

City of Moreland Sport and Physical Activity Strategy – 2014-2018 (the Strategy)

Submission

1. **Section 1 Introduction**, the aims and objectives of the strategy are well articulated in the introduction *that is the purpose is to guide planning provision promotion and advocacy of sport and physical active for the next 5 years so that both formal and informal participation in sport and physical activity by all sectors of the community is increased.*
2. The objectives about identifying current and future sport and physical activity needs identify barriers to participation and provide advice on the most effective role and strategies to increase active participation, are well meaning and logical.
3. At **Section 2 Sporting facilities and environments**, identifying current and future capacity issues of facilities and pavilions is a logical step in the process of defining a strategy.
4. Estimating and priorities financial resources for a 15 years period is also logical given the expected population growth for this inner city suburban area.
5. The report starts with the demographic profile of the municipality based on the ABS “Participation in Sport and Physical Recreation Survey” to determine the rates of participation in sport.
6. The highest participation rates being between the ages of 15-17 (78%) and 18-24 yrs., with a male/female 67-76% split.
7. The demographic profile of the municipality revealed a population of 147,241 people divided into three (3) ABS Statistical Local Areas of Brunswick (46,000), Coburg (51,000) and Moreland (51,000). Brunswick having a slightly younger median age (33yrs compared to 35).
8. Of note was that Brunswick has a significantly higher percentage of people attending university (37% compared to 22%), yet the median weekly personal income levels were all higher in Brunswick.

9. The forecasted population increase to 2031 for the Municipality is significant at 18%, resulting in an additional 28,000 people to reside in Moreland by 2031.
10. A majority to occur within Brunswick (14,000 or 27% increase), followed by Coburg (9000) and the North SLA (5000).
11. In terms of the abutting municipalities the expected projected increase in population by 2031 would be:
 - Melbourne 67% (pop increase of 73,385)
 - Darebin 18% (26,966)
 - Moonee Valley 16% (18,911)
 - Hume 74% (134,030)
12. At *Section 2.5 The implications of current & projected demographic trends*, issues are raised at:
 - Directing future recreation programs targeting certain demographic groups;
 - Prioritising future infrastructure demand is likely to be greatest and likely nature of recreation demand;
 - Providing justification for where Council should direct future capital works priorities based on demand supply characteristics.
13. Section 3.1 *Participation in Sport and physical activity* identifies the Victorian findings (2012) of the most popular activities and then extrapolated these findings to the Moreland population.
14. Individual activities such as walking (31,747), gym (22,994), cycling/BMX (20,910), Jogging (10,191), Swimming (12,896) and Golf (6010) were the largest activities.
15. In terms of structured team sports requiring significant infrastructure such as ovals, courts, the results identified as follows:
 - Non-seasonal (all year round sports) which have a combination of indoor and outdoor facilities with participants in Tennis (6993) and Netball (5742), Basketball (6212) being the most popular;
 - The seasonal sports of AFL (4879), Cricket (3315) and Soccer (3549).

16. As would be expected the all year round sports (indoor/outdoor) are very popular while the seasonal or half yearly organised sports also carry a significant proportion of the sporting load in Moreland.
17. By applying the projected 2031 population increases to these sports this would result in the following increases:
- Tennis – 8493
 - Netball – 6975
 - Basketball – 7527
 - AFL – 5894
 - Cricket – 4026
 - Soccer – 4303.
18. Moreland “organised sports” participation data at 3.1.4 identifies that the five largest organised sports (as measured by player numbers) and extrapolated to what would be the expected participation rate based on the ABS Surveys (i.e. range):
- AFL - 3400 to 4879
 - Basketball – 2800 to 6212
 - Soccer – 2200 to 3549
 - Cricket – 2100 to 3315
 - Tennis – 1700 to 6993
 - Netball¹ – 343 to 5742

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1. ¹ Of note here is that Netball at 343 participants is to increase to 5742, yet Moreland has only 8 netball courts, while training would also be conducted in school courts, in addition to the new training courts at Raeburn Reserve.
2. The unidentified issue here is that Netball competition is held at the State Netball & Hockey Centre (SNHC) at Parkville, while other “new competitions” cannot be developed unless with the consent of the Victorian Netball Association. This factor needs to be examined as to whether or not this will limit netball participation.

