

Leisure on the Fringe

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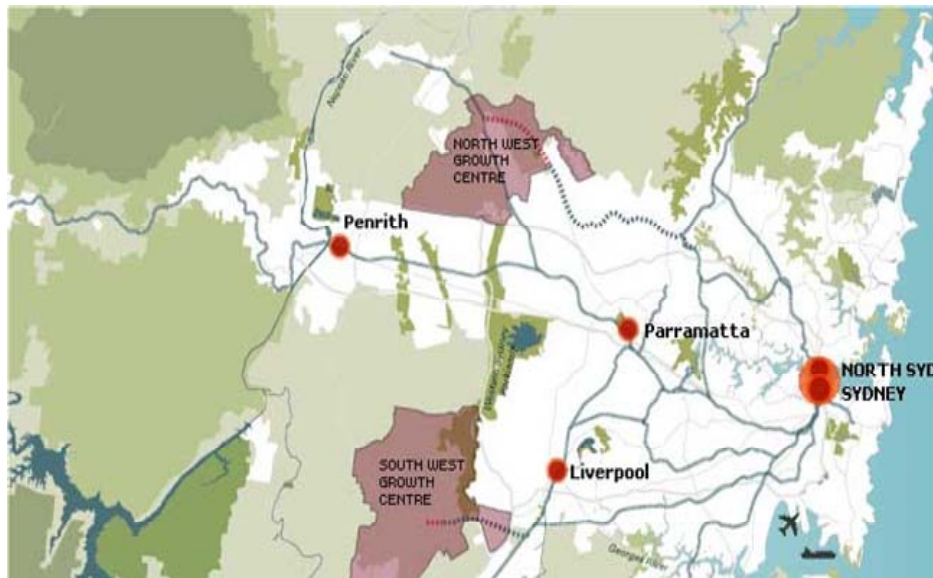
Abstract: In 2006 the NSW Government announced plans outlining the future of land releases in the North West and South West Growth Centres of Sydney. The Growth Centres under the management of the Growth Centres Commission (GCC) is projected to provide a total of 180,000 homes over the next 30 years. As a result, Western Sydney's population is projected to grow by an approximately 450,000-500,000 people. The land designated to accommodate this growth has its own microclimate, has conservation areas of high ecological value, cultural landscapes which provide visual separation between urban areas, heritage properties and riparian corridors. These natural constraints combined with pressures on developers to achieve dwelling yield (12dwellings/hectacre) and employment yield (20jobs/hectacre) mean that allocating land for leisure and recreation purposes is seen as a luxury. Yet for residents open space, sport and recreation facilities underpin their quality of life and are core elements of liveability.

This paper highlights the need for vertical and horizontal governance and coordination between state and local government bodies, across the whole Growth Centre to transcend local government boundaries and politics. There is a need to plan strategically for open space and recreation and not rely on incremental planning on a release area basis which has been the norm for most of Western Sydney.

1. Introduction and Context

In 2006 the NSW Government announced plans outlining the future of land releases in the North West and South West Growth Centres of Sydney. The Growth Centres under the management of the Growth Centres Commission is projected to provide a total of 180,000 homes over the next 30 years, characterised by staged delivery of infrastructure co-ordinated with land releases, and new governance arrangements associated with the establishment of the Growth Centres Commission.

Figure 1 Growth Centres Area



As a result Western Sydney's population is projected to grow by an approximately 450,000-500,000 people. The South West Growth Sector constitutes 17,000Ha of land across Camden, Campbelltown and Liverpool local government areas. It is projected that there will be 18 precincts and up to 115,000 new dwellings. Whilst the Growth Centres Commission has responsibility for managing the development process the local councils are the consent authority. An infrastructure levy across the sector will be

imposed in addition to developer's contribution for infrastructure including open space and community facilities. The relevant local council is responsible for preparing and adopting the s.94 Contributions Plan for the Precinct. The S.94 Plans will be for local infrastructure not provided for by the Growth Centres Infrastructure Plan and the Special Infrastructure Contribution.

