and metropolitan associations, zones and clubs are varied and unique. Some are in high growth areas that provide open space for new facilities. Some are within highly urbanised areas that have limited free space. Some are running at full capacity of their facilities and are turning players away, whilst others have capacity to meet demand but need to renovate and redevelop facilities that have reached the practical end of their life.

Facilities are recognised as a key factor in keeping and attracting players by providing spaces that not only enable play, but also inspire people to play. Current trends in relation to facilities go some way to highlight the urgent support required to continue to provide for the people of NSW.

### CURRENT STATUS



#### TYPE

- 99% of pitches are natural turf
- 30 artificial pitches existing/near completion

#### QUANTITY

- 917 sites
- 2031 pitches

#### CONDITION

- 39% good
- 52% fair
- 9% poor

### SITE CHARACTERISTICS



#### KEY ISSUES

- 38% have drainage issues
- 34% have no irrigation
- 54% are not fenced
- 96% have no undercover seats
- 34% have no change rooms
- 17% have inadequate change rooms
- 43% have no female/unisex change rooms

### EXCLUSIVE USE OF PITCHES



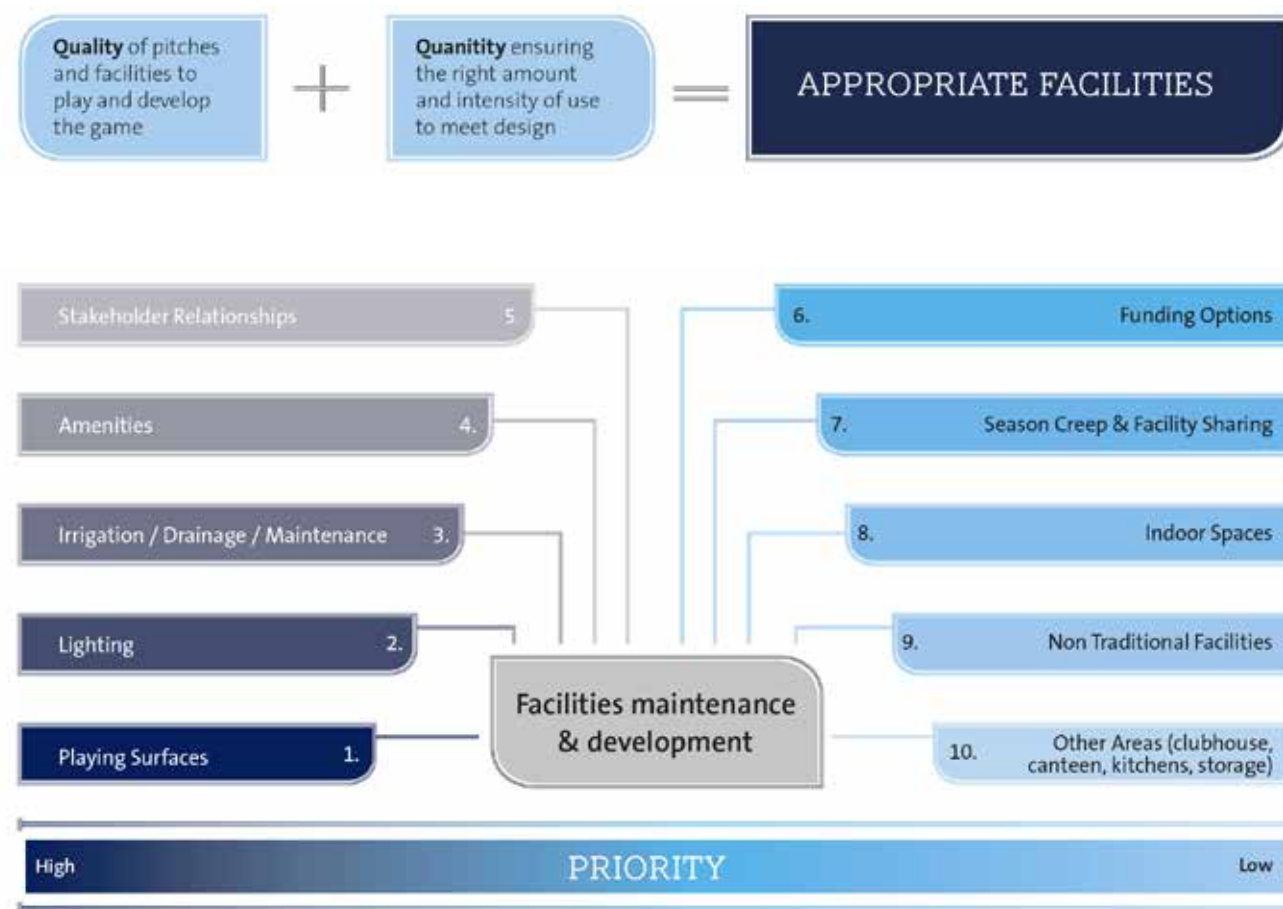
- 25% are not shared with other sports
- 67% shared with a summer sport
- 25% are shared with a winter sport



