

3.3 Boroondara Netball Association proposal for additional courts at Macleay Park

Myrtle and Macleay Parks (MMP) are one of the most popular outdoor locations in Balwyn North, providing a location for a number of sports facilities, unstructured recreation facilities and informal use of sports fields. The structured sports codes include soccer, netball, cricket, baseball and lawn bowls. Broader uses include schools, scouts, personal trainers, public events and passive recreation. An aerial overview of the MMP area is shown in **Attachment 1**. The netball facility at the MMP (Boroondara Netball Centre) provides eight outdoor netball courts (three lit courts) and a pavilion. This facility opened in 2005 and since its opening has been utilised by the Boroondara Netball Association (BNA), who are allocated the eight courts and associated pavilion through a licence agreement with Council. The licence agreement with the BNA was recently extended for an additional five years, which enables the BNA to occupy the facility until at least 2025.

The BNA is managed by volunteers and is committed to providing the opportunity for participants to achieve their personal best whether that be as a player, coach, umpire or administrator. Their program provides significant benefits to the community by promoting increased participation in physical activity and encouraging a sense of 'community spirit' through volunteer involvement. The BNA website states they support five community clubs and seven school clubs with a membership base of 3,800.

The purpose of this report is to present community consultation feedback on the BNA's proposal to add four courts adjacent to the existing eight netball courts at MMP and review key issues in order to inform a Council decision as the land owner to permit the construction of the four courts. The BNA has secured Australian Government funding of \$1.2 million to build these courts, however, the BNA did not seek Council's endorsement as the land owner as part of their application. The funding from the Australian Government did not specify a location for the 4 additional courts. However, the BNA is strongly advocating for Council to construct the four additional courts at MMP. This would have a significant impact on other users of the site, as well as local residents and these impacts are explored in detail in the report. It is noted Council has and will continue to explore other opportunities to support netball participation within the municipality, which includes Council funding and building a new 2 court stadium at the Kew Recreation Centre.

The Boroondara Sport and Recreation Strategy (2016) identified netball as experiencing high growth in demand and requiring additional access to facilities in the future. In regards to outdoor netball facilities, the Boroondara Sport and Recreation Strategy identified outdoor netball facilities being at capacity on Saturdays. The BNA indicates they have over 3,800 active members and new teams are currently being refused due to capacity issues.

Community consultation regarding the BNA's proposal for construction of 4 new courts at MMP commenced on May 25, 2021 and closed June 8, 2021.

This consultation sought community feedback on the following options to co-locate the courts with the current eight courts:

- Option 1 - Installation of four courts and lighting on Macleay oval 5
- Option 2 - Installation of four courts and lighting on Macleay oval 3

As part of this consultation, Council was also interested in understanding community feedback on two other opportunities which could increase court time for the BNA. One opportunity is lighting five of the eight courts which are currently unlit. The installation of new lights would ensure the lighting on all eight netball courts is up to competition standard and could result in the provision of additional games and training within the BNA's current licenced hours. In addition, another opportunity could be for the BNA to use the existing courts more on a Sunday which could occur within BNA's current licenced hours.

According to an indicative schedule of use provided by the BNA, should four additional courts be constructed adjacent to the existing courts, they would program another 67 hours of netball per week. Consideration should also be given to the increased capacity that would come from upgraded lighting and Sunday use as a way to provide more netball opportunities. Lighting improvements would create an additional 69 hours per week of possible use and Sunday programming, if it was scheduled between 9am and 1pm, would provide an additional 32 hours per week. This scenario would provide a total of 101 hours per week without the need to build four additional courts and would meet the additional use forecast by BNA.

It should be noted that the BNA does not support additional Sunday use due to:

- Impact on local residents and other users, including congestion
- Inter-association tournaments which are held on Sundays
- Coach and umpire development programs held on Sundays
- Clashes for participants with other sporting codes
- Life balance of players, team personnel, administrators and volunteers

While the BNA does support the lighting of all the current courts, they have made it clear this would only be in addition to the inclusion of four new courts.

Community consultation involved:

- A letter and information sheet delivered to over 800 homes in Boroondara within approximately a 400m radius of MMP
- Online survey
- 10 posters displayed around MMP to inform park users of the consultation
- Direct engagement meetings with committee members from impacted clubs, along with a specific survey for each tenant user group of MMP

A total of 789 community survey responses were received along with 26 email submissions. In addition to this, seven organisations/sporting clubs based at MMP submitted representative consultation responses.

A detailed analysis of these results is provided within the report, but in summary

- 96% of people associated with netball support the addition of courts (329 people).
- 76% of regular park users were not supportive of additional courts (264 people).
- Most other user groups were not supportive of additional courts.
- Key concerns raised were traffic and parking, loss of open space (displacement of use and environmental impact) and other amenity impacts.
- There was a reasonable level of support for both additional lighting and programming changes to include more use on Sundays.

