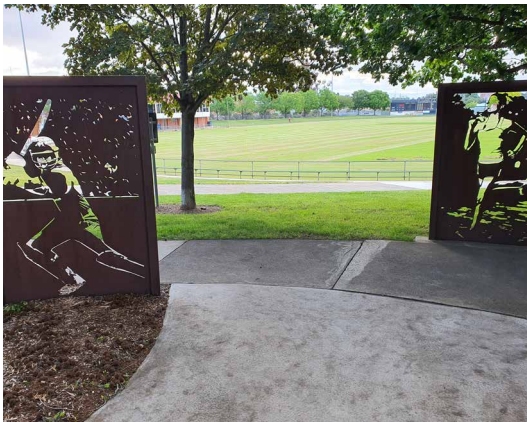




# Northern Grampians Shire Council

Sport and Active Recreation Strategy 2023-33

DRAFT FOR REVIEW



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

**Northern Grampians Shire Council acknowledges the Barengji Gadjin (the Wotjobaluk, Jaadwa, Jadawadjali, Wergaia and Jupagulk peoples), the Dja Dja Wurrung peoples and the Eastern Maar peoples as the Traditional Custodians of the lands throughout the Northern Grampians Shire and pays our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.**

The Sport and Active Recreation Strategy 2023-33 was supported by the Victorian Government. The report has been prepared for:



This report has been prepared by:



ROSS Planning Pty Ltd

ABN 32 508 029 959

PO Box 5660

MANLY QLD 4179

P: (07) 3901 0730

E: [info@rossplanning.com.au](mailto:info@rossplanning.com.au)

W: [www.rossplanning.com.au](http://www.rossplanning.com.au)

### Document control:

Version	Date	Document	Author	Reviewer	Recipient
1.0	09/11/23	Draft Sport and Active Recreation Strategy	SW	DC	DH
2.0	12/02/24	Amended Draft Sport and Active Recreation Strategy	SW	DC	TD
3.0	16.02.24	Amended Draft Sport and Active Recreation Strategy	SW	DC	JK
4.0	11.03.24	Amended Draft Sport and Active Recreation Strategy	SW	DC	DH

© 2024 ROSS Planning Pty Ltd

This document may only be used for the purpose for which it was commissioned and in accordance with the terms of engagement for the commissions. Unauthorised use of this document in any form whatsoever is prohibited.

# Table of contents

<b>Executive summary</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Planning framework</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Community profile</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Consultation outcomes</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Sport and active recreation provision</b>	<b>37</b>
Great Western	39
Halls Gap	43
Marnoo	47
Navarre	51
St Arnaud	57
Stawell	63
Stuart Mill	71
<b>Demand assessment</b>	<b>74</b>
<b>Key directions/actions</b>	<b>80</b>

# Glossary

Classification	Description
Active recreation	Active recreation refers to activities undertaken during leisure time that requires physical exertion. It includes organised forms of passive (non-sport) recreation activities such as Parkrun, yoga and Pilates, gym workout and group fitness, for example.
Core open space	Core open space is active (sport) and passive (non-sport) open space that meets Council's requirements specified by its Desired Standards of Service (DSS). This is particularly important to ensure equitable distribution and quality open space across planning areas, as well as ensuring development contributions are calculated and captured accurately
Non-core open space	Non-core open space includes active open space areas that are privately owned or operated and that are not freely available for public use, and passive open space areas where appropriate recreation use is typically a secondary use of the land. The primary use of non-core passive open space can be for a range of uses including conservation, stormwater management, utility reserves and amenity.
Open space	Open space is land that provides recreation and leisure benefits, although that may not be its primary purpose. It can include beaches, parks, natural areas, utility and drainage corridors, and conservation areas.
Passive recreation	A range of unstructured activities and social interactions undertaken for enjoyment, relaxation, physical and mental health. Passive recreation can be undertaken in all forms of open space (parks and natural areas) and may include walking, cycling, children's play, picnicking, fishing, kayaking and relaxing in nature.
Public open space	Public open space is land that is set aside for public recreation or as parkland, or for similar purposes. Public open space incorporates active and passive open space. The terms park and/or reserve are also used interchangeably with public open space.
Recreation park	Settings for passive recreation and social activities. Parks provide a range of embellishments such as play equipment, kick-about areas, picnic facilities, formalised walks, gardens, landscaped areas, access to water bodies and car parking.
Sport	A range of structured activities capable of achieving a result requiring physical exertion and skill, that is competitive or training for competition.
Sports park facilities	Designed to primarily support a range of active recreation activities for training and competition. These sports parks are designed to accommodate the playing surface and infrastructure requirements of specific sports. Sports facilities are further broken down into a number of categories.





# Executive summary

The development of this Sport and Active Recreation Strategy 2023-33 (the Strategy) reflects the Northern Grampians commitment to working collaboratively with businesses, government agencies, community members and visitors to preserve and enhance the lifestyle on offer in the townships and communities within its council area.

The Strategy has been prepared based on qualitative and quantitative data including demographic and major trends in sport and active recreation. Understanding the shire's demographic profile including age, household composition and income and employment patterns provides an insight into potential sport and recreation needs for the people living across the Northern Grampians Shire.

The Strategy will be used by council as a mechanism to prioritise future investment and development of hard and soft sport and recreation infrastructure across Northern Grampians. It has been developed in parallel with the complementary Open Space and Active Transport Strategy, ensuring that council develops initiatives, programs and facilities consistently across the Shire, meeting identified community needs.

For the purpose of the Strategy, sport and active recreation are defined as:

## **Sport**

*A range of structured activities capable of achieving a result requiring physical exertion and skill, that is competitive or training for competition.*

## **Active recreation**

*Active recreation refers to activities undertaken during leisure time that requires physical exertion. It includes organised forms of passive (non-sport) recreation activities such as Parkrun, yoga and pilates, gym workout and group fitness, for example.*

Following an extensive process of research, consultation, and inspections (of all relevant sport and active recreation facilities), a thorough analysis was undertaken to develop actions that will ensure council provides the appropriate opportunities for the community to participate in a range of sport and active recreation activities.

The consultation process included utilising a range of tools and techniques to engage stakeholders (such as State Sporting Organisations, Northern Grampians sporting clubs/organisations and council officers).

The Strategy provides a snapshot of active sport and recreation provision for each township and community in the shire, providing an analysis of each respective location.

Integral to the Strategy's proposed actions are the key findings for the shire as a whole:

- there is a sufficient number and distribution of sport and active recreation facilities across the shire
- there is the opportunity to greatly improve the use of the existing facilities through increased efforts in the delivery of appropriate programs and activities
- maximising council existing investment in sport and recreation infrastructure by increasing sport and recreation participation and programming across the shire, facilitating stronger partnerships with community sport and active recreation organisations, (including local clubs) and Sport and Recreation Victoria.

Following the above processes and the analysis of the outcomes, key actions for council to focus on in the coming years have been presented.

People living in townships and communities across the shire area have access to natural areas, recreation parks, and sport parks providing them with opportunities to participate in a diverse range of leisure, recreation and sport activities. The Sport and Active Recreation Strategy 2023-33 should be read in conjunction with the Northern Grampians Shire Open Space and Active Transport Strategy. This is particularly important for actions relating to individual park development and embellishment.

## **Recommended actions**

Specific recommended actions were developed to address the key issues identified and have been proposed in three main areas:

1. Management (policy and procedures)
2. Existing facilities and programs
3. New facilities, programs and initiatives.



# Introduction

## Purpose

The Northern Grampians Shire *Sport and Active Recreation Strategy 2023-33* will provide strategic direction to council ensuring the provision of sport and active recreation infrastructure and programs is developed to an appropriate standard and to meet the sport and active recreation needs of current and future residents. The Strategy will be used as a mechanism to prioritise future investment and development of the shire's sport and recreation hard and soft infrastructure.

## Scope

For the purpose of the Strategy, sport and active recreation includes organised or structured games including training and competition, and recreation activities that contribute to meeting the Australian Physical Activity and Exercise Guidelines.

## Methodology



*Sport and Active Recreation Strategy Methodology*

The development of strategic directions involved several steps, detailed below.



### Community and connection - Increase opportunities through the provision and activation of sport and recreation places and spaces

- ensure facilities are maintained/developed to meet the needs of their respective communities
- invest in the design of appropriate facilities to cater for all user groups, including supporting gender equality and inclusive participation of women and girls in sport and active recreation
- undertake appropriate engagement with the community when initiating facility improvements and community programs/activities
- ensure the provision of equitable access to sport and recreation opportunities
- consideration of the changing community approach to sport.



### Healthy and active - Support the shared outcomes of NGSC Municipal Health and Wellbeing Strategy

- identify opportunities for the programming, access, and activation of facilities across all age cohorts including our ageing population
  - responding to trends such as technology limiting sport and recreation, connection (impacting access)
- facilitate the promotion and management of programs and activities at council facilities to maximise community participation
- support for promotion and management of programs and activities at non- council managed facilities
- ensure facilities are maintained at a standard that allows the maximal amount of use by the community.



### Livability - Support the shire vision “to love where we live”

- provide a range of facilities and programs that are accessible and provide sport and recreation opportunities to all residents of the shire
- ensure facilities are well maintained and add to the attractiveness of the shire
- make facilities available and appropriate for a wide range of community groups/members
- support gender equality and inclusive participation of women and girls in public recreation spaces and places by investing in well-designed and high- quality space and facilities
- support accessibility initiatives that provide improved opportunities for people living with a disability.

#### USE OF THIS STRATEGY:

The Strategy is to be used as a mechanism to prioritise future investment and development of the shire’s sport and recreation hard and soft infrastructure.



# Planning framework

Public open space, sport and recreation infrastructure could be defined as a critical investment in current and future populations. This “Urban Health Infrastructure” delivers multiple returns on investment.