1.1 Need for a New Approach to Planning Open Space for New Release Areas

The traditional practice of urban planning, in which a municipal planning department plans for the physical future of the entire jurisdiction, often fails to provide effective planning for the full range of community components that affect families and children at the neighbourhood level. Some common characteristic of this problem is the emphasis by planners on the physical realm of land use and capital improvements, to the secondary consideration of other often non-physical interests affecting quality of life including leisure opportunities and programs. For the purpose of this paper the terms *leisure* and *recreation* may be used interchangeably and encompass the following elements as outlined by Kraus (1971):

"Recreation consists of activities or experiences carried on within leisure, usually chosen voluntarily by the participant either because of satisfaction, pleasure or creative enrichment derived, or because he[she] perceives certain personal or social values to be gained from them. It can also be perceived as the process of participation or as the emotional state derived from involvement"

Green spaces perform an important role in nature conservation and biodiversity. In the early 1990's land use planners designated open space within release areas as 'dual use' where the land for sport and recreation purposes doubled as detention basins for drainage, this was prevalent in Western Sydney as this is where the large land release areas were. Whilst this was viewed as an ideal solution, to optimise land use the reality of this approach is that many of the resultant sports fields have poor drainage, high maintenance costs, are prone to flooding and not fit for purpose and so Council's in Western Sydney are under sustained pressure from the community for more open space, more grounds for training and competition coupled with demand from state and federal government to achieve targets for health and physical activity. The dissatisfaction with open space areas in Western Sydney particularly in Liverpool, Campbelltown, Camden and Blacktown was highlighted in research by PlanningNSW in (2002), as well as discussion documents prepared by Department of Planning for the Metropolitan Strategy (2005) and in the more recent *Standing Committee Inquiry into Sportsground Management in NSW* (2006) report which noted :

"...continuing and future access to sustainable sportsgrounds and open space recreation facilities is under threat in New South Wales. Uncoordinated planning, disparate management practices and a lack of consistent data collection are compounding an already precarious situation and preventing active community sporting participation"... "One of the core issues underpinning the precarious state of sportsgrounds in NSW is the failure to anticipate and plan for changes. Such changes include greater community participation in active recreation, population shifts from rural to urban areas, increased housing density and environmental consequences of increased use of facilities. "

The Committee has concluded that because the current distribution of sportsgrounds in NSW has evolved historically, there is a lack of consistency in the provision of facilities across council areas. This means that planning for open space and recreation in the future requires a more strategic focus than in the past. Incremental planning on a single release area basis leads to a lack of opportunity for training and competition, an inability to accommodate emerging sports and a failure to put into practice Federal and State government campaign strategies to improve general community health and well being.

A range of well designed and managed leisure facilities are fundamental to delivering broader social sustainability objectives for greenfield developments; by providing a focus for community activities, bringing together existing and new populations and providing opportunities for informal social interaction and skill development. Furthermore, these facilities have an important role to play in promoting a healthy lifestyle and aiding the social and cognitive development of young children and teenagers.

1.2 Role of leisure in creating healthy communities

In this Paper the historical link between community health and urban planning is being re-examined. The emergence of the 'New Public Health' paradigm has an ecological focus in that it addresses environmental issues, public policy, individual behaviour, and has an emphasis on holistic health. Recognising that: *"Physical and social planning are unavoidably enmeshed. Environments are typically constructed for social reasons, designs lead to social consequences whether intended or not, and even the humblest construction inevitably acquires a socially ascribed meaning"* (Halpern, 1995, p. 2).

The social model of health focuses on changing the environmental issues that are contributing to ill health, rather than just treating the resulting illness. (Headaches, eye strain, respiratory problems, communicable diseases, depression, stress, anxiety, car accidents and cancers can all be negative outcomes of poor quality urban environments (CDHAC, 1999). Planners and developers have a key role to play in planning and developing environments, which can assist in reducing these lifestyle related illnesses.

Most ill-health and death in Australia is caused by chronic conditions such as cardio-vascular disease, diabetes, cancer, stroke and mental illness. The greatest risk factors for most of these conditions are a lack of physical activity and being overweight. Australia is facing a crisis in the number of people who have sedentary lifestyles and are obese. This is evident by the high rates of childhood obesity, (approximately 20% of the population, which correlates highly with them becoming obese adults). Physical activity is an important preventative strategy for coronary heart disease, stroke, type two diabetes, some cancers and other chronic diseases.

Planning for and providing environments that assist people to be more active in their daily lives can reduce these risk factors. For example providing cycleways, footpaths with regular crossings, street furniture and benches where people can rest, walking/jogging trails suitable for prams and young children, local parks and playgrounds located close to home increases opportunities for incidental physical activity¹.