An analysis was conducted of those responses received from residents who live closest to MMP, including the following streets: Buchanan, Morris, Hilda, Elliot, Belmore, Kendari, Hunt, Severn, Moody, Sylvan, Bemborough, Monash, Metung, Nugemer, Nargo and Hood. Of these responses:

- 9% (6 people) were supportive of additional courts and 91% (61 people) were not supportive.
- 70% (46 people) were supportive of additional lighting to the existing courts and 30% (20 people) were not supportive.
- 46% (31 people) were supportive of Sunday use and 54% (36 people) were not supportive.

This analysis indicates of those residents most impacted by any changes to MMP, there is strong support for additional lighting to the existing courts, there is moderate support for Sunday use and low levels of support for additional courts.

Along with the community consultation on the various options and opportunities, a number of other factors were also considered in the preparation of this report including participation benefits of each option, traffic and parking, impacts of altering open space and other amenity impacts.

The BNA is a well organised and committed Association which provides a pathway program for young netballers. However, the results of traffic and parking analysis, community consultation, analysis of the current court use and consideration of other park users does not support the addition of four new courts at MMP. While the BNA has presented information (detailed later in this report) outlining why they do not believe additional lighting or Sunday usage will provide a solution, the current asset (eight courts) has capacity to be used outside of Saturdays to meet some of the demand unable to be accommodated on Saturdays. Given the addition of 4 courts would result in a number of negative impacts, including additional traffic, pressure on available parking, loss of open space, the environmental impact of placing a hard surface on grassed areas, displacement of other users and impact on resident amenity, it is considered imperative everything is done to better utilise the current courts including spreading the usage for competition across the week rather than just Saturdays.

Given the outcomes of the community consultation and the consideration of other issues which would negatively impact the MMP, local residents and the users regarding the 4 additional courts, there is merit in lighting the existing 5 unlit courts, upgrading lighting on the 3 lit courts and for the BNA to consider Sunday usage. In addition, parking and traffic improvements could be constructed to ease the increase of use by the BNA of the existing courts which would flow from enhanced lighting and Sunday usage. The funding provided by the Australian Government could be used to install lighting for the 5 unlit courts and upgrade the 3 lit courts and construct improvements in the MMP to relieve traffic congestion and parking pressure within MMP. Should the Australian Government agree, the desired outcome for the BNA to offer court time to new clubs would still be met, which is consistent with the objective of the funding.

Whilst the BNA's proposal for the construction of 4 additional courts is considered to be unsupportable due to the number of negative impacts on MMP, Council is committed to continue to work with the BNA and Netball Victoria to consider future opportunities to increase the provision of netball within Boroondara.

*Five speakers opposed to the officers' recommendation addressed the meeting.
Nine speakers in support of the officers' recommendation addressed the meeting.*

MOTION

Moved Councillor Sinfield

Seconded Councillor Watson

That the Services Delegated Committee resolve to:

- 1. Not approve the Boroondara Netball Association's proposal to construct four additional courts in the Myrtle Macleay Park.**
- 2. Request the BNA seek a variation from the Australian Government to reallocate grant funding to:**
 - a. light the 5 existing unlit courts (200 LUX); and**
 - b. upgrade the lighting (to 200 LUX) on the other 3 courts; and**
 - c. deliver site amenity improvements in Macleay Park to support the additional netball participation resulting from lighting and other identified opportunities; and**
 - d. Engage an external consultant to analyse netball demand to inform the development of the sport and recreation strategy to be undertaken in 2022/23.**
- 3. Progress points 2 a-d pending approval from the Australian Government to reallocate grant funding.**
- 4. Write to the Federal Member for Kooyong, Hon Josh Frydenberg MP, advising of the Services Delegated Committee decision and provide a copy of this report and resolution.**
- 5. Recommend the BNA consider how they can program additional Sunday morning use, within their currently approved licenced hours.**

6. **Work with all MMP Stakeholders (including tenant sporting clubs and local residents) to develop a MMP Masterplan, pending the approval of funding in Council's 2022-23 budget.**
7. **Work with the BNA and Netball Victoria to consider opportunities to utilise additional satellite locations within Boroondara to support the long term strategic growth of netball.**
8. **Request officers provide a report to Council regarding traffic and parking improvement opportunities for the Myrtle and Macleay Park precinct.**

CARRIED**4. General business**

Nil

5. Urgent business

Nil

6. Confidential business

Nil

The meeting concluded at 6.18pm**Confirmed****Chairperson**

Date