Membership surveys have highlighted the challenges currently related to facilities, and the major needs of participants include:

- Well maintained grass turf grounds
- Floodlighting that can allow night games and extensive training
- Synthetic grass options for inclement weather and to increase playing hours
- Toilets that are easily accessible
- Changing facilities that cater for men and women

By meeting these needs, and providing more 'Appropriate Facilities', participants will be able to play football more consistently throughout the year in safe and inviting settings, hopefully leading to long-term engagement with the sport, and the associated health benefits.

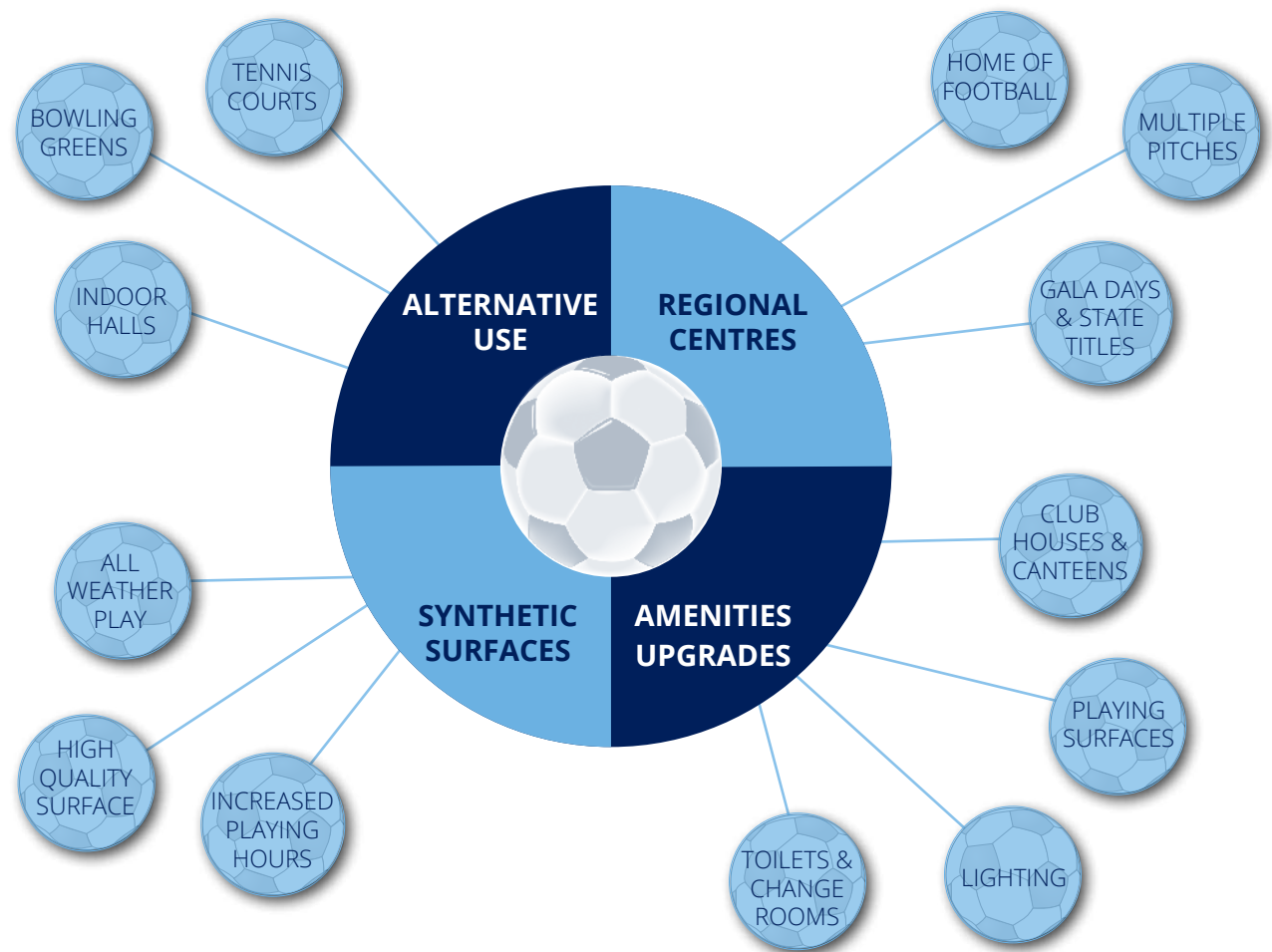




# 4. Facilities Investment

To ensure that the game's future facilities needs are met, and there is continued participation growth in football and long-term engagement, we propose the development of facilities infrastructure in four key areas.

1. REGIONAL CENTRES
2. AMENITIES UPGRADES
3. SYNTHETIC SURFACES
4. ALTERNATIVE USE



## 4.1 Regional Centres

The development of regional centres for football associations and zones will provide improved home grounds for these organisations, and a focal point for the sport in the area. They will normally comprise a complex containing several good quality pitches, quality lighting suitable for night-time competition and training, amenity blocks, a club house, access to PA systems, canteen and good quality grass or synthetic surfaces. They might also contain covered areas for spectators.