The National Heart Foundation observes:

- the health effects of physical activity are compelling. However, the potency of physical activity as a policy investment for Australia extends far beyond health. Active living plays a key role in broader economic and social goals for our nation: walking, cycling and public transport are affordable and sustainable solutions to traffic congestion
- these same behaviours contribute to cleaner air, reduced carbon emissions and sustainable environments
- active neighbourhoods and cities are more liveable, with higher levels of social capital and community cohesion and lower levels of crime
- in the context of an ageing community, physical activity enables older Australians to live more active lifestyles with reduced risk from disabling and costly chronic diseases
- fit and active workers are more productive, take fewer sick days and make a positive contribution to our economic wellbeing. (A blueprint for an active Australia, Heart Foundation, 2019).

## Value and benefits

### Health benefits

Sport and active recreation play an important role in increasing the physical activity levels of residents. Research demonstrates that participating in regular moderate-to-vigorous physical activity provides many health benefits, physical and mental, that can be seen in children and adolescents, young and middle-aged adults, older adults, women and men, people of different races and ethnicities, and people with chronic conditions or disabilities<sup>1</sup>.

### Physical health<sup>2</sup>

Physical activity is an important factor in preventing or reducing overweight and obesity, a leading contributor to disease in Australia. Regular, on-going participation in sport and/or active recreation activities lowers the risk of all-cause mortality, cardiovascular disease and developing and/or slowing the progression of a wide range of chronic diseases.

Healthy bone development is critical in youth development. Children, adolescents who are physically active, be it through sport, active recreation activities or play, have higher bone mass, improved bone structure and greater bone strength. In addition, they often have higher levels of cardio-respiratory fitness, stronger muscles and lower body fat.

Functional disability increases with age. Active middle aged and older adults have a lower risk of functional limitations than inactive adults, particularly those that participate in exercises where the physical benefits can be transferred to everyday activities such as sit-to-stand, stair climbing and walking tasks. Regular physical activity also helps those with osteoarthritis or other rheumatic conditions affecting the joints.

### Mental health

The Australian Department of Health<sup>3</sup> estimates that almost half of all Australians aged 16 to 85 will experience mental illness at some point in their life. The most common conditions include; anxiety, affective disorders (especially depression) and substance use disorder (especially alcohol use).

Regular participation in sport and active recreation activities has significant positive effects in preventing or reducing the risk of depression and suicide, as well as neuro-degenerative disorders such as Alzheimer’s and Parkinson’s disease. Decreased levels of mental stress, life dissatisfaction and anxiety are also associated with increased levels of physical activity. Recent studies have shown that physically active people are less likely to be diagnosed with dementia<sup>4</sup>.

In addition to improving quality of life, regular physical activity improves sleep, aspects of cognitive function, vocabulary learning, memory and creative thinking.

### Social benefits

#### Building communities

The shire’s variety of sport and active recreation opportunities create an environment where diverse community groups and individuals can come together and interact on a social level. Many sport and active recreation clubs/groups view their members as ‘family’ or a ‘community’ within the broader community. The associational nature of these activities and clubs can be helpful in facilitating social introductions, provide opportunity for social networking and connections, increasing levels of generalised trust, reducing social isolation and, hence, have potential to support the development of social capital, particularly at the neighbourhood level.

1 Physical Activity and Sports - Real Health Benefits, Malm, Jakobsson & Isaksson

2019

2 Blueprint for an Active Australia. National Heart Foundation of Australia, 2019

3 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2018

4 Mental Health, Department of Health, Australian Government 2020



Club leaders, often volunteers, help create connections on behalf of their club/group with the broader community. These connections not only provide clubs/groups with access to knowledge, funding, expertise, resources, and facilities; but provide significant benefits to social and business connections within the shire's community<sup>1</sup>.

### **Inclusion**

Council aims to create an inclusive environment for all community members regardless of age, gender, sexual preference, ability level, disability, ethnic background and socio-economic status. Sport and active recreation (organised) perform an important bridging role within the shire's community by creating settings where people can play and build relationships across age, gender, religious, ethnic and economic differences.

### **CALD**

Immigrants from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds face many challenges in becoming active participants in sport and active recreation activities. Sport and active recreation are identified as one of the key planks of Australia's social inclusion agenda, building the sense of belonging and civic pride which is critical for integration. CALD communities around Australia have developed CALD community-based sport and active recreation leagues which strength of communities and develop trusted community mentors. These leagues and clubs also provide security and facilitate the development of key lifelong networks of friends and service providers.

The barriers to CALD community participation in sport and active recreation have been widely documented and include lack of awareness and understanding, cost of participating, uniform cultural sensitivities, communication and language barriers, culturally inappropriate food, racism and access to facilities.

### **Modified sports**

Many sporting organisations have modified their sport to target children. However, to ensure sport and active recreation is inclusive to all, a number of sporting organisations have modified their traditional sport to make them more accessible to various potential participatory groups such as older adults, persons with disability and time poor people.

To increase and sustain participation numbers in sport among children sports have been modified to offer a fun and socially relevant activities designed to develop fundamental movement skills and encourage future participation in the targeted sport. Overall, modified sports provide structured, age-appropriate, skill development while appropriately introducing competitive sports, although the element of 'competition' may be de-emphasised. Successful modified sports programs for children include Net-Set-Go, AusKick and Milo Cricket.

Sport and active recreation are able to provide immediate and long-term relief to people with disabilities. Sport and active recreation clubs/group have the ability to develop a culture of inclusion and ensure that people with a

disability are valued for their contribution. As such, are valued for their contribution. As such, a number of sports have modified their rules to accommodate a participant's ability to perform or created mixed leagues to ensure all participants feel they are part of the team and club. Examples of such programs include wheelchair rugby, netball, basketball and tennis.

Engagement in low impact and non-competitive, playful sport and active recreation can make a real difference to the emotional and physical health of older adults and potentially enhance their quality of life<sup>2,3</sup>. Modified sports, such as walking netball, have had enormous success amongst the older community, particularly women, with walking netball programs being rolled out across the country as participation numbers and demand increase.

Modified sports can also be aimed at providing faster, less formal, and more social, formats that can be attractive to adults. These modified sports seek to engage people who are either time poor or enjoy being active but with less emphasis on competition.

### **Social intervention**

Sport, and more recently active recreation, is known for its role in preventing or reducing crime and other anti-social behaviour, particularly among the youth.

Generally, places with high levels of social capital are safer and better governed, compared to those places with low levels. The role of peer groups in anti-social behaviour is well documented. Participation in sport and active recreation clubs/groups provides youth with accessible, appropriate activities in a supportive social environment which has been found to help with desirable peer association by providing positive social contexts.

The mental health benefits gained from regular physical activity, including improved self-esteem and emotional and cognitive skills combined with reduced opportunities for boredom and unsupervised leisure time also contribute to crime reduction and anti-social behaviour.

### **Volunteerism**

An important phenomenon in sport and active recreation is the role of volunteers. Without them, there would be fewer activities or they would be more expensive to participate in. Most importantly, volunteers often form the 'human face' of sport and active recreation. Performing coaching, management and organisational functions, the importance of their role within the community extends much further. Often the first point of contact for new and current participants, volunteers build and enhance social capital by facilitating social connectedness, networking and integrating different communities with the club.

1 A Review of the Social Impacts of Culture and Sport. Taylor, Davies, Wells, Gilbertson & Tayleur 2015

2 Mental Health, Department of Health, Australian Government 2020

3 You think you are too old to play? Bronikowska, Bronikowska & Schott 2011

## Northern Grampians Shire character

The Northern Grampians Shire local government area (LGA) is characterised by its diverse and rugged landscapes. The area is dominated by the Grampians mountain range, which boasts towering peaks and scenic valleys that are covered with native bushland and dotted with waterfalls. The Grampians are a popular destination for outdoor enthusiasts, offering opportunities for hiking, rock climbing, camping, and wildlife viewing. The area is home to a range of native flora and fauna, including rare and endangered species, and is considered to be of significant cultural and spiritual importance to Indigenous Australians.

The shire is also characterised by its rolling hills, farmlands, and scenic rivers. The Wimmera River, which runs through the region, along with a number of lakes, provides recreational opportunities, and water sports. The fertile farmlands of the area are primarily used for grazing livestock and growing crops, including wheat, barley, and canola. The region's rural character is emphasized by its small towns, which offer a peaceful and relaxed way of life, and by its many charming country roads and scenic drives.

Council directly manages a diverse range of parks, reserves, civic spaces and streetscapes that contribute to the lifestyle and amenity of the towns, villages and communities across the shire. Over the past decade, council has focussed on enhancing public open spaces, sport facilities and streetscapes through upgrading facilities and planting additional street trees. Increasing the network of walking and cycling paths has also been a priority.

## Planning areas

The shire includes the larger towns of Stawell and St Arnaud, and several villages and outlying communities. For the purpose of the Strategy, the shire has been divided into planning areas. The planning area boundaries are determined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) for data collection purposes. In effect, the entire population of Northern Grampians Shire will be considered for the Strategy. The planning areas are detailed in the table below.

*Northern Grampians Shire planning areas.*

Townships	Communities of Interest	
Stawell	Glenorchy	Marnoo
St Arnaud	Great Western	Navarre
	Halls Gap	Stuart Mill





Map of planning areas within Northern Grampians Shire.

## Facility hierarchy

The facility hierarchy proposed in the previous Strategy should remain in place to ensure clarity in expectations for facility provision across the shire. This is a three- level facility hierarchy consistent with the research findings and industry trends utilised for the council in order to guide the future development and provision of open space and recreation facilities. Industry research indicates there will be need for categorisation systems for open space and separately for sport and recreation built form facilities and playing fields.