19. From an AFL and Cricket perspective the report makes no allowance for the increase in these participation rates as a result of female participation rates. For example AFL figures identify that:
- In 2003 only 33 teams in 3 leagues in Victoria (600-700 players);
 - By 2014 this has grown to 145 teams/27 leagues/divisions;
 - VWFL handing over administration to AFL and will have 6 divisions in 2014;
 - There will be 150,000 female players in 2014.
20. Hence within a decade female participation in AFL alone has been dramatic, while Junior Leagues are now providing for female only competition, with the YJFL creating 3 Divisions in the past 3 years.
21. Hence the extrapolation of simple population projection data needs to be tempered in the light of new trends in sport, in particular the increase in interest of female participants in traditional male dominated sports such as AFL and Cricket.
22. At the end of *Section 3.1.6 Implications of the sport & physical activity participation data* (p27) the Strategy states that (amongst others)...*the extrapolated estimates of future participation in sport and physical activity are grounds for bold strategic planning initiatives to significantly bolster the supply of recreation infrastructure, particularly in the southern portion of the municipality. This will require Council to support initiatives beyond the level of maintenance and upgrade to existing infrastructure.*
23. *Section 3.2 Sporting facilities and environments* compare the current ratio/provision of facilities against those developed for “Greenfield” suburban areas. That is new urban areas to be developed/currently being developed on the urban fringe of the metropolitan area.
24. These ratios need to be tempered in the light of Moreland inner city location and to the fact that the settlement pattern was derived without reference to such ratios some 120 years ago.

25. However what it does reveal is that Tennis, Cricket and Outdoor Soccer fields/courts are within or around the current ratio's, Soccer being just outside at 5347 residents per field, compared to 5000.
26. AFL playing fields are however no-where near the required ratios, with 8162 residents per field (19 fields). The required population ratio of between 4000-5000 people, which reveals that Moreland has a vast undersupply with almost twice the population density per field.
27. Netball is also well under represented with 8 courts at a population ration of 19,384, where the required ratio is 1 court per 7000 residents. Again this figure needs to be tempered in the light of other facilities currently provided by schools and those at the SNHC within the City of Melbourne.
28. At 3.2.2 *Comparison of current recreation facilities between City of Moreland planning regions* identifies that Brunswick has the lowest proportion of sporting fields (16%) and Coburg (37%) and North SLA (47%) the highest, again a reflection of the settlement history of suburban Melbourne.
29. For Brunswick cricket fields are only at 16%, compared to Coburg (47%) and north SLA (38%).
30. Soccer for Brunswick is at 28%, compared to Coburg 38% and North SLA 34%.
31. The strategy concluding that Brunswick has the largest number of sports (x12) with provision below municipal wide levels.
32. It concludes that sports within Brunswick that are below municipal wide provision levels are, AFL, Indoor basketball, Outdoor aquatic, Skate venues, Cricket, Table Tennis, Outdoor soccer, Lawn bowls, Baseball/softball, Tennis and Athletics.
33. So with this conclusion and coupled with the expected projected population growth for Brunswick being significant (14,000), the most of the other SLAs, then it would be expected that any strategy would need to identify how:
 - a. The current shortfall in facilities is going to be addressed?
 - b. How the projected shortfall in facilities to 2031 is going to be addressed?

34. The draft strategy fails to identify how this shortfall is going to be addressed.
35. At *Section 3.3 Policy Review* then examines the policy environment both at State and Local levels for recreation and physical activity. This section does not add anything to the discussion or strategy of how the shortfall would be addressed.
36. At *3.3.3 Council Strategies & policies* the strategy then identifies current capital works programs to upgrade or redevelop facilities (for the next 5 years) such as Charles Mutton Reserve (Fawkner), Roberts Reserve (Brunswick Cycling Club Pavilion), Fleming Park (Brunswick), Middle Street Reserve (Hadfield Tennis Club) and CB Smith Reserve (Fawkner).
37. No doubt these reserves have been chosen for works, but would not be based on any empirical evidence such as demand, population projections, increase in participation etc. that have been derived from a similar strategy or from empirical evidence.
38. At *Section 3.3.4.2 Developer Contributions* commentary of developer contributions (C133) and increasing public open space contributions (amendment C122) are all initiatives that have been completed by most municipalities over the past decade.
39. The limiting factor here is that none of these levies or contributions can be levied until a planning permit application has been approved.
40. Further the imposition of the new restrictive residential zones will no doubt have an impact on future growth and development within Moreland. It is unknown how this would impact on the timing and collection of monies from projects.
41. Of note also in this section of the report is that no mention is made of the current level of public open space contributions currently sitting within the cash reserves of the Moreland City Council. The Moreland Annual Report revealing an account with some \$7.5 million in funds.