The health benefits derived from participation in sport and recreation include preventing the development of hypertension, obesity, diabetes and cardiovascular disease later in life. The health benefits of moderate activity are substantiated by well documented research and include:

- We live longer (44% of men who exercise have a lower rate of premature death than other males)²
- We are less in danger from heart disease and stroke (sedentary people can be up to twice as susceptible)³
- We are at significantly reduced risk of bowel cancer and certain other cancers⁴
- We suffer less stress, anxiety and depression (mental health is considered the fastest growing health concern of the western world)⁵
- We have improved chances of combating a wide range of chronic conditions such as diabetes, arthritis, asthma and depression⁶

A critical success factor in increasing physical activity is the motivation of individuals to sustain the activity patterns. Whilst there appears to be a significant growth in the number of recreation and sport facilities developed as part of new housing estates, there needs to be more emphasis placed on the quality of provision and on facilitating access to these facilities to encourage and motivate individuals to achieve health and personal benefits. Many community buildings in new release areas are planned and built

¹ Incidental activity is where being physically active is a secondary reason for undertaking an activity eg walking to the shops

² Blair SN, Kohl HW III, Barlow CE, Paffenbarger RS Jr, Gibbons LW, Macera CA. 1995. Changes in physical fitness and all-cause mortality: a prospective study of healthy and unhealthy men. *Journal of the American Medical Association*. 273:1093-1098.

³ Blair SN, Kohl HW and Gordon NF. 1992. How much physical activity is good for health? *Annual Reviews of Public Health*. 13:99-126.

⁴ Slaterry ML, Potter J, Caan et al. 1997. Energy balance and colon cancer - beyond physical activity. *Cancer Research*. 57(1):75-80. Thune I, Brenn T, Lund E et al. 1997. Physical activity and the risk of breast cancer. *New England Journal of Medicine*.

336(18):1269-1275. Thune I and Lund E. 1997. The influence of physical activity on lung cancer risk: A prospective study of 81,516 men and women. *International Journal of Cancer*. 79(1):57-62.

⁵ Commonwealth Department of Health and Family Services. 1998. Developing an Active Australia: a framework for action for physical activity and health. Canberra ACT

⁶ Slaterry ML. 1996. How much physical activity do we need to maintain health prevent disease? Different diseases - different mechanisms. *Research Quarterly Exercise and Sport*. 67(2):209-212

without any consideration to the financing of its management and on-going operation with the result that community centres are little more than halls for hire. Carers at home with children may not have the confidence or social networks to organise an activity. Centres need to employ staff to organise casual programmes to get people started and facilitate use. The provision of childcare within centres allows carers to use the facilities more regularly. It is these fundamental elements of provision which are being overlooked in Western Sydney.

1.3 Role of leisure in creating socially integrated communities

In addition to the health benefits of leisure participation, research also indicates access to leisure opportunities and community resources act as venues for formal and informal social interaction and participation; encouraging friendship formation, heightening sense of community and increased social sustainability. Social capital has become an overused and frequently misunderstood term although there are variations in the way it is defined, the term generally refers to social structure such as networks, trusts and norms which facilitate cooperation and cohesion in communities and which result in benefits for community members. The provision of recreation programs increases opportunities for existing and new residents to meet as well as bringing people of different age cohorts, ethnic backgrounds and socioeconomic groups together regularly and informally. In addition sport and recreation provides opportunities for skill development and for some young people, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds it may provide the confidence to enable them to assimilate into the community.

Sport has been used very successfully as an instrument for social inclusion in a variety of contexts. It may provide a starting point for young people without formal education to develop leadership skills through coaching. Once basic skills have been developed pathways towards formal qualifications can be forged. For example the project 'Sport and Recreation Pathways for Young People' was developed by the NSW Department of Education and NSW Sport and Recreation Industry Training Advisory Board to target young people in Campbelltown at risk of leaving school early and who are unemployed. The program provided opportunities for disaffected youth to participate in an accredited program in sport and recreation whilst developing literacy and numeracy skills.

Open space areas provide opportunities for young people to gain social independence, experience diversity, and develop responsibilities towards others. Lack of provision means that they gather in inappropriate places and their presence causes mistrust, as a result, often they are designed out of opportunities to make unstructured use of public space in an attempt to manage perceived risks and promote spaces to appropriate niche markets. There needs to be a greater understanding of youth culture and acknowledgement of their need for self expression and inclusion in the planning of new release areas.