The three hierarchies are:

### Regional

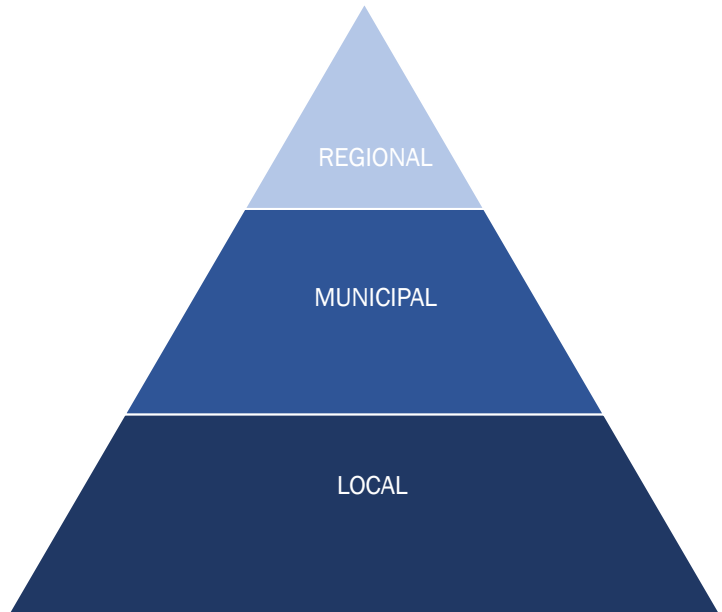
Significant facilities catering for the whole shire and surrounding areas and of a high quality. Generally only one (sometimes two) across a shire.

### Municipal

Facilities that are accessed from people across the shire. Generally of a high standard and only a few within the shire, usually within the main population centres.

### Local

Facilities that service their immediate town and surrounding localities without the expectations of quality as for the Regional and Municipal facilities. The most numerous type of facility, generally spread across townships and across localities.



The service levels of ground and building maintenance will be provided in line with the hierarchical structure. The higher standard Regional facility will usually require a greater level of maintenance. Classifications should be reassessed every five years or as facilities are upgraded or user needs change.

The definitions for the three- level facility hierarchy open space facilities are detailed in the following table.



Classification	Description	Examples	Indicative level of service
Regional	High quality facilities that provide either one or several sports and service the entire Shire and surrounding areas. They are also capable of attracting regular State and Regional events and may have the ability to attract National events	Central Park	High level of service from council with limited responsibilities for tenant organisations
Municipal	Catering for use across the Shire and of high quality (although generally not as high as for Regional facilities). Usually providing for two or more sports/activities, they can attract regular regional events and may sometimes cater for State events.	Stawell Leisure Centre St Arnaud & District Tennis Centre North Park Lord Nelson Park	Also a high level of service from Council but more likely to have additional contributions from tenant organisations
Local	Generally acceptable to be of a lower quality than Regional and Municipal facilities, Local facilities will generally be of a multi-purpose nature (where a demand exists) and provide for local competition and training. They service the immediate town and surrounding localities and are the most common level of facility across the Shire.	Great Western Recreation Reserve Marnoo Recreation Reserve Navarre Recreation Reserve King George's Park	Very limited level of service from council with bulk of maintenance responsibilities lying with local clubs or community committees. Council will most likely financially contribute to such committees.

It is important to note that not all levels of the Sport Facility Hierarchy are applicable to all sports. Generally lower participation sports may only have one or two levels (e.g. softball/baseball, hockey, rugby union) whilst higher participation sports may have all three levels (e.g. netball, cricket, Australian Rules Football) in order to be able to cater for the varying standards of competition.



## Legislation and planning context

### Australian legislation and planning context

A range of Commonwealth legislation and programs influence public open space, as well as structured (sport) and unstructured recreation pursuits during leisure time. Those that will be referenced significantly in relation to development of the Strategy are summarised below:

#### **Sport 2030 - National Sport Plan**

Sport 2030 is the Australian Government's vision for sport nationwide and aims to ensure Australia is the world's most active and healthy nation, and also known for integrity and sporting success. The National Sport Plan has four key priority areas aimed at creating a platform for sporting success. The priorities are:

- Build a more active Australia – More Australians, more active, more often
- Achieving sporting excellence – National pride, inspiration and motivation through international sporting success
- Safeguarding the integrity of sport – A fair, safe and strong sport sector free from corruption
- Strengthening Australia's sport industry – A thriving Australian sport and recreation industry.

#### **AusPlay - The Australian sport and physical activity participation survey**

The Australian Sports Commission's (ASC) task is to strengthen sport and it aims to achieve this through research to provide evidence for strategy and decision-making.

In October 2015 the ASC commenced the AusPlay survey, a large scale national survey tracking the sporting behaviours and activities of the Australian population. The survey data informs Sport 2030 - the National Sport Plan.

The objectives of AusPlay are to:

- provide insights to help sports grow participation and track trends
- provide data that informs government investment, policy and program delivery
- identify and describe links between sport participation and other influential factors.

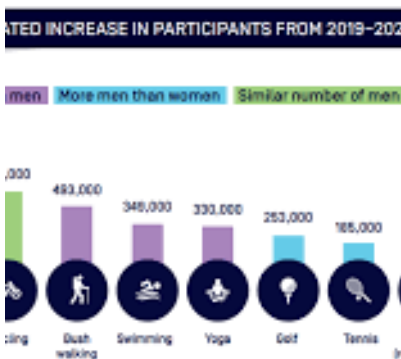
AusPlay data will be used to inform the Strategy.

#### **Australian physical activity and sedentary behaviour guidelines**

The guidelines recognise the importance of physical activity to maintaining physical and mental health and wellbeing throughout people's lifespans. The guidelines set out how much physical activity is required for age groups and during pregnancy. The guidelines outline:

- how much physical activity you should do each day
- ideas to fit more physical activity into your daily life
- the importance of reducing and breaking up the time you spend sitting or lying down when not sleeping
- how much sedentary screen time is recommended
- how much sleep children and young people should get
- how children and young people can get good quality sleep.

The guidelines reflect scientific evidence from around the world and consultation with stakeholders, state and territory governments, and national and international experts.



## Victorian legislation and planning context

The provision and development of land for sport and active recreation is guided by several pieces of State Government legislation, as well as strategies and policies.

The Northern Grampians Planning Scheme also guides and supports appropriate land dedication and facility development. A summary of key legislation, strategies and policies to be used to prepare this Strategy, are listed below.

### Legislation

#### **Planning and Environment Act 1987**

Land use in Victoria is regulated by the Planning and Environment Act 1987 (The Act) which allows plans to be made to guide the process of development and to regulate competing land uses. The Act enables planning through subordinate instruments including the Victoria Planning Provisions, planning scheme, regulations and Ministerial directions.

The Northern Grampians Planning Scheme is the principal land use planning instrument applying to land in the Northern Grampians local government area.

#### **Ministerial directions**

Directions can be issued by the Minister for Planning to planning authorities about the preparation of planning schemes and amendments to planning schemes. These directions apply to planning scheme layout and required information, including amendments to those planning schemes, and should be read in conjunction with the Victoria Planning Provisions. When preparing a planning scheme or an amendment, planning authorities must consider all Ministerial directions.

#### **Subdivision Act 1988**

Northern Grampians Shire Council does not currently have an Infrastructure Contributions Plan and Policy. Therefore, it currently relies on the *Subdivision Act 1988* for open space contributions.

The Act governs the requirements and guidelines for subdividing land. The Act is an important piece of legislation that helps to balance the need for urban development with the preservation of green spaces and public recreation areas.

One of the provisions of the act pertains to open space contributions. When a piece of land is subdivided, the Act requires that a certain amount of open space must be set aside for public use. This open space contribution is calculated as a percentage of the total area of the subdivision and must be provided in the form of parks, embellishments such as playgrounds, sports fields or other public recreation areas. The aim of this requirement is to ensure that new developments have adequate public open space for residents to enjoy, thus enhancing the liveability of the area.

#### **Local Government Act 2020**

The Local Government Act 2020 aims to achieve improved service delivery, innovation, collaboration, and sustainable futures through:

- better financial management and community engagement
- clearer standards of behaviour for elected representatives
- increased council and councillor accountability
- changes to election processes and candidate requirements

### Strategies and policies

#### **Active Victoria 2022-2026**

Active Victoria sets out Victoria's priorities for sport and active recreation to support economic growth and jobs, contribute to health and happiness, building community cohesion and contributing to the liveability of local communities.

There are six priority outcomes of the Plan:

- increasing equitable participation in sport and active recreation
- delivering quality infrastructure that is accessible, respectful and inclusive
- building the capacity of the sport and active recreation workforce
- implementing good governance practices to ensure a safe and sustainable sector
- supporting a pipeline of sporting events within the Victorian events calendar
- encouraging Victorians to achieve success at the highest level through high performance.

#### **Design for Everyone Guide**

Victoria's Design for Everyone Guide is a practical resource to assist the planning, design and development of inclusive sport and recreation facilities. The principles underpinning the guide will be applied to both Strategies to support inclusive design.

#### **Female friendly sport infrastructure guidelines**

Female participation rates in sport and active recreation remain lower than males in Victoria, particularly in community sport and recreation clubs.

The Female Friendly Sport Infrastructure Guidelines provide information and advice on how to deliver more gender equitable environments for community clubs, governing sport and recreation bodies, facility managers, and local government.

The guidelines ultimately aim to provide the range of amenities that attract and sustain women and girls' participation, along with supporting cultural change to provide a strong foundation for participation increases.

### **Guidelines for preventing violence against women: Taking action through community sport**

The Guidelines acknowledge the role that members of community sport clubs can play in influencing positive behaviours and attitudes around gender equality, respectful relationships and the prevention of gender-based violence.

The Guidelines include practical tools, strategies, and advice to support state sporting associations, regional sports assemblies, local councils, women's health services and community health organisations to develop projects that meet the needs of the communities they serve.