The development of these facilities enables the regional association or zone to host state titles, large gala days, talent training camps, and regional finals days. They would also be regularly used by local clubs, and located centrally to local schools and can be easily accessed.



**Glen Willow Stadium, Mudgee**



## 4.2 Amenities Upgrades

The upgrading of amenities at existing venues can cover a number of different projects, but all can result in a significant improvement of facilities and increased participation rates and enjoyment by all sectors of the community.

### Playing surfaces

The quality and durability of a pitch's playing surface is key to the enjoyment of the game. Over-use, poor drainage or inadequate irrigation can increase susceptibility to damage affecting the quality of a natural turf pitch, leading to its closure during poor weather, or its wearing out before

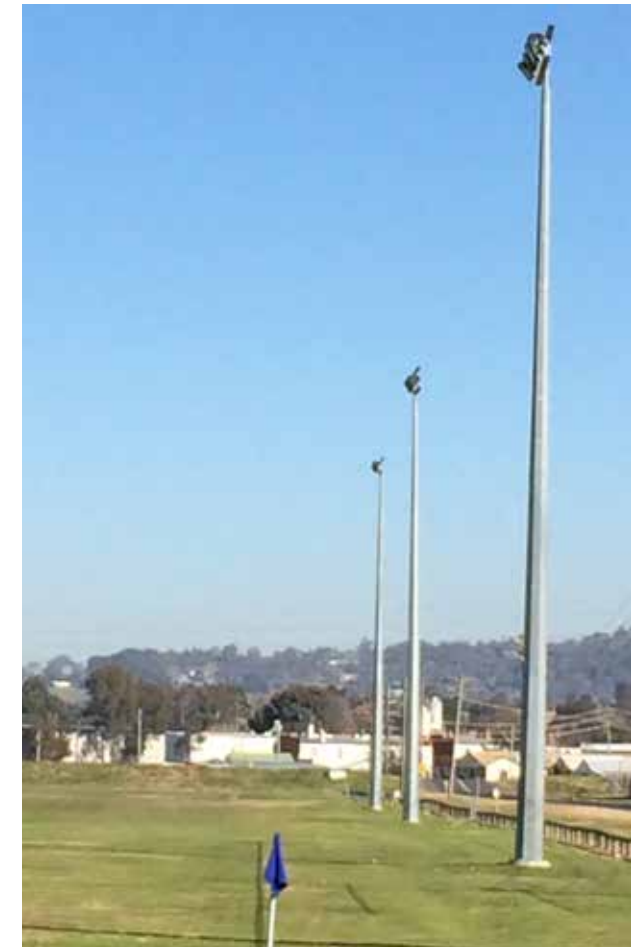


the end of the season. Improvements such as the installation of drainage or irrigation systems can dramatically improve the quality of a grass football pitch, leading to a better playing experience for players and referees, and for a relatively small investment.

### Lighting

Lights are a very important element of a football facility, and a simple but effective way to improve the quality of a large number of facilities. As a predominantly winter sport, football matches are generally played on the weekends during daylight, but training has to take place on weekday nights when there's no daylight saving and it's dark.