1.4 Trends in Leisure

The demand for open space for recreation and sport is very much influenced by the following key factors:

- Trends in participation and facility development: recreation participation is facility led ie provision of locally available facilities increases participation rates;
- Demographics: the highest rate of participation is in the 15-24yrs group;
- Availability of leisure time: time available after family and work commitments;
- Access: which may be physical or social ie transport dependant and/ or having a network to recreate with;
- Affordability: which may be real or perceived based on disposable income;

Overseas and in other states in Australia since the 1980's there has been continued growth in Multi-Leisure Parks (MLPs) - which typically contain commercial or business properties such as fitness centres, electronic games arcades, multi-screen cinemas, bowling centres, ice rinks and restaurants, combined with retail. The MLP's are seen (marketed) as family-orientated with free parking and good public transport an attraction. There's also been an increase in quasi commercial properties with public and private facilities co-locating to provide economies of scale and cross subsidies from public and private leisure elements in the same footprint, for example Fox Studios and Centennial Parklands, traditional swimming pools and fitness centres provided on public grounds; as well as dual use arrangements with schools and local government facilities. Increasingly the grouping of leisure facilities ranging from 2,500sqm to 25,000sqm is becoming the norm. The advantage is that:

- There is a choice of things to do therefore it encourages repeat visits
- Provides synergy between activities and age groups and therefore attracts a wider market of users
- Provides economies of scale resulting in savings in infrastructure costs, management and marketing
- Minimises time spent travelling between venues for users

However the incremental approach to greenfield residential estates in Western Sydney has meant that insufficient land is set aside for these types of development. The weakness in failure to plan is that the economic value of the leisure dollar is lost to these LGA's. The provision of high quality multipurpose leisure facilities attracts a night time economy and increases employment opportunities for young people. Within Western Sydney there is a shortfall in the provisions of specialised facilities that emphasise local skills, these venues are needed to more effectively meet local needs, and establishes the foci for creative industry development. Location of these cultural facilities – studios for arts production, as well as galleries, museums, theatres and libraries needs to be included as an integral part of the planning for the SW Sector.

1.5 Access Considerations

The issue of accessible, reliable and cost-effective transport has been raised in as a barrier to participation in recreation in Western Sydney as it substantially affects the access to services of people on low incomes as well as those with limited personal transport options or who rely on public transport particularly people with a disability and young people.

Access is considered a 'social' and 'physical barrier'. Integration between new residents and established neighbourhoods can sometimes be limited. Newly formed organisations or those representing marginalised groups may have greater difficulty in booking and using new community facilities. This is an important consideration for social sustainability within new communities.

In terms of physical access, many facilities have design features which create structural barriers that prevent participation by people with a disability or limited mobility. With the changing demographics consideration will need to be given to more accessible public domains and facilities beyond As noted in table 1 the LGA's reviewed did not have universal design standards or guidelines. Recreation Needs Assessment studies undertaken by Camden Council and Liverpool Council 2003 note the lack of opportunities for young people especially teenagers.

1.6 Demographic Considerations

Age and stage in the lifecycle also affects participation in recreation and sport. ABS data indicates the most popular sport and physical recreation activities for men and women aged 18yrs and over across Australia. The 2002 survey indicated the activities which attracted the most participants were walking (3.7 million people), swimming (1.6 million), aerobics/fitness (1.6 million) and tennis (1.0 million).

The Exercise Recreation and Sport Survey in NSW 2004 for adults 18yrs and over notes For men, the most popular activities were walking and swimming. For women, walking, swimming and aerobics/fitness were most popular. It is interesting that soccer rates much higher for women than the traditional sport of netball. Stages in the lifecycle also have considerable influences in participation patterns in sport and recreation. Table 1 summarises the typical facilities and opportunities required by different stages in the lifecycle.