### **Regional strategic planning context**

Regional strategic planning refers to the process of developing long-term plans for the growth and development of the various regions within the state. This planning process involves collaboration between local government authorities, state government agencies, and other stakeholders, and is aimed at ensuring that the growth and development of each region is well-coordinated, sustainable, and in line with the overall goals and priorities of the state. Regional strategic planning in Victoria is an important tool for managing the balance between economic growth, environmental protection, and social equity, and helps to ensure that the state's regions continue to be attractive places to live, work and visit. By working together, regional strategic planning helps to create thriving and sustainable communities that are well-positioned to meet the needs of residents now and into the future.

### **Activate Plan 2020-2030**

Activate 2020–2030 is a 10-year regional strategic plan enabling a coordinated and collaborative approach aimed at increasing participation in sport and active recreation for the following Councils:

- Ararat Rural City Council
- City of Ballarat
- Golden Plains Shire Council
- Hepburn Shire Council
- Moorabool Shire Council
- Northern Grampians Shire Council
- Pyrenees Shire Council.

To provide a regional framework, a 10-year action plan and a plan-on-a-page that enables a coordinated and collaborative approach aimed at increasing participation in sport and active recreation for liveability, health and wellbeing.

The four strategic priorities of the Plan are:

- Working together
- Activating places and spaces
- Creating quality physical environments
- Community cohesion through sport and active recreation.

### **Regional Growth Plan**

The Wimmera Southern Mallee Regional Growth Plan is aimed at guiding a coordinated regional response to population growth and regional change over the next 30 years. The plan recognises key environmental, cultural, recreational, economic, tourism and natural resources of value that require preservation, maintenance or development. The plan supports growth in the Northern Grampians Shire, particularly in the district towns of Stawell and St Arnaud that support communities of interest across the Shire.

### **Western Region Sustainable Water Strategy**

The Western region covers around one-third of Victoria from Colac and Lorne in the south-east to Ouyen in the north-west. Its agricultural and urban centres include Colac, Port Campbell, Horsham, Stawell, Ararat, Hamilton, Warrnambool and Portland.

The Western Region Sustainable Water Strategy includes policy statements and 69 actions for implementation at a regional and local scale.

Waterways and water bodies often have cultural significance and contribute to the landscape character. They also can provide recreation opportunities for residents and visitors, if safe and appropriate.

Council is reaping the benefits of securing ample water supply for a range of uses and applications, including irrigation of recreation and sport parks.

### **Grampians Region Climate Adaptation Strategy**

The Grampians Region Climate Adaptation Strategy (GRCAS) is a comprehensive plan developed to address the impacts of climate change. The GRCAS aims to help the region prepare for and respond to the impacts of a changing climate, including increased frequency and severity of extreme weather events, changes in rainfall patterns, and rising temperatures. It outlines a range of actions that can be taken to reduce the vulnerability of the region and its communities to the impacts of climate change, and to ensure that the region is better able to adapt to these changes over time.

The GRCAS takes a collaborative approach with a range of stakeholders including local government, businesses, community organisations, and government agencies. Based on the latest climate science, it considers the unique characteristics and needs of the Grampians region, and focuses on key sectors such as agriculture, forestry, water management, and infrastructure, identifying practical actions that can be taken to enhance the resilience of these sectors to the impacts of climate change. The GRCAS is an important step towards building a more resilient and sustainable future for the region and its communities.

Planning for sporting facilities for the future requires consideration of the impact of climate change, and can form part of adaptation and mitigation actions.



## Wimmera Regional Catchment Strategy

The Wimmera Regional Catchment Strategy (WRCS) is a long-term plan for the management of the Wimmera region's water resources. The WRCS is aimed at balancing the region's economic, environmental, and social needs by managing water resources in a sustainable and integrated manner. It provides a framework for the protection and management of the region's rivers, wetlands, and groundwater resources, and sets out a vision for a sustainable future that supports the growth and development of the region while also safeguarding its natural assets.

The WRCS focuses on a range of key issues, including water quality, water availability, and the protection of important ecological assets such as wetlands. It also provides a framework for the integration of water management into broader planning processes, such as land use planning and economic development. By taking a collaborative and integrated approach, the WRCS helps to ensure that the region's water resources are managed in a way that meets the needs of the current and future generations.

Access to and proximity to water bodies has numerous benefits to people's health and wellbeing. Swimming, fishing, boating, and other water-based activities are popular recreational pursuits and offer a chance to exercise, relax, and connect with nature. The sound (waves, flowing water) and presence of water can also have a calming effect, reducing stress and improving mental health. Additionally, the natural beauty of waterways can also serve as a source of inspiration for artists, photographers, and writers, helping to foster creativity and a sense of purpose. Overall, the value of access and proximity to water bodies in Australia is widely recognised as a crucial aspect of a healthy, balanced lifestyle.



## Council strategic planning context

Northern Grampians Shire Council has undertaken strategic planning for a range of key issues to provide a clear direction and framework for decision-making and to ensure that the resources and efforts of council are aligned with its goals and priorities. Council's strategic planning includes economic development, health and wellbeing, and land use and infrastructure planning.

Quality strategic planning includes engaging with the community, gathering data and information, analysing trends, and developing a vision for the future. The resultant plan is then used as a roadmap to guide decision-making and allocate resources to achieve the desired outcomes. Through its strategic planning processes and activities, council aims to create vibrant, sustainable, and liveable communities across the shire.

A selection of council's strategic planning is summarised below to provide context for the Open Space and Active Transport Strategy under development.

### Council Plan

The four-year Council Plan sets out how council will deliver outcomes identified in key council strategic planning documents such as:

- Asset Plan
- Financial Plan
- Economic Development Strategy
- Shire Vision 2041.

### Economic Development Strategy Action Plan 2021-31

Council recognises that targets within the plan are ambitious goals to reach by 2031, however the aspiration is to "Uplift our communities economic wellbeing and quality of life."

The Action Plan identifies how council and the community aim to:

- grow the population, and lower the median age
- grow the economy
- grow the economic capacity and engagement of residents.

Of relevance to this new work under development, a key strategy (1a ii) is to 'ensure diverse and enriching places and experiences that offer an attractive lifestyle alternative'.

### Financial Plan 2021-2031

Council's Financial Plan projects expenditure over the next 10 years to deliver services, maintain and renew existing assets and build new infrastructure.

Council currently spends over \$28 million to deliver an estimated 40 services and functions, and manages over \$500 million worth of community assets consisting of roads, drains, footpaths, buildings, sporting facilities, recreation reserves and streetscapes. Council can only fund \$6 million of asset replacement annually, instead of the required \$10 million, due to income and revenue constraints.



### **Asset Plan 2022-32**

Council developed an Asset Plan in 2022 to ensure assets relating to roads, bridges and culverts, footpaths, buildings, kerb and channel, stormwater drainage, and open space are strategically managed to meet current and future needs of the community. Footpaths and open space assets are the most relevant for the Strategies being developed.

Community engagement undertaken to inform development of the Asset Plan revealed the following positive feedback from respondents in relation to open space and active recreation:

- 67% believe open space is meeting current community needs
- 69% believe open space assets are well utilised
- 90% believe the size of open spaces meet community requirements
- 70% believe the quality of open space meets community expectations
- all prefer multi-use facilities rather than single use

The plan recognises that future demands for new and altered services provided by assets will result from a range of factors that are to be proactively managed to maximise efficiency and value for money for the community. Integration with Council's long-term financial plan is integral to appropriate management of assets.

The Strategies will contribute to Council's Asset Plan by providing additional rigour around data gathered through open space and facility inspections, and by making recommendations relating to asset renewal, upgrade or replacement, as well as rationalisation where appropriate.

The Strategies may also contribute to Level of Service planning for parks and reserves, although this will be high-level input rather than detailed analysis.



### **Northern Grampians Shire Council Health and Wellbeing Plan 2017-2021**

Council collaborated with state government agencies and non-government and community organisations to develop a plan to support improved health and wellbeing outcomes for residents.

The Vision of the Plan is: Northern Grampians where communities are thriving, healthy and welcoming.

The goals of the Plan are:

- improving mental health and wellbeing
- increasing access to health services
- reducing family violence
- increasing healthy eating and active living
- act on climate change.

The goals of the Health and Wellbeing Plan have been incorporated into the Strategy to ensure alignment.

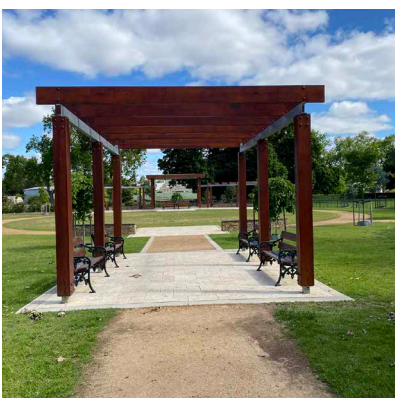


### **Stawell Parks Precinct Plan 2019**

The Precinct Plan includes Central Park, Cato Park and the Swans Project water storage and treatment ponds bordering Maude Street. Key directions included:

- paths and access
- fit-for-purpose sport facilities
- presentation and interface
- lakes and wildlife
- inclusive play facilities
- vegetation.

Implementation of the directions will be reviewed as part of the Open Space and Active Transport and Sport and Active Recreation Strategies, to either support or offer amendments, based on current community needs.



## **2021 Local Government Community Satisfaction Survey - Northern Grampians Shire Council**

The annual Community Satisfaction Survey (CCS) surveys local residents to provide feedback to council regarding services and facilities, and provides a benchmark and comparison allowing council to adjust focus to meet the needs and expectations of its community.

The overall performance of council has improved since 2019, with waste management and decisions made in the interests of the community underpinning positive ratings by residents. The survey has not sought feedback relating specifically to open space, active transport, sport or active recreation, however it may in the future.