42. It is noteworthy that the strategic basis for the increase in open space is based on an open space strategy, and the Brunswick and Glenroy Structure Plans; however none of these plans would be based on any empirical data to resolve or improve recreation facilities or standards within the community.
43. The identification of 34 projects (p40 – Appendix 7) which may be eligible for the increase in open space contributions levy would be at best considered a wish list, and again would not be based on evidence.
44. The 5 year rolling capital works program, which identifies the full reconstruction of one sports field per annum is based on the Moreland Open Space Strategy of 2004.
45. Obviously this decade old strategy would need to be revised having regard to the results identified above of lack of facilities coupled with significant population increase, in particular the southern or Brunswick part of the municipality.
46. Further the rolling program of reconstruction of one ground per annum would take 57 years to complete. Surely any rolling program needs to start where demand is greatest, proven and having regard to the projected population growth. Evidence based planning is what is required.
47. What the strategy needs to address is this issue.
48. Further given that new sporting grounds or areas cannot be purchased in inner city locations such as Brunswick, then the only option is for current facilities, in particular playing fields and surfaces to be improved so they can be used all year round and for a greater frequency of use. The increase in frequency may go some way to accommodate projected population growth in the development of new Clubs and greater participation.
49. Sporting fields during the 10 year drought were problematic to manage with water or recycled water not being purchased to maintain. While the return to normal to above normal winter rainfall conditions throughout 2011-13 has resulted in many ovals being water logged and unable to cope with these conditions. This being a result of a lack of underground drainage when these facilities were constructed last century.

50. If the data and assessment of the Moreland Physical Activity Strategy are not used to develop a strategic program with respect to addressing current under supply and in light of the projected population increases, then the strategy will have failed.
51. Further if no attempt is made to address facility under supply coupled with population growth, then the only option available will be to cap teams and Club memberships. Clearly an outcome contrary to this strategy of increasing physical activity.
52. At 3.3.6 *Recreation & Leisure in neighbouring municipalities* a simple list of abutting municipal recreation strategies has been developed.
53. This list does not report on the Melbourne City Council study, *Sports Facility Provision Analysis* – November 2012.
54. Like the Moreland Physical Activity Strategy, it examines projected population growth and the current level of facilities. It states, *the study focused on an assessment of present supply of facilities for the following selected sporting activities and the likely future demand:*
- *Australian Rules Football.*
 - *Cricket.*
 - *Lawn Bowls.*
 - *Soccer.*
 - *Tennis.*
 - *Touch Football.*
 - *Indoor Sports (largely basketball and netball usage).*
- These sports were selected as they are either one of the more popular sports being participated in by Melbourne City residents, there is a current shortfall of facilities to meet present demand, or the sport is considered to be increasing in popularity.*
55. The study identified that the population of Melbourne would effectively double from 98,000 to 181,000 by 2031, with significant population increase within the 5-34 age group.

56. **Based on this growth and the current level of facilities, the City of Melbourne would require a further 10 football/cricket fields, 12 soccer fields and 10 indoor courts.**
57. Like the Moreland Strategy however no examination of how recreation needs are met from surrounding facilities in adjoining municipalities or what overflow occurs between populations.
58. The issue of usage by populations between municipalities may not be important but what If Melbourne City does not provide for this increase in facilities? What impacts would overflow into Moreland, Yarra and Moonee Valley?
59. Conversely if Moreland's projected population increase being in Brunswick and abutting Melbourne City, what impacts will this growth have on Royal Park and other neighbouring areas?
60. At *Section 5 Summary of the main themes and key findings*, the Strategy fails to offer solutions.
61. For example Theme 1 is about increasing participation. But how is this to occur if you have a current deficit?
62. If Brunswick and other parts of Moreland have a deficit and coupled with significant population growth, then the only options for growth in participation will be in those areas where facilities are underutilised. i.e. maybe Bocce courts!
63. In improving outdoor and indoor facilities the best the Strategy can identify is that *Council will advocate strongly to State Government and collaboratively with neighbouring Council to identify future opportunities to increase the supply of active open space...*
64. This is not a strategy nor a solution, but a cop out.
65. The issue is, like identified above with the City of Melbourne, all inner City municipalities are faced with increasing population and the ability to provide for areas is limited.
66. It will be about improvement of current facilities, in particular playing surfaces to increase structured sporting activity.