Table 1 Generalised Age specific recreation needs

<i>Age Group</i>	<i>Major recreation facility needs</i>
Children 0-5 years	Small safe parks and playgrounds – enclosure, seating, shade, soft surface area and fixed play equipment, within 400 metres walking distance of home, and away from busy roads.
Children 5-9	As above, with greater variety of play equipment for creative and adventure play; plus larger active areas for informal games and adventure areas, spaces for ball games and wheeled activities, and access to parkland areas for passive pursuits;
Adolescents and young people (age group 10-24 years)	Specialist sporting facilities and areas for informal sports, access to parkland areas for passive pursuits, skate parks and rollerblade areas, bicycle tracks, indoor sports facilities;
Younger adults (25-50 years)	Access to natural or parkland areas for passive pursuits, picnicking and barbecues, specialist sporting facilities (especially golf, tennis, swimming), areas for informal sporting activities, walking and cycling tracks, indoor recreation facilities for fitness activities;
Older adults (50+ years)	Access to natural or parkland areas for passive pursuits, sheltered picnic and barbecue areas, safe places to relax, walking tracks, bicycle tracks, some specialist facilities such as bowls, golf.

2.0 Examination of Current Practice

Research undertaken in compiling this paper indicates that the current approach to urban planning for new residential areas accepts the literature that open space and recreation facilities contribute to community wellbeing. However what seems to be lacking is the understanding of how these outcomes can be achieved. There is fragmentation in the planning, delivery and evaluation of recreation and open space. This needs to be addressed in the planning for the SW Growth Sector.

2.1 Insufficient Planning for Open Space

In traditional recreation planning, research undertaken by Local Government identifies the needs of the resident population, which informs the delivery of recreation facilities. In new release areas because of the legislative and funding framework, Contribution Plans⁷ are used to guide the allocation of land use. Developers have an option to pay development levies or deliver the open space and recreation facilities through 'works in kind'. A limiting factor in this process is that the developer wants the new facility to be within the masterplanned estate and the nexus requirement is that the facility serves the incoming population. In Camden, Liverpool and Campbelltown where there has been significant new land release areas each subdivision (when considered) in isolation 'demands' a similar level of provision. Consequently there are a high number of similar standard facilities and pocket parks delivering similar benefits to local residents. What is lacking is the hierarchy of facilities and opportunities for young people who grow out of playgrounds. If Contributions Plans were informed by recreation strategies a hierarchy of facilities could be developed; to serve not just the new residents, but plan for the maturation of communities. Existing areas of open space could be embellished to offer a greater range of opportunities, to increase value from existing land and resources and minimise the duplication of smaller parks and facilities. Land for open space and recreation may not be required within each new release area if existing areas are embellished thereby reducing the development cost for each dwelling.

However the following table illustrates the lack of recreation planning by local governments experiencing urban growth. It seems that Councils are undertaking surveys and researching needs however these studies are not being used to inform Contributions Plans or to rationalise existing areas of open space.

⁷ Required under S94 of the Environment Assessment and Planning Act (1979)

Table 2 Review of Recreation Planning for New Developments in Western Sydney

LGA	Camden	Campbelltown	Liverpool
Recreation Strategy	Recreation Needs Study 2005 undertaken but No Strategy for future provision developed	Draft Recreation Needs Study 2005 did not assess need for indoor sports. No Strategy for future provision developed	Liverpool Council Recreation strategy 2020 completed 2003
Guidelines for Open Space Hierarchy (District, neighbourhood, local, pocket, linear/ drainage reserves and natural areas)	No	No	No
Universal Design (i.e lifespan design or trans- generational design)	No	No	No
Planning for open space in new release areas supported by plans for ongoing management, including cost estimates for management and maintenance.	No	No	No

Source: Research undertaken by Tangent Leisure Consultants 2006-2007

2.2 Reliance on Standards

The Contributions Plans produced by Councils generally rely on planning standards of open space set by (DUAP 1992) at 2.83Ha of open space per thousand residents. The final standard may vary from 2.83Ha-3.5Ha dependant on the availability of existing regional open space. The management of the resultant open space is undertaken by the local government parks department and the evaluation of new community's satisfaction with facilities is undertaken by social planners through the social planning process. As each of these functions are located within different departments there is little integration or feedback on the appropriateness of the provision.