## **Open Space, Sport and Recreation Strategy 2014**

In 2014, council developed an open space, sport, and recreation strategy to identify priority projects to respond to the changing needs of the community and increase participation in sport and recreation activities by all members of the community. Priority projects, programs and services were identified to meet Council's strategic objectives over a 10-year timeframe.

Council has progressed several of the recommended actions from the 2014 strategy, and these are summarised further in this report.

## **St Arnaud Structure Plan - emerging themes**

Council is in the process of working with the community to develop a Structure Plan for St Arnaud to:

- establish the township boundary and protect its rural surrounds for agricultural uses
- support and expand existing industries, and enhance the town's role as a regional centre
- provide a range of housing for the changing community and to attract new residents and tourists
- enhance the lifestyle, character and heritage features that make the town special
- create a network of pedestrian and cycling paths, and enhance road network capacity for industry expansion.

In relation to recreation, opportunities have been identified to create opportunities to extend the network of high quality public spaces to suit different recreational needs of the existing and future community.

## **Shire Community Vision 2041**

The Northern Grampians Shire Community Vision 2041 sets the community's priorities for the next 20 years and aims to inform the strategic planning and decision-making processes for the future of the shire.

Two key themes are of particular relevance to development of the Strategy:

- Wellness and Welfare - develop the facilities and capabilities to deliver a range of recreational activities and events for all ages
- Improving Connectivity - identify improved transport connections that help people get where they want to be.

These strategic directions will guide planning to develop the Strategy.

## **North Park Master Plan 2022-32**

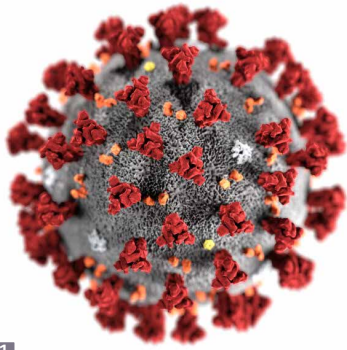
The purpose of the master plan is to provide an understanding of the current and potential future uses of the site, and enable council to consult, plan and design in a structured and informed manner. This plan has:

- identified active and passive opportunities, including those linked to Central and Cato Park
- identified existing and future capability and design options to ensure sustainable recreation provision
- supported investment at North Park to transform the current 'siloes' infrastructure into an integrated and well-connected precinct for active and passive recreation.

## **KEY THEMES FROM COUNCIL PLANNING**

When considered together, the review of council's previous planning highlights a number of key considerations:

- Northern Grampians Shire offers an enviable lifestyle with community wellbeing as a cornerstone
- council engages the community to identify needs and aspirations, and plans accordingly
- council acknowledges the importance of walk and cycle infrastructure as key contributors to positive health and equity outcomes
- council acknowledges the importance of public open space, recreation and sport facilities for the community
- council recognises the unique attributes of individual communities across the shire and aims to reflect characteristics in future planning
- council is aware of the need to preserve the lifestyle available in the shire for current and future generations.



01



02



03



04

- 01\_ COVID-19 has impacted the use of the public realm
- 02\_ Technology changes impact recreation participation
- 03\_ Social media provides new ways for people to engage with parks
- 04\_ Walking remains the activity with the highest participation rate

## Major trends in sport and active recreation

Participation patterns in recreation and sport are changing at a community level. Factors such as a move toward non-organised or social sport, increased outdoor nature-based recreation and increased use of technology have all had a significant impact on how people recreate and use public open space. Understanding these trends (and their impacts) is important as Council looks to develop strategies, programs and facilities to encourage people to engage in sport and active recreation.

### COVID-19

At the time of undertaking this work, the COVID-19 Coronavirus pandemic was in its fourth year and was continuing to impact many aspects of traditional society. While in many parts of Australia semblances of 'normal' life has returned, longer term impacts are currently the subject of further study and investigation.

After Australia's initial lockdown period in the first half of 2020, a number of new, staged public protective measures commenced with State and Federal Governments enforcing restrictions to maintain good hygiene and stop the spread of the virus. The government recommendations included:

- social distancing of a minimum 1.5m from any other person
- limited numbers of people for indoor and outdoor gatherings
- limited number of patrons for restaurants
- restrictions on team sports including change rooms, number of supporters and physical distancing.

Toward the end of 2022 and early 2023, with distribution and take-up of vaccines occurring worldwide, it is likely that the impact of the pandemic will have lasting effects on design aspects and use of the public realm.

Some investigations are occurring into the potential effect of COVID-19 on where people want to live, and the influence of technological connectivity allowing some workers to choose a place to live that is not constrained by proximity to work. During the peak of the pandemic, house prices (particularly in major capital cities in Australia) continued to increase, providing another consideration for people's home location choices. The impacts of these factors on population projections in regional locations such as the Northern Grampians is not yet known, however provides an opportunity to promote the lifestyle benefits on offer across the Shire.

Council's future planning and design of public parks and places will benefit from referring to guides such as *Streets for Pandemic Response and Recovery* to ensure the optimum in public health standards are maintained in public spaces including parks and sporting facilities.

### How Australians' participation in sport and physical activity is adapting to COVID-normal

In July 2022, AusPlay data was reported showing further evidence of how participation in sport and recreation is changing for Australians. In summary:

- compared with 2019, the average mix of activities per person is increasing, with fewer people relying solely on sporting clubs or organised venues for exercise
- physically-distanced (COVID-safe) or home-based activities are increasingly popular, including walking, bush walking, tennis, pilates, mountain biking, and canoeing/kayaking
- "exergaming" is now one of the top 20 activities for Australians aged 15+
- social and mental health benefits of exercise are increasingly important for Australians aged 15+
- participation by children in sport is lower than 2019, however, there are indications that children are returning to regular (1+ per week) participation.

## Technology

In just one generation, there has been a dramatic shift in childhood activity from outdoors to indoors. This has been driven in part by increased use of technology. Technology remains one of the main contributors towards decreased physical activity and increased sedentary behaviour. However, active gaming is becoming a contemporary approach to exercise. In some technology-based games, participants are engaged in physical movement by using their bodies as the controllers (thus increasing their heart rate).

Increasing use of smart phones and apps allows people to obtain information, communicate with each other very quickly, and provide feedback on their recreation experience at any time of the day or night. Many people using parks, playgrounds, paths and trails make the decision on where to recreate based on the information available via the internet, blogs, forums and social media.

A number of mobile phone apps are aiding the community in tracking, recording and mapping their activities including walking, running and mountain bike riding. The apps allow participants to compete against themselves, as well as other app users. It can also be a useful tool for managing authorities in determining where the community is currently participating in activities (whether authorised or not).

There are also increasing community expectations of access to technology in recreation areas including WiFi access in key parks, and use of digital tools for information and marketing on tracks and signage.

### Increasing 'screen time' during leisure time

Time spent looking at a screen is somewhat unavoidable in many workplaces and schools. More of our leisure time is also being spent looking at screens, at the cost of active leisure activities including socialising, reading, writing, arts and crafts, sports, exercise and recreation<sup>1</sup>.

A study conducted using data from the US Bureau of Labor Statistics found a clear trend of adult Americans participating in increased screen time (for leisure) and decreasing active leisure over a 13-year period ending in 2015. It is believed that a similar trend applies to adults in Australia. Excessive screen time has been associated with negative health outcomes as people have less time available to participate in physical activity.

### Social media

The rise of social media over the past 15 years has provided new ways for people to engage with parks and public places and share their experiences on platforms such as TikTok, Instagram and Facebook. In some cases, this process of sharing and promoting locations has increased visitation. A recent study conducted in the United States identified that millennials are seeking 'brag-worthy' experiences to share on social media<sup>2</sup>.

### Participation trends

Since 2015, Sport Australia has conducted a national sport and physical activity participation survey, *AusPlay*.

The most recent results of the survey were released in April 2020. In 2011-12 and 2013-14, a similar survey, the *Participation in Sport and Physical Recreation Survey* was conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). Between 2001-2010, the *Exercise, Recreation and Sport Survey* (ERASS) was conducted by the Committee of Australia Sport and Recreation Officials (CASRO).

Overall, participation in sport and physical activity has increased in the last two decades. More adults participate more frequently compared to 2001. Female participation (at least once each year) has remained on par with male participation throughout. However, more women have constantly participated, more often.

Participation in sport-related activities has not increased, while non-sport physical activities have increased significantly (by more than 20 percent from 2001 to 2019). Participation in non-sport recreation activities such as walking and fitness/gym have increased the most.

More children participate in organised (out-of-school) sport, than adults. The top activities children participate in changes as children age, with a focus on the life skill of swimming for infants and toddlers and running, fitness/gym, football and walking being the dominant activities by the time children reach the ages between 15 and 24 years old.

National participation rates in organised sport have been declining for a number of years as participants move toward more social (drop-in drop-out) sport and informal recreation. It will be important for Council to monitor participation trends into the future to ensure resources are allocated appropriately to support a broad range of both recreation and sport activities.

### Walking

Walking continues to be the most popular physical activity across age groups in Australia. Further refinement and implementation of Council's strategic planning for infrastructure that supports walking and cycling for transport and recreation will continue to increase in importance in future years.

### On Your Bike

In Australia in 2005, 13% of the population (or 2.1 million people) cycled regularly or occasionally. By 2019 this figure reached 19% (or 3.7 million people)<sup>3</sup>. Cycling has been reported as one of the top five sport and physical activities from results of the *AusPlay* survey released in 2020. Over 90% of participation in cycling is non-organised, with only 8% of cyclists participating in organised competitions.

Mountain bike riding includes a number of off-road biking styles, including cross-country, downhill, observed trials, cross-country marathon and cyclocross. In November 2020, Mountain Bike Australia, BMX Australia and Cycling Australia amalgamated to form AusCycling. AusCycling has over 54,000 members and 400 affiliated clubs nationwide across different forms of cycling. There are many mountain bikers who are not registered with AusCycling. It is estimated that over half of mountain bike riders are not club or group members.