67. The last theme identifies the need to increase participation and expand recreation infrastructure by building on the *already impressive base of recreation and infrastructure policies to provide incentives and inducements for sporting clubs, community groups and schools to both encourage increased participation.*
68. This is nonsense.
69. My direct experience in the development of the Brunswick Junior Football Club (BJFC) arose not from any Moreland City Council policy, but one of a review in 2007 of the North Old Boys St. Patricks Football Club (NOBSPC). To get the Club off the ground took three years.
70. BJFC took to the field in 2010 with 16 players and today in 2014 is at 170 players.
71. Moreland CC has not contributed in any way to the development of this Club through its policies or procedures, nor were there any inducements or grants available.
72. In fact the policy environment introduced in 2009, which directed that ground allocation was to be determined by whether Clubs had junior's teams, female participation and non-religious names, almost derailed the whole initiative.
73. With BJFC at now 170 players and climbing to 350 the recreation department is benign in its support for any improvement of grounds to accommodate the Junior club as it grows. This approach appears to be common to other clubs as well.
74. This intransience continues with respect to the development of a Women's Team in the VWFL, another initiative of NOBSPC.
75. Policies do not induce or increase participation, in fact I would doubt whether any recreation policy has ever been reviewed as to its effectiveness in achieving its outcomes.
76. For example what was the outcome for the Ground Allocation policy? Did Moreland reduce the number of misogynist sporting clubs with religious names? Did junior teams suddenly appear? Did Bocce and Lawn Bowls introduce new junior teams?

77. Policies are only a guide to decision making and too often these policies are not based on evidence, science, nor common sense. They are bureaucratic attempts to provide a check lists to ensure decision making becomes consistent, yet usually result in an inability to exercise discretion.
78. At *Section 6 Summary* the report concludes with a checklist with a list of priorities over 1 to 5 years.
79. Oddly the report identifies 3 goals being:
- a. *To encourage participation in sport and physical activity;*
 - b. *To ensure adequate supply and distribution of good quality sporting infrastructure used in the most effective and efficient manner possible and,*
 - c. *Ensure Moreland approach to improving sport and physical activity is underpinned and well informed by robust policies, strategies and plans.*
80. These goals are not listed in the introduction where the objectives. There is a disconnect between the evidence identified as to facility under supply, projected population growth and the goals listed above.
81. This is where the strategy dramatically fails and simply repeats the works programs already existing within Councils policies or initiatives, none of which are based on the findings of the Draft Physical Activity Strategy.
82. So the questions remain:
- a. How are those areas currently deficient in facilities to be addressed?
 - b. How will the projected population growth for the southern part of Moreland be accommodated with new or upgraded recreation facilities?
83. Goal 1 for example identifies at (8) that *grants could be used to increase junior and female participation*. In what sports and using which facilities? The issue is that with under supply you can't increase participation in AFL, Soccer, Cricket, Basketball, Netball i.e. all those sports identified in section 3.2.2.
84. At Goal 1 at (2) *work with local sporting clubs and community organisations to develop programs and activities that promote participation in sport and physical activity?*

85. The policy environment for Council is a regulatory one, where control is exercised about how use is made of sporting facilities. Council has not identified programs that promote participation. I would not count grants that make it easier to purchase or subsidise equipment as one which promotes participation.
86. Goal 2 *To ensure an adequate supply and distribution of infrastructure, at 12 identifies the current rolling program for capital works.* It is odd that this works program has not been recommended for amendment in light of the now identified deficiencies and projected population growth.
87. So what was the purpose of this Sport and Physical Activity Strategy?
88. It appears that its purpose was to conclude that the current programs, policies and strategies of Moreland CC are all well founded and based on empirical evidence?
89. So the question raised in Section 2.5 *such as prioritising future infrastructure demand where demand is likely to be greatest and to provide justification for priorities to direct future capital works, remains unresolved.*
90. Yet the Strategy clearly identifies the under provision of sporting fields in Brunswick coupled with the added burden of significant projected population growth.
91. Does the strategy bolster the supply of recreation infrastructure in the southern portion of the municipality, as raised in 3.1.6? The answer is no.

92. As this submission demonstrates the empirical evidence is there to justify a totally new approach to recreation/facility provision. However the strategy has fallen well short.

93. The strategy is flawed and needs to be substantially revised given the findings within Section 3

Yours faithfully,



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