



CLUBS AUSTRALIA SUBMISSION NEW NATIONAL SPORT PLAN

Clubs Australia welcomes the opportunity to comment on the new National Sport Plan Public Consultation Paper.

Clubs Australia represents 6,000 licensed clubs that employ more than 140,000 people. Clubs are not-for-profit, member-owned organisations that commonly provide sporting and recreation infrastructure to their members and the wider community.

Clubs offer a range of sports facilities, such as tennis courts, golf courses, bowling greens, sporting fields, baseball pitches, stadiums, swimming pools, aquatic centres, squash courts and gymnasiums. These spaces are often provided to community members and organisations free of charge or below market rate.

Providing sports facilities for the use of local communities is almost always unprofitable for clubs. These arrangements can be sustained due to the not-for-profit structure of clubs and the income generated from hospitality activities.

Clubs have hosted world-class sporting events and dedicated their resources to supporting grass roots sporting groups. They have championed the advancement of individuals with disabilities in sports and regularly use their facilities as a communal meeting space for sports organisations.

The club industry's dedication to sports development has fostered positive mental health and well-being across the nation.

Clubs Australia supports the Australian Government's commitment to building healthy, active, connected and thriving communities.

The National Sport Plan provides an overarching framework that prioritises participation, inclusion, safety, education and development. These pillars are integral to the success of sport in regional and metropolitan areas and will help shape Australia as a world-class sporting nation.

Clubs Australia believes there are further opportunities to incorporate clubs in the proposed Australian sporting vision.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

- Promote clubs as safe and inclusive sporting environments.
- Use clubs for world-class and interstate sporting events, such as international golf tournaments and football games.
- Take into account recreational or casual use of sporting facilities in assessing sporting participation.

NOT-FOR-PROFIT CLUBS SPORTING MODEL

Clubs dedicate considerable funds towards the operation of sports facilities, which includes construction and maintenance, and organising activities.

The club industry plays a significant role in supporting the sporting workforce, offering employment opportunities for green keepers, leisure attendants, personal trainers, and various maintenance roles.

Venues may cover these expenses by imposing unaffordable user fees, but they refrain from doing so as this would discourage community participation. As a result, clubs do not recover the capital and operating costs associated with encouraging sports.

Clubs can overcome these financial limitations by operating and deriving revenue from other activities, such as the provision of food and beverage, entertainment, and functions.

This unique model of supporting sporting activities is enabled through the not-for-profit structure of licensed clubs, under which:

- clubs are not driven to maximise profits, and
- surplus funds can be contributed to loss-making, uncommercial activities, rather than distributed to shareholders.

Where sporting entities rely on user charges, adverse social consequences will likely follow. For example, higher user charges will prevent low-income families from participating in sports. A 2018 survey of 696 people by Western Sydney University, demonstrates that people paid an average of over \$1,100 in sports costs each season. The greatest expense was the registration fee.¹

The survey results also showed that 10% of respondents reported borrowing an average of \$5,000 to participate in sports. Thirty-five per cent of respondents reported a greater credit card debt due to sports fees.

These findings are consistent with Australian Sports Commission research which found children are less likely to participate in organised physical activity outside school if they are from a low-income family.² The same research found children were more likely to participate if they are from a high-income family (84%) relative to a low-income family (58%).

These findings reinforce the critical importance of the clubs model.

Indeed, clubs make a social contribution of \$4.1 billion in the form of discounted use of facilities compare to market rate.³

¹ M Cull & K Parry, Is Participating in Sport Becoming too Expensive for average Australians, Australian Broadcasting Corporation, September 2018

² Australian Sports Commission, Children's Participation in Organised Physical Activity Outside School Hours, April 2018, p. 12.

³ KPMG, National Clubs Census, August 2016.



Clubs across Australia provide:

- 3,901 bowling greens;
- 1,444 sporting fields;
- 299 golf courses;
- 67 swimming pools and aquatic centres; and
- 2,286 tennis and squash courts.⁴

CASE STUDIES: CLUBS SUPPORTING SPORT IN THEIR LOCAL COMMUNITIES

In NSW, the Hornsby RSL Club supported the development of a 7-year-old child with cerebral palsy, providing adequate resources and support for their inclusion in a local football team.

Since 2016, Dooleys Lidcombe Catholic Club have invested more than \$70,000 towards 'Swim, Survive, and Socialise', a water safety program educating culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

PROMOTE CLUBS AS SAFE AND INCLUSIVE SPORTING ENVIRONMENTS

Inclusion is important in fostering social cohesion and cultivating a sense of belonging in communities.

Clubs Australia supports the Australian Government's commitment to promote environments that are safe and encourage participation and involvement across diverse cohorts.

Clubs offer a safe and inclusive environment for people to participate in various sporting activities. Their sporting facilities are used by seniors, disadvantaged groups, and younger people.

Providing sporting infrastructure free of charge or below market rate and covering registration fees has supported low-income families to engage in sports.

Venues allocate considerable funds towards promoting sports, including constructing and maintaining sports infrastructure, facilitating lighting upgrades and organising various sporting activities. As discussed earlier, clubs do not impose high fees on sports users, recognising that such pricing would restrict access for many community members.

Clubs Australia believes the Australian Government should assume a more prominent role in championing clubs as affordable and inclusive sporting environments. We believe clubs should be specifically addressed in the 'inclusion' and 'participation' pillars of the National Sport Plan, as they significantly contribute to the realisation of these strategic objectives.

Promoting clubs as 'safe' and 'inclusive' would increase sports participation and socialisation, enhancing positive mental health and well-being.

Clubs Australia recommends the Australian Government should assume a more prominent role in promoting clubs as safe and inclusive sporting venues.

⁴ Ibid.



USE CLUBS FOR WORLD-CLASS AND INTERSTATE SPORTING EVENTS, SUCH AS INTERNATIONAL GOLF TOURNAMENTS AND FOOTBALL GAMES

Clubs offer high quality sporting infrastructure with the capability to accommodate a significant number of sports enthusiasts and participants.

Collaborating with clubs to host global events would increase tourism and enhance international development, aligning with another strategic pillar of the National Sport Plan.

Concord Golf Club has hosted several international tournaments, including the Australian PGA, Australian Women's Open, and the ANZ Championship, which has connected sporting athletes from across the globe. The Murray Downs Golf and Country Club has been home to many successful golfing tournaments and offers a range of amenities for both professional athletes and sporting enthusiasts. These include tennis courts, croquet fields, and swimming pools.

Leveraging the sporting facilities of clubs in regional and rural areas holds significant importance due to the economic contribution to small towns.

Certain clubs provide the facilities for overnight stays, with hotels adjacent to their premises, while others offer accommodation facilities within walking distance. Many have food outlets and dedicated entertainment or presentation spaces for significant sporting matches.

Clubs Australia believes the Australian Government should consider providing financial incentives to clubs hosting global sporting events, such as subsidising expenses related to facility maintenance, temporary 'setups', and other associated costs.

Clubs Australia recommends using clubs to host world-class and interstate sports events.

FACTORS USED TO ASSESS THE SUCCESS OF THE NATIONAL SPORT PLAN

Ensuring the implementation of suitable monitoring and evaluation methods for the National Sport Plan is essential to sport success across Australia.

Clubs Australia believes qualitative and quantitative measures should be adopted and published.

Participation is often assessed based on individual registrations in a sports team. However, clubs offer facilities for community members to engage in sports, even if they do not have a direct association to a specific sports team.

Clubs Australia believes these individuals should be considered when evaluating participation where feasible.

Clubs Australia recommends taking into account recreational or casual use of sporting facilities in assessing sporting participation.

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