One of the benefits of using standards for government is that they prescribe a level of facilities per head of population for a given area and provide an easy means to calculate land requirements for facilities. They also provide a yardstick against which to measure existing levels of provision and are intended to result in uniformity of provision across an area. Standards or thresholds are used to provide an indication of the potential requirements and when applied flexibly, and as one part of a provision methodology, can be useful in providing an initial assessment of need. However, a purely standards-based approach has significant limitations as they:

- Do not account for more complex indicators of need such as socio-economic status, household structure, and the preferences people have for service usage;
- Take no account for density and layout of development and related accessibility factors such as physical barriers, distance, transport routes and available infrastructure in adjoining areas;
- Fail to account for size and **quality** of facilities and range of services offered by them;
- Do not consider practical funding realities, particularly recurrent funding opportunities and constraints. Service capacity and quality is often more determined by staffing or program funding, rather than the building it operates from;
- Fail to allow for changing community expectations and preferences, shifts in government policy or funding, or changes in technology. Similarly they do not account for changing models of services delivery;
- Do not account for the role of non-government and private sector agencies in the provision of infrastructure. Nor do they account for the opportunities for partnerships and shared use of resources that emerge from integrated planning processes, and
- Standards often reflect current levels of provision rather than ideal levels, and so can perpetuate inadequacies in service provision.

The practice of standards has resulted in minimum embellishment and quality of provision, resulting in parks and playgrounds lacking the amenities and facilities to make the open space areas functional for example without basic amenities: shade, storage, lighting or adequate drainage. This was highlighted in grant applications to the NSW Department of Sport and Recreation by sporting clubs in Camden and Liverpool looking for funding to embellish existing facilities. ⁸Council's reliance on planning standards, are not validated by recent recreation research. This has resulted in the same facilities being advocated for each release area and the overemphasis on traditional male dominated outdoor sports as illustrated in table 4. Based on historical precedence the same facilities would be prescribed by Councils for the SW Sector area.

In planning for the wider release area consideration needs to be given to the development of a hierarchy of facilities some of which will be dedicated to matches and tournaments and therefore have a requirement for spectator requirements especially parking and amenities. Internationally there is a trend towards flexible training areas which do not have full pitches but rather provide an opportunity for small sided games and half court practice areas. This increases the flexibility of use and prevents pitches from being dominated by one sporting code. Consideration should also be given to the development of synthetic turf pitches for training which require less maintenance and water and have a higher capacity for use especially in winter months. These would supplement the traditional turf pitch.

Table 3 standard rates of provision included in Contributions Plans

Local Facility Provision Rate	Camden	Blacktown
Sports ground	1:1,850 persons	Soccer 1:2,500 Cricket 1:4,000
Courts	1:1,075 persons	Tennis 1:3,000 Netball 1:2,500
Athletics Track	1:10,000 persons	NA
Leisure Centre	1:50,000 persons	1:50,000
Children's Playground	1:600 persons	1:223 children (0-9 year olds),

Source: Council Contributions Plans

2.3 Lack of Indoor Recreation Opportunities

Open Space provision in SW Sydney is characterised by local parks and playgrounds within estates and district open space areas catering for structured recreation. These areas have been created by consolidating a number of recreation facilities and playing fields onto one site. The areas are usually between 5 -10 hectares based on the availability of publicly owned flood prone land. Indoor sports teams rely on facilities provided in Campbelltown and Liverpool so youth have to travel out of Camden to access these facilities. The distribution of services across the Camden LGA is very scattered, and this, together with the poor levels of public transport in the area, creates access difficulties, particularly for older people and young people. Access to many services is generally determined by private vehicle ownership, as a result people who do not have access to personal transport are disadvantaged. Service development has not kept pace with rapid population growth and most types of services are overstretched. There is a need for more diverse leisure and recreation opportunities located near public transport links.

Historically Councils have provided traditional rugby, cricket and soccer grounds and not levied developer contributions for indoor recreation facilities. Indoor recreation facilities traditionally service more female oriented activities these include: the Arts, gymnastics, dance, fitness classes, as well as informal recreation activities such as music, craft and classes. They also accommodate emerging sports basketball, volleyball, futsal, martial arts. Therefore by prescribing the range of outdoor activities to be

⁸ personal correspondence with grants officer NSW Dept of Sport and Recreation

provided, Councils are being somewhat discriminatory and the result is inequitable to females by restricting their capacity to participate.

The community centres provided as part of the new release areas tend to be inflexible in their design offering only a series of office spaces. Developers interviewed noted that there is surprisingly little input into the design or project planning for community facilities by Councils. With more flexibility in the design of facilities such as movable /concertina walls or larger flexible spaces, which are suitable for large gatherings as well being able to be subdivided for smaller groups. Higher ceilings in the meeting rooms could mean that the community centre could offer dance classes, gymnastic, martial arts, indoor bowls or exercise classes. Clearer design guidelines at the planning stage could enable a much wider range of community activities and events to be accommodated.

