



Ashburton United Soccer Club
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5 June 2023

City of Boroondara 8 Inglesby
Road
Camberwell,3124

To whom it concerns (budget@boroondara.vic.gov.au)

Re: Response to the DRAFT Council Budget 2023/24

I refer to our recent correspondence regarding the adequacy of sporting grounds for our club and the City of Boroondara more generally.

Our community of 950 playing members were surveyed in September 2022 and the overwhelming comment from over 350 responses was that our playing surfaces are not good enough when compared to other clubs we visit across Melbourne. This is evidenced locally by comparing ground conditions with Malvern City FC (City of Stonington), Eastern Lions (City of Monash) and Box Hill United (City of Whitehorse).

In February 2023 our club was in crisis with the poor state of the Dorothy Laver West grounds. This was particularly frustrating as the grounds had been renovated in 2019 and only had one full season in use. We also experienced poor surfaces at all our other facilities namely Warner Reserve, Watson Park, Markham Reserve and High St Oval. This costs our community time in re fixturing and using alternative venues that included Auburn High School, Forest Hill Secondary College, Salesian College, Camberwell High School, Monash University and Knox Football Centre. We are very nomadic!

The backlash from our community was fierce and I would like to acknowledge Cr Victor Franco and Sam Taylor (Senior Co-ordinator Sport and Recreation) that wore the brunt of that frustration. The recent advice that \$1M has been allocated in the draft budget to improve the subsoil layers on both soccer pitches at Dorothy Laver West is great news for soccer and our club specifically. This is a demonstration of Council listening to the community and being nimble to bring forward much needed work.

The draft budget also shows extra commitment to the ground reconstruction program which shows a change from the 2022/23 budget that increased the sports ground reconstruction 4 year estimates from \$4.485M to \$8.083M in the 2023/24 draft budget. This reflects community needs and I commend the Council for making this change.

The Boroondara Community Plan (BCP) quite rightly recognizes sporting clubs as an important part of building community. To achieve this, sports grounds and pavilions need to be of a standard that enables good quality, safe and welcoming facilities. The BCP identifies three key strategies and KPIs summarized as follows;

Theme	KPI
<p>Theme 1 – Community, services, and facilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Strategy 1.1 Community spaces to facilitate social connections › Strategy 1.4 Sports precincts that encourage equal access › Strategy 1.7 Community resilience 	<p>Community satisfaction with our recreational facilities</p>
<p>Theme 2 – Parks and Open Spaces</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Strategy 2.1 Maintain and improve recreation spaces 	<p>Community satisfaction compared with participating councils</p>

We appreciate the challenges the Council has in providing enough good quality grounds that are versatile. We understand that a usage review and strategy is being developed that focusses on;

- › Improving utilization of grounds including reviewing the use of public grounds by private schools
- › Education into better ground management
- › Improving lighting and use for official night matches
- › Capital works into ground surface improvement.

Hybrid or synthetic surfaces are being deemed by Council as an option of last resort. Our own analysis indicates that the current surfaces are technically not capable of carrying the playing loads both in summer and winter. We believe an integrated approach with cricket clubs is an option that could solve both sports needs. This could be achieved by a rationalization of grounds and access for the different cohorts between sporting clubs.

Warner Reserve provides an opportunity for a major upgrade that could suit both soccer and cricket by improving playing conditions and utilisation. It could serve as a template for Boroondara and a benchmark for other councils to follow.

We therefore request that funding be brought forward to the 2023/24 financial period to undertake the following;

- 1 Complete the ground reconstruction for Warner Reserve in 2023/24 that could;**
 - › Integrate the facility into the wider APARC sports precinct
 - › Investigate the design of the playing surface to suit both soccer and cricket so the sports could co-habitat the venue during the critical usage period of January to March
 - › Investigate the efficiency gains that would reduce AUSC reliance on High St, Markham and Watson Park.



Warner Reserve – 31st May 2023

- 2 Fund the planning and design of a new Pavilion at Warner Reserve in 2023/24.** We believe there is a fantastic opportunity to create a social space that caters for the needs of sporting clubs (per BCP Theme 1). The 2022/23 Budget made an allowance of \$40,000 for Warner Reserve in 2025/26. This was confirmed by Council to be for the planning of a refurbishment only of the existing pavilion. The Proposed 2023/24 Budget does not provide any allowance for Warner Reserve whatsoever.

Given the criticality of this venue for our 400+ members under the age of 12 and at least four junior cricket clubs that use the facility, we respectfully request council reconsider funding for planning a better outcome at Warner to meet the objectives of the Boroondara Community Plan. Our club is willing and able to fund the additional needs of a pavilion over and above the standard council provisioning.

Our club had offered to contribute to a masterplan process for Warner for the 2023/24 financial period on the basis that there is some certainty to the redevelopment in the forward estimates.

Yours Faithfully

Ray Verratti
President
Ashburton United Soccer Club
(email: ray@ashburtonsoccer.com.au)

cc. Boroondara Councillors
cc. Mr Matt Fregon – Member for Ashwood
cc. Daniel Freer, Director Places and Spaces
CC. Andrew McHugh, Manager Health & Wellbeing, Community Sport
cc. Mr Paul Crisp – Vice President AUSC