Lights enable a ground to be used for training, and all teams from junior to senior can train two or three times a week in safety. The lighting of training-specific pitches and areas also allows for the preservation of main playing pitches, and prevents their deterioration. The upgrading of existing lights can also have huge benefits, eg allowing matches to be played at night, and easing scheduling difficulties on over-subscribed pitches.





## Change rooms and toilets

A seemingly fundamental requirement for any football facility, yet 34% of existing football grounds do not have change rooms; of grounds that do have change rooms, 17% are considered inadequate; and 43% of existing football grounds do not have unisex or women's change room facilities.

It is a basic health requirement to provide suitable toilets (male, female and disabled) at a public gathering place such as a football ground, but often these facilities are totally inadequate for the number of players, referees, coaches, officials and fans who regularly attend matches at the weekend.

Adding and upgrading change rooms and toilets, particularly to accommodate the growing popularity of women's football and the legislative requirements to provide accessible facilities, is a focus for facilities infrastructure development.

## Clubhouses and canteens

Clubhouses and canteens are basic elements of a football club, yet a key to fostering a sense of community among participants. They provide the infrastructure to store equipment, serve food and beverages, conduct administration and provide a home for the club where memorabilia and awards can be displayed, and club members can meet and be social.

For many clubs, canteen takings represent a most significant part of their annual income, and can be crucial to their survival. The availability of food and drink to players, officials and fans on matchdays, also greatly improves the football experience and is an added benefit to the community.

In essence a football club cannot really be a club until it has a clubhouse and this is an important quality measure of football facilities. More sophisticated clubs have bars and restaurants, but generally for grassroots football as simple structure is all that is required.





## 4.3 Synthetic Surfaces

### A SYNTHETIC SURFACE CAN BE PLAYED ON INTENSIVELY AND EXTENSIVELY THROUGHOUT ALL WEATHER CONDITIONS

This can significantly increase the number of active people within a community. This supports the achievement of improved social, health, environmental and economic benefits for the community.

The installation of a synthetic surface at a football facility can have wide-ranging benefits, including the provision of:

- High quality and consistent surfaces to support skills development and play
- Improved participants' physical health and conditioning as they can play more often on a safer surface
- A more tolerant surface to adverse weather conditions that requires little or no irrigation and can be used as a water catchment facility to aid irrigation
- Over a 10 year period, it's estimated a synthetic pitch can be 56% more cost efficient per hour of use than a natural grass surface due its utilisation capability

- Lower comparative maintenance requirements which can reduce ownership costs
- Increased intensity of use by up to three times that of natural turf supporting increased participation rates and revenue opportunities
- Increased intensity of use can also support use by other sports on the same pitch, improving amenity for the wider sporting community.





## 4.4 Alternative Use

The development of alternative sites for use by football can help meet the growing demand for the sport, and increase participation rates. Indoor halls, tennis courts, bowling greens and other open spaces can be suitable for training for 11-a-side football, or training and competition for small-sided, futsal or 6-a-side.

The conversion of an alternative site to a synthetic surface can also improve amenities for the whole community, with numerous sports able to play and train on the same venue. School playing fields are also a potential shared-use facility with football.



**Willis Park Recreation Centre, Castle Cove**



## 5. Funding Partnerships

Funding of facilities infrastructure projects has to come from the development of a number of partnerships with key stakeholders in the game. Some football associations and zones have built development funds through contributions from their members, and this is a model being investigated by football's governing bodies across their entire membership to help fund facility projects for the benefit of all.

The involvement of government at Federal, State and Local levels is critical to the development of football facilities in the State, and the importance of existing funding from the NSW Government in the form of the Participation and Facility Program, Community Building Partnership and ClubGrants scheme cannot be over-stated.

The news that the NSW Government has increased its commitment to the Sports and Cultural Infrastructure Fund to at least \$1.2 billion is hugely significant for football in the State. While it is understood some \$600 million of that amount would be spent on three major stadia in Sydney, there are over 900 football venues in the State, and a majority are in need of re-development or

refurbishment. The investment of relatively modest amounts in these facilities would significantly improve the experience for players, referees, coaches and spectators alike, and provide far-ranging positive outcomes for whole communities. By keeping the grassroots healthy, the benefits can transcend football.

Football NSW and Northern NSW Football have conducted an extensive audit of these facilities, in conjunction with their Associations, Zones and Clubs, and have identified the following projects as priorities. We present these grouped by State Electoral District, and look forward to discussing these projects with the Government in due course.







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