1 Krause and Sawhill. *How free time became screen time.* 2016

2 *Ways to Make Your Parks Millennial Friendly*, US NRPA. 2015

3 Roy Morgan Single Source (Australia), April 2014–March 2015 (n=15,913)

The past decade has seen a steady increase in registered BMX club members with over 17,000 active members (excluding volunteers) nationwide in 2018. BMX bikes are also popular for non-competition recreation and skate parks are popular locations for BMX bikes, as well as other wheeled recreation devices, such as scooters.

Pump tracks are also becoming one of the more popular recreation facilities for all ages. A pump track is a 2-6m wide track for mountain bike, BMX, pedal-less balance bikes, scooters and skateboard riders. The track consists of rollers and banked turns (berms). While there is no set dimensions or design template, layouts consist of continuous loops with different combinations of rollers and berms. The 'pump' part is the pushing-down and pulling-up action performed by riders as the key source of momentum. A well-designed pump track will allow advanced riders to jump from roller to roller and across berms to different parts of the track, rather than just pumping and riding over a prescribed route. In Australia, larger pump tracks tend to be made of asphalt or dirt, with smaller plywood composite and pre-cast concrete tracks also popular.

The various forms of cycling and the growing popularity of all types of bike riding supports evidence of a shift away from structured sport to unstructured recreation. Cycling is also growing in popularity as an active transport method.

### **Ageing population**

Australia's population is ageing due to declining fertility rates and increasing life expectancy. 16% of Australians (4.2 million) were aged 65 and over in 2020. This cohort is projected to grow to 22% of the total population by 2066.

In 2020, AusPlay data revealed that less than half (44%) of older Australians aged 65+ participated in physical activity five times per week.

The change in age structure for people living in Northern Grampians Shire between 2011, 2016, and 2021, indicates increases (+575) in people aged 70+ living in the Shire. Overall, this group represents over 5% of the population, and approximately 2,269 individuals.

Ensuring access to a range of recreation opportunities for older residents in the Northern Grampians will require conscious planning and design, including elements to ensure inclusion and access. Recent research shows that older adults who maintain a higher level of physical capacity may actually slow their ageing process, contributing to improved personal health outcomes including managing cardiovascular disease or diabetes, for example<sup>4</sup>.



4 Richards, R & May, C. *Mature-aged sport and physical activity*. 2019

## IMPLICATIONS OF MAJOR TRENDS

Trends are significant changes occurring over the long term that are tracked with data-based evidence. The implications for Northern Grampians include:

- major interruptions from external and uncontrolled sources to 'normal' daily life can occur and may occur again in the future
- technological advances will continue to influence how we interact with the physical environment
- participation in unstructured physical activity is increasing, compared with declining participation in sport. Sport remains important particularly for children and young adults (ages 5-35 years)
- walking remains the most participated in physical activity and safe and comfortable walking and cycling options are key to creating liveable communities. Cycling continues as a strongly growing sport/recreation activity
- imagination and nature-based play provide extended play opportunities compared with traditional equipment 'playgrounds'
- people are reclaiming the public realm, particularly from car dominant uses, and creating spaces where people create a sense of belonging
- people are increasingly aware of living well into older age.

## Emerging sports trends

### **Declining number of volunteers**

The rate of volunteering in sport and recreation clubs has been declining for many years. Often, the responsibility for running clubs falls to a small group of key personnel. To address this issue, there is a move toward amalgamations, with multi-sport clubs becoming more common. In other cases, organisations may become aligned to larger licensed clubs, that take over some or all of the volunteers' roles, as well as asset management responsibilities.

### **Sport precinct provision**

There are acknowledged benefits of developing dedicated multi-use sports precincts (rather than single-field facilities).

Large flexible-use sites provide opportunities for shared use of infrastructure and maintenance requirements and enhanced ability to attract funding given the range of users. There are a number of existing multi-use facilities across the region. These larger facilities are important in attracting high-level events that often require large numbers of playing fields and courts.

### **Field sharing**

With many sports extending the lengths of pre-season and season fixtures, sports are no longer classifying themselves as strictly summer or winter sports, this has led to the sharing of field space becoming more difficult. While providers strive to maximise the use of community resources (and State Government espouses field sharing), the reality is that shared use of ancillary facilities (e.g. clubhouses, car parks) rather than fields will be more likely.

### **Field and court quality**

Facility providers face an increasing trend to develop and re-develop sporting fields and courts to a higher standard in order to increase carrying capacity. Upgrades, such as lighting, field irrigation and turf varieties allow training and competition times to be extended and increases the ability of turf playing fields to cope with the resulting wear and tear. Further, to achieve ongoing field quality, fields need 'rest periods' (of up to four weeks) where necessary maintenance can be undertaken.

### **Emergence of Soccer/Football**

The birth of the Stawell Pioneers SC and its subsequent growth over the last 4 years has been excellent for football in the Wimmera region. From 52 participants in its inaugural season in 2019, through 60 in 2020, to 71 in a Covid-19 dampened 2021 season, the club continues to solidify itself as a long-term interest in the area.

### **Field lighting**

Councils across Australia are becoming increasingly aware that through the design and development of modern field lighting, the availability and use of many existing sporting venues can be greatly increased. This reduces the need to develop costly new facilities and to find the required land for such.

### **Move towards indoor sport and recreation**

Anecdotally, there is an emerging trend toward sport participation indoors (e.g. basketball, netball and fitness). Potentially, this move may be a result of a preference for activities in a controlled climate and/or greater mid-week opportunities (compared with outdoor activities and traditional Saturday or Sunday fixtures).

### **Diversification of sport**

Road cycling, mountain biking and eco-tourism activities are all growing as non-traditional physical activities, while modified sports such as T20 cricket and 7s rugby are burgeoning. Changes are placing additional pressure on councils with regard to playing field capacity, facility flexibility and the need to plan for additional demand.

### **From extreme to mainstream**

There has been a recent rise in adventure, extreme and alternative sports that are proving particularly popular with younger generations. These sports typically involve complex and advanced skills and often have some element of inherent danger and thrill-seeking. Examples include freestyle BMX and rock-climbing. These sports are also characterised by a strong lifestyle element and participants often obtain cultural self-identity and self-expression through their involvement. International associations for adventure sports are working hard to obtain inclusion in Paralympic and Olympics events (with both skate boarding and rock climbing included as exhibition sports in the 2020 Olympic Games)

While participation rates in some mainstream and organised sports have held constant (or slightly) declined over the past decade, extreme and action sports have risen in both demand (participation) and supply (industry). These sports are gaining popularity among large segments of Generation Y who connect to a counter-culture of adventure and freedom of expression. At this point, however, solid longitudinal participation data in these sports and activities remains scant.

### **Busy lifestyles**

Shift work, increases in part-time and casual employment and family commitments influence participation as:

- people do not have the time to commit as a regular participant or volunteer
- people seek facilities and participation opportunities with flexible hours.



## EMERGING SPORTS TRENDS - LOCAL IMPACTS

- declining numbers of volunteers at many of our local sporting organisations and creates stress on longstanding sporting clubs. There needs to be creative and proactive action in partnership with peak bodies and SSO to review strategies for positive outcomes
- several of the sport reserves/facilities in Northern Grampians Shire are home to multiple sports. There is an opportunity to investigate alternative governance models for clubs, that reflect and take advantage of changes in technology, participation trends, contemporary facility management practices and programming
- energy efficiency initiative opportunities are evident at sporting reserves for upgraded sports lighting, solar energy provision and water supply which would contribute to club sustainability and energy efficiency outcomes.
- soccer/Football continues to grow in the Stawell area and will require ongoing reviews to monitor its direct impacts and impacts on other sports locally. Council has contributed substantially in the last 3 years to new infrastructure including multipurpose clubrooms, lighting and playing surfaces to support its growth.

## FOOTBALL (SOCCER) TRENDS

The emergence and growing maturity of football (soccer) in Stawell is a case study into how Council supports the growth of clubs through multi-use infrastructure and programming.

Stawell Pioneers Soccer club was established in 2018 and what was initially a single senior team, has since grown to include junior teams competing across various age groups. Northern Grampians Shire Council supported the club through finding a suitable location in North Park Athletic Track to play, train and operate from. From that location, the club also had access to the entire Sporting Precinct including changerooms, storage and main oval. This was further enhanced through a lighting upgrade to allow for greater access and operating hours for the soccer pitch.

There recently has been a large influx of international workers within the LGA which has been supported through council's Multicultural Action Officer. This connection has enabled council to grow the sport through programming at the Stawell Sports and Aquatic Centre in the form of a casual seven a side competition. Council has tailored the program to be accessible and informal to encourage those workers, as well as the broader community to engage with the sport.

## Sport and active recreation achievements

Since the adoption of the Northern Grampians Open Space, Sport and Recreation Strategy in 2014, a commendable volume of work has been undertaken to improve sport and active recreation facilities. A concise summary of achievements is provided here to contribute to the strategic context for development of the next 10-year Sport and Active Recreation Strategy 2023-33.

Key achievements since 2014 include:

- master planning of significant parks to guide development and provide the staged implementation of adopted master plans
- upgraded facilities at several sport parks across the Shire
- redevelopment of the Stawell skate park and planning underway for upgrade of the St Arnaud facility
- asset management planning for open space infrastructure.

The 2014 strategy recognised the broad range of sport, recreation, open space and leisure services available in the townships and villages across the Shire, and identified facilities, programs and services as future improvements and opportunities. In particular, the 2014 Strategy identified:

- walking tracks and trails including strategic links within and connecting towns and villages
- upgrades to swimming pools and leisure centre
- improved accessibility
- secure access to lakes and suitable amenities
- youth facilities
- upgrades to sport facilities
- a range of programs and services spanning participation, information and communication, facilities, grants and funding, youth, capacity building, partnership and relationship building, and planning.

The 2014 Strategy provided strategic direction for policy development, facility upgrades and recommended programs and services to meet the communities needs into the future. Council has made progress with many of the identified actions.

The Northern Grampians Shire Sport and Active Recreation Strategy 2023-33 builds on the 2014 Strategy, with renewed focus on strategic goals and actions for individual sport and recreation reserves infrastructure and programming to position Northern Grampians Shire as a unique and regionally significant lifestyle location.







# Community profile

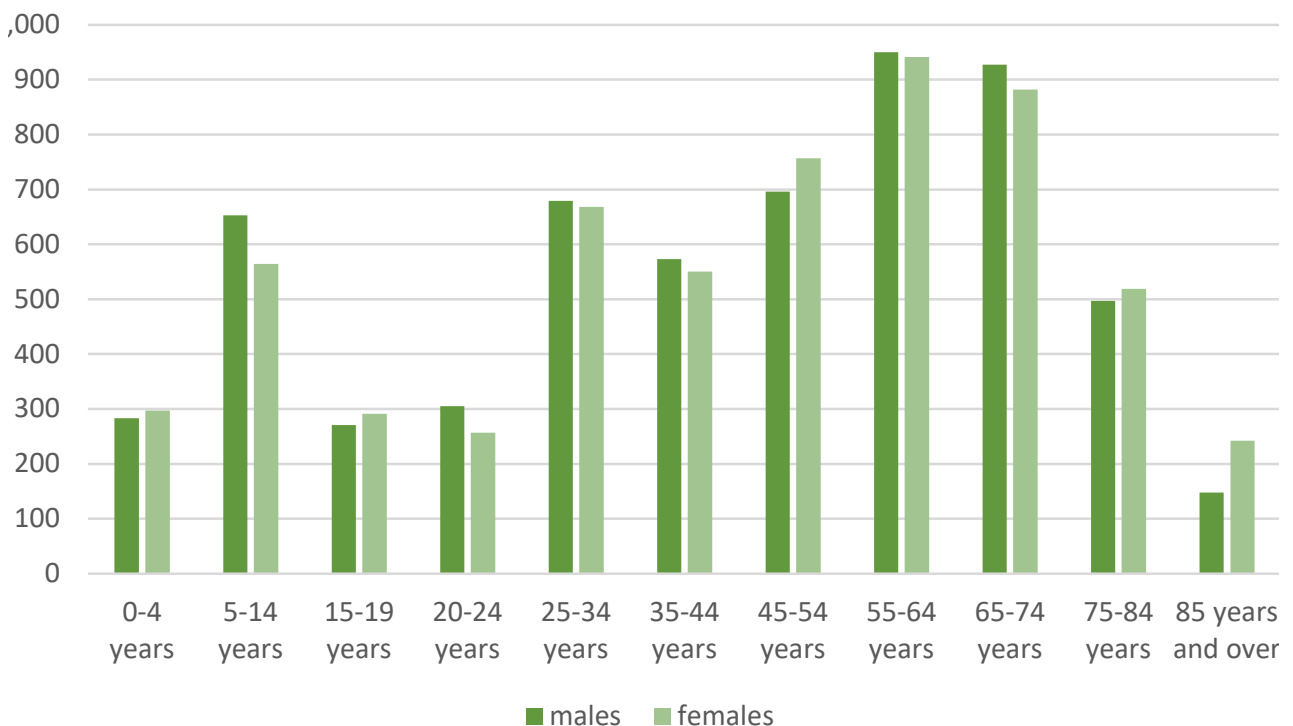
Understanding the shire's demographic profile including age, household composition and income and employment patterns provides an insight into potential sport and recreation needs for the people living across the Northern Grampians Shire. Key demographic information is provided here as an input to further analysis of participation in recreation and sport activities by individuals, as well as groups of people with similar demographic characteristics in the community.

## Demographics

The following demographic information is provided as a snapshot in time and is aimed at providing context, and a reference point, as readers consider the overall context for this project.

The demographic profiles on the following pages were sourced from Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Census 2021 data and REMPLAN population estimates.

### Northern Grampians Shire population age groups





**66%**  
residents

Live in the townships of  
Stawell and St Arnaud



**229**  
people

Estimated Indigenous population



**5,989**  
male



**5,963**  
female

Male and Female population



**2.2**  
people

Average household size

Fig. 01 Northern Grampians Shire Local Government Area and Villages

## Stawell township

5,627	population
48	median age
2,853	(50.7%) female
2,774	(49.3%) male
2.1	average people per household
\$1,089	median weekly household income
118	Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander people
2,384	(88.9%) occupied private dwellings
294	(11%) unoccupied private dwellings



### Glenorchy



131	population
53	median age
	(57.2%) male
	(42.8%) female
2.1	average people per household
\$1,020	median weekly household income
0	Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander people
53	(88.3%) occupied private dwellings
4	(6.7%) unoccupied private dwellings

### Great Western



425	population
52	median age
218	(51.3%) male
207	(48.7%) female
2.2	average people per household
\$1,474	median weekly household income
6	Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander people
182	(88.8%) occupied private dwellings
25	(12.2%) unoccupied private dwellings

### Halls Gap



495	population
44	median age
268	(54.1%) male
227	(45.9%) female
2	average people per household
\$1,196	median weekly household income
16	Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander people
184	(44.1%) occupied private dwellings
230	(55.2%) unoccupied private dwellings

## St Arnaud township

2,318	population
52	median age
1,203	(51.9%) female
1,115	(49.3%) male
2	average people per household
\$920	median weekly household income
54	Aboriginal/ Torres Strait Islander people
1,042	(86.6%) occupied private dwellings



### Marnoo



99	population
52	median age
53	(53.3%) male
46	(46.7%) female
2.1	average people per household
\$900	median weekly household income

### Navarre



99	population
54	median age
45	(45.1%) male
54	(54.9%) female
2.2	average people per household
\$814	median weekly household income

### Stuart Mill



78	population
57	median age
40	(51.2%) male
38	(48.8%) female
2.1	average people per household
\$1,042	median weekly household income



# Consultation outcomes

A range of tools and techniques have been utilised to engage stakeholders (such as State Sporting Organisations, Northern Grampians sporting clubs/organisations and Council officers) including:

- emails introducing the project and seeking input
- on-site and telephone discussions with stakeholders regarding facility issues
- sporting club online survey (and relevant responses to the Open Space and Active Transport online survey)
- telephone interviews and MS Teams meetings.

## Council feedback

Various meetings have been held with relevant Council personnel with the main outcomes summarised as follows:

- more emphasis needs to be placed on the ongoing maintenance costs of facilities
- increasing the community use of facilities could be achieved through initiatives such as lighting facilities once a week for the community to use
- recognition of the trend in the rising popularity of informal recreation
- the co-operative development of programs between council and clubs could increase general participation
- current projects were identified that included North Park, the Stawell Sports and Aquatic Centre and Stawell skate park
- the frontage of Central Park to Main Steet is unsightly
- the ongoing viability of clubs is an issue
- an additional netball court at Central Park has been requested by the club
- advice is sought regarding a proposal received from the St Arnaud Bowling Club for a significant development involving large shade domes and two synthetic greens.

## Sport and Recreation Victoria

- the aim should be a range of diverse facilities across the Shire
- if the Strategy identifies there is not a strong need for new facilities, the focus should be on a more sustainable approach such as activating existing facilities, increasing community use
- the development of gender neutral facilities is becoming increasingly important
- any proposed developments should incorporate environmentally sustainable design principles.

## School workshops

Council engaged with students from schools in Stawell and St Arnaud to inform the development of both the Open Space and Active Recreation Strategy and the Sport and Active Recreation Strategy. The outcomes of the school workshops that provide direction for this Strategy include:

- on the whole, students like where they live and appreciate the lifestyle across towns and outlying communities
- popular destinations in St Arnaud include Lord Nelson Park, Queen Mary Gardens, skate park and the tennis club
- popular destinations in Stawell include Cato Park, netball courts and running track at North Park, and Taylors Gully Park
- young people generally feel safe walking and cycling around the towns and on trails, including the rail trail
- interestingly, some younger students felt unsafe at the skate park and Central Park due to the behaviour of other park users
- young people 'hang out' at each other's homes, as well as the popular parks identified above.

Further engagement with school students and young people will be necessary as specific projects identified in the Strategies undergo further detailed planning.

## On-line survey

An on-line survey specifically designed to record the needs and wants of local sport and active recreation clubs/organisations was developed and distributed.

It is noted that the closing date for the completion of this survey was extended to ensure the most possible responses were received prior to the development of this draft Strategy. The full responses to all questions have been provided to council separately.

A summary of survey responses is provided following.