The stand-alone community centre cited in Contributions Plans is no longer sustainable because of high land costs, fragmented service delivery and duplicate operational costs. Greater efficiencies and more integrated service outcomes can be gained through joint use and co-location of community centres with complementary facilities. These complementary facilities include children's and family services, community meeting space, offices for community-based organisations, cultural facilities, sports centres, libraries and schools.

In relation to the supply of indoor facilities research for this paper concurs with existing studies undertaken in Western Sydney that:

- There are no major arenas for large entertainment and sports events in South Western Sydney;
- Many potential participants in indoor sport in Camden, Campbelltown and Liverpool do not have the resources (time, car and/or money) to travel outside the LGA to use facilities;
- On a national benchmark basis, Western Sydney has a very low supply of indoor recreation facilities. While the per capita provision has improved significantly over the past 12 years, the regional supply is still low on a 'comparative' and 'industry benchmark' basis;
- Many regional centres in Australia have a two to three times greater provision of indoor sports facilities than Western Sydney;
- The low provision of indoor sports facilities is reflected in the low participation, in indoor sports – including Basketball, volleyball.
- There are no large performance/entertainment venues in Sydney's West (the largest being the Hills Centre with a 1,500 seat capacity);
- The closest purpose built performance facilities are in the City (Sydney Entertainment Centre and Hordern Pavilion) and Wollongong which creates time, cost and public transport constraints.
- The major facilities at Homebush Bay are not – because of their isolated location, design and presentation – well suited to the hosting of smaller scale community cultural activities;
- Many regions in Australia with much smaller populations than Western Sydney have major indoor stadiums (suitable for entertainment, sport and community functions) with seating capacity of 5,000+.
- Continued growth and diversity of the population of SW Sydney creates a need for additional facilities and a need for a broader range of facilities.

2.4 Design of Playgrounds and Local Parks

A common concern across new release areas, which was evident in community feedback, is the poor quality of the open space that is provided. The historical dual use of drainage and open space has resulted in Council's having to duplicate parks in land not prone to flooding, as the quality of the playing surfaces is not suitable for competitive sport. Many of the playing fields do not have the basic facilities to make parks functional for example, toilets and change rooms, lack of storage means that it is not feasible for teams to transport equipment every week, lack of amenity buildings render parks unusable for sporting competitions. Playgrounds offer only basic fixed equipment for 0-6yr olds many are without shade and with no nowhere for carers to sit these factors reduce the number of users. There is an insufficient provision of adventure playareas, skate parks and BMX cycle tracks for older children who seek independence but need supervision. In addition the poor distribution of open space throughout older new release areas, and a lack of consistency in the application of planning and design principles has rendered many of the parks under utilised and subject to vandalism. Without access to adequate local parks children have nowhere to play, carers are isolated in their homes and the health and social benefits, which may be derived, are lost.

2.5 Use of Developers Agreements

There has been an increased in the provision of recreation facilities through 'works in kind' provision particularly outdoor swimming/plunge pools and tennis courts by developers in lieu of Section 94 funds (Developers Levies). These facilities have been used to promote the sale of houses without consideration of the ongoing management and maintenance of the facilities. The high quality of landscaping has also been an area of concern as Councils find that the landscaping is not sustainable or appropriate for the location, as it requires high maintenance and is too expensive for them to maintain; it is not uncommon for plants to be removed or the quality of the landscaping has deteriorated. Camden Council Officers stated that there might be some reluctance from Council to engage in further Developer Agreements for 'works in kind'. However, it was also suggested that Council might be willing to consider "tighter" agreements that are based on mutually agreed facilities that include specifications. There appears to be reluctance on behalf of council officers to be more proactive in determining expected outcomes.

2.6 Community Title

There is an increasing trend towards the use of Community Title for the management of open space and community facilities within new release areas. This gives residents access to a higher standard of facilities than conventionally provided by local authorities. Owners are actively involved in the management of community property ensuring community resources are maintained and managed at levels acceptable to the community; levies ensures an on-going stream of funding for maintenance of facilities.

Some disadvantages include the cost of providing and maintaining communal property is borne by residents, in the form of annual levies. Residents pay considerable fees to access to services and facilities. This has implications for the affordability of the estate.

Communal assets are in effect private property, owned and controlled by residents as a group, who pay for the privilege. Access to communal assets is commonly restricted to residents and their guests, or allowed on a public basis only to a limited range of facilities. Residents usually do not want to share with the public access to facilities for which they have paid and they have to manage, maintain and insure in terms of public liability. For instance, public access to roads running through the development may be permitted, but access to swimming pools and tennis courts will be restricted to residents only.