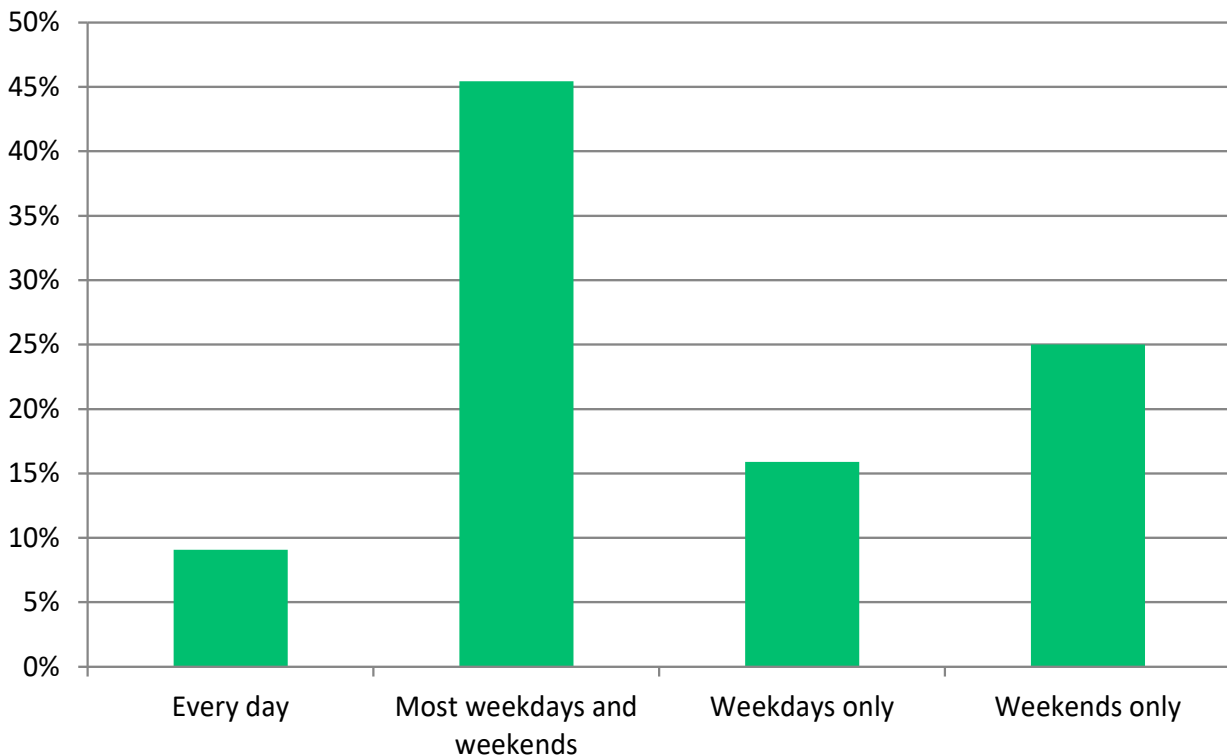
## Sporting club survey summary

The on-line survey asked local clubs to identify facility and operational issues currently impacting their club. 45 responses were received from the following clubs/organisations (in order of receipt):

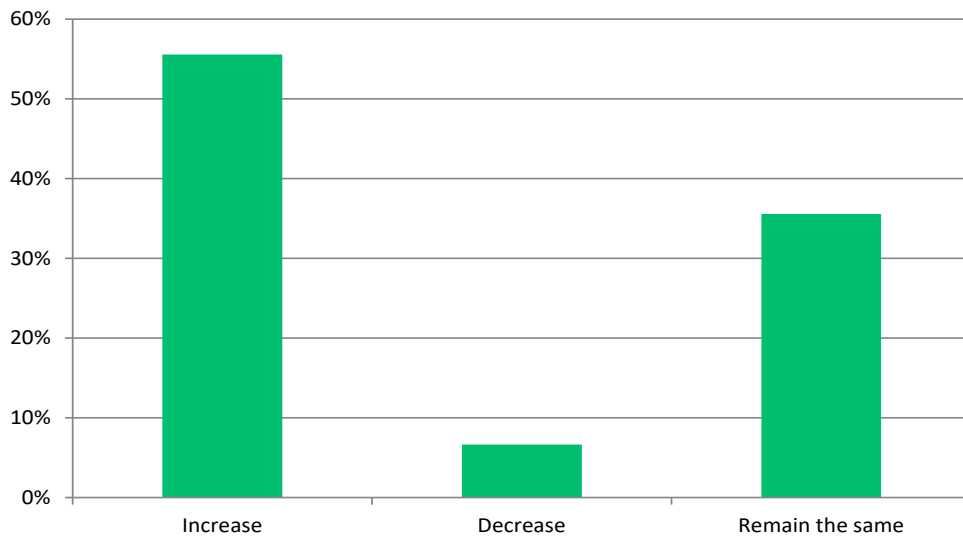
- |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> St Arnaud and District Swimming Club    | <input type="checkbox"/> Grampians Cricket Association   | <input type="checkbox"/> Youth Club Cricket Club             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> St Arnaud Bowling Club                  | <input type="checkbox"/> St Arnaud Hockey Club   | <input type="checkbox"/> Callawadda/Stawell Clay Target Club |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Halls Gap Community Sports Club         | <input type="checkbox"/> Grampians Bushwalking Club  | <input type="checkbox"/> Stawell Racing Club                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Stawell Women's Day Basketball Club     | <input type="checkbox"/> St Arnaud Netball Club  | <input type="checkbox"/> Dance Capital                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Grampians Field and Game Australia      | <input type="checkbox"/> Stawell 13 and Under Football Association                             | <input type="checkbox"/> Grampians Riding Club               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Stawell Football and Netball Club       | <input type="checkbox"/> Stawell Racquetball Association                                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Stawell Bowling Club                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Stawell Golf Club                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Stawell Interchurch Netball Association                               | <input type="checkbox"/> St Arnaud Harness Racing Club       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> St Arnaud Pony Club                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Grampians Petanque Club   | <input type="checkbox"/> Stawell Pony Club                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Great Western Football Netball Club     | <input type="checkbox"/> Halls Gap Caravan Park and Recreation Reserve Committee of Management | <input type="checkbox"/> Swifts Great Western Cricket Club   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Marnoo Cricket Club                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Stawell Wildcats Basketball Association                               | <input type="checkbox"/> St Arnaud Cricket Club              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Stawell Little Athletics                | <input type="checkbox"/> Swifts Football Netball Club  | <input type="checkbox"/> Stawell Amateur Athletic Club       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Navarre Football Club                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Stawell Gymnastics Club   | <input type="checkbox"/> Stawell Rifle Club                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Great Western Racing Club               | <input type="checkbox"/> Riding for Disabled   | <input type="checkbox"/> Glenorchy Golf Club                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> St Arnaud and District Lawn Tennis Club | <input type="checkbox"/> Halls Gap Cricket Club  | <input type="checkbox"/> Stawell Fire Brigade                |
|  |  | <input type="checkbox"/> St Arnaud Swimming Club             |
|  |  | <input type="checkbox"/> Stawell Pioneers Soccer Club        |
|  |  | <input type="checkbox"/> Stawell Tennis Club.                |

An excerpt of responses received reflect some of the trends identified, are summarised following.

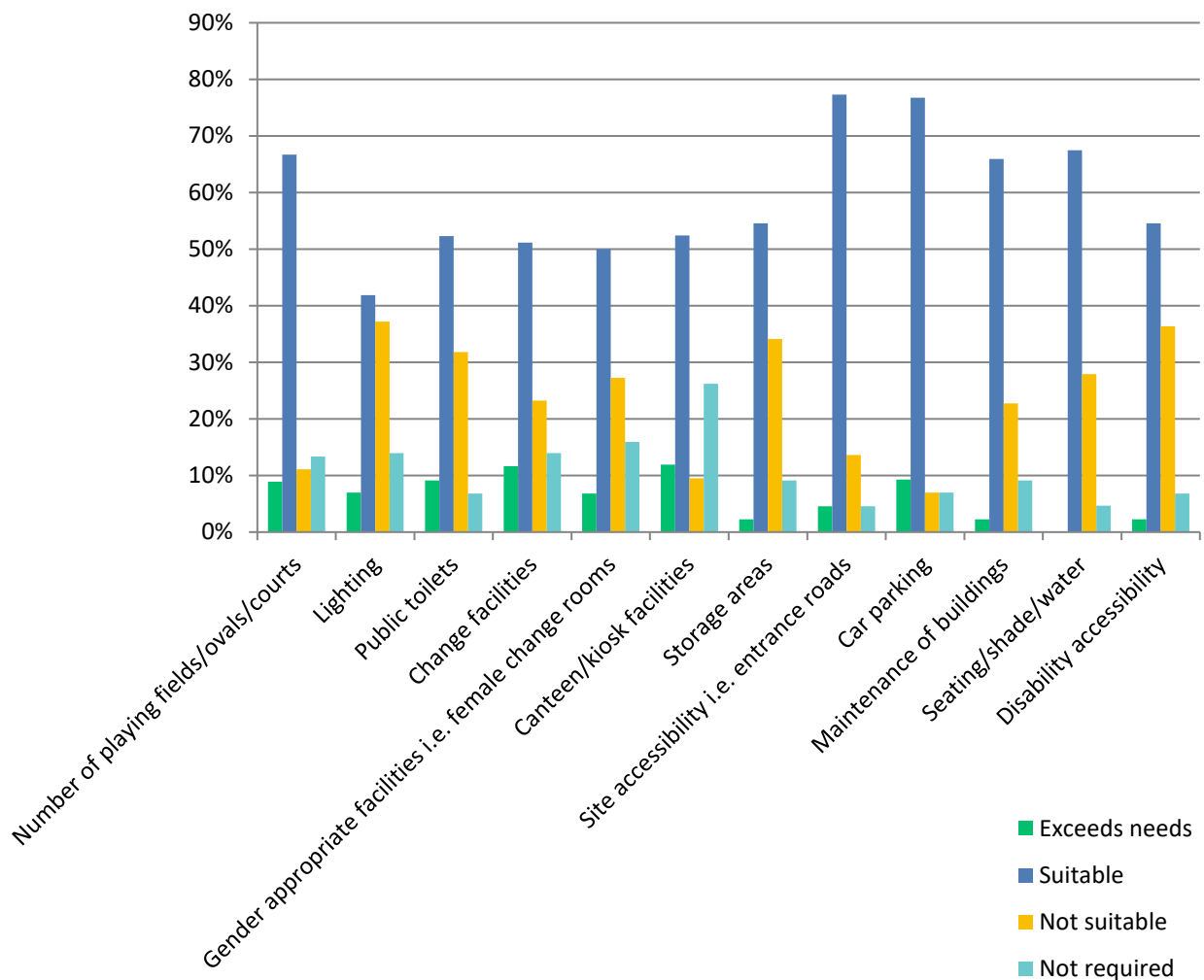
### Q: How often do you use your home reserve/facility?



**Q: In the next three years, do you expect your membership to:**