There is a need to achieve balance between the entitlements of residents within Community Title developments and the interests of the broader community in terms of equity and public access to resources. Associated with their restricted access to community property, community title developments carry a perception of exclusivity and segregation, even when they are not gated communities. This is not conducive to integrating communities and the development of cohesive, inclusive communities.

3.0 Conclusion

To date, a narrow interpretation of leisure behaviour has resulted in the development of only conventional resources to support stereotypical recreation and sporting activities within new release areas in Western Sydney. There is an opportunity to expand the inclusions within new community facilities to incorporate cultural and arts activities and a need to emphasis the importance of proactive programming to facilitate access to activities and programmes that offer a variety of leisure behaviours.

The cross boundary nature of the SW Sector provides an opportunity for a more strategic approach to planning sport, arts and recreation for the future in Western Sydney. An inter- governmental forum could allow discussion of cross boundary issues and guide regional level planning. The forum could also be used to develop agreements between councils for shared funding and provision of facilities. For example if a regional Art and Recreation facility is to be developed at Leppington (the proposed regional centre for SW Sydney) the adjoining councils Campbelltown and Liverpool should be involved.

There is a need for an integrated Regional Strategic Plan to satisfy the demand for open space, recreation and the arts for the total SW Growth Sector. This process would guide future planning and management. To be effective the process would need to be undertaken in conjunction with other key stakeholders including:

- Camden, Campbelltown, Liverpool and the Wollondilly Shire LGA's
- The Department of Planning
- Department of Conservation,
- Sydney Water,
- State Sports Organisations,
- Arts and Cultural Groups
- Regional Organisation of Councils,
- NSW Department of Arts, Sport and Recreation
- The landowners including Hawkesbury Nepean Catchment Management Trust and
- Schools and Further Education Institutions
- Department of Transport and Regions (DOTAR)
- Premiers Department
- Growth Centres Commission

The development of the Strategy would include an audit of existing parks, sportsgrounds and facilities within Camden, Campbelltown and Liverpool LGA's to determine opportunities within existing areas which may be upgraded and augmented for future arts and recreation opportunities. This analysis of supply should be matched with data on current usage levels, projected population growth of LGA's inside and outside the SW Sector to determine long term demand for facilities, taking into account the growth in population and the trends in participation. The Regional Strategic Plan would ensure an adequate supply of active and passive open space for the region and to reduce degradation of the existing natural setting. It would create a hierarchy of facilities which provides more effective use of resources focus.

Without a strategic approach to the SW Sector growth an incremental approach based on individual developments will result in duplication of smaller facilities and parks which provide limited social, economic or environmental benefit. The provision of facilities or open space alone does not achieve social benefits. They serve a limited function unless access to them is facilitated. Many of the community centres do not have any programming or management; they operate under a caretaker arrangement where users have go to Council offices to pick up keys, often the centres are empty during the day. Many of the recreation opportunities within new release areas are developed using a standards based approach. There is no evaluation of whether resources are being used or are serving any community function once constructed.

The variety of experience being sought by individuals is not understood, with the result that spaces do not respond to user needs or aspirations. Crane and Dee (2001) suggest *'authorities have commonly sought to 'design out' many opportunities for young people to make unstructured use of public space in an attempt to manage perceived risks, control crime and promote spaces to appropriate niche markets'*. In this sense, the management of image through the development of highly sanitised, extensively regulated spaces, can prove to be a barrier for people to the benefits associated with public open space and the ability of the spaces to have social value for target groups of residents.

Whilst Draft Indicative Layout Plans for the Oran Park and Turner Road precincts within the SW Sector have been put on exhibition there has been no strategic planned approach to the delivery and ongoing management of open space, culture and recreation facilities for the whole sector. The Oran Park Precinct is to be the first development in the South West Growth Centre and as such it will establish a benchmark and quality standard which may shape the level and standard of social infrastructure provision for the whole development. It provides an important opportunity to establish a planning process and standard that will carry through to other precincts. The process needs leadership and lateral innovative thinking to reduce further duplication, minimise unnecessary costs to new homeowners and provide facilities that will mature with the growth of the area and that are capable of facilitating participation in sport, recreation and the Arts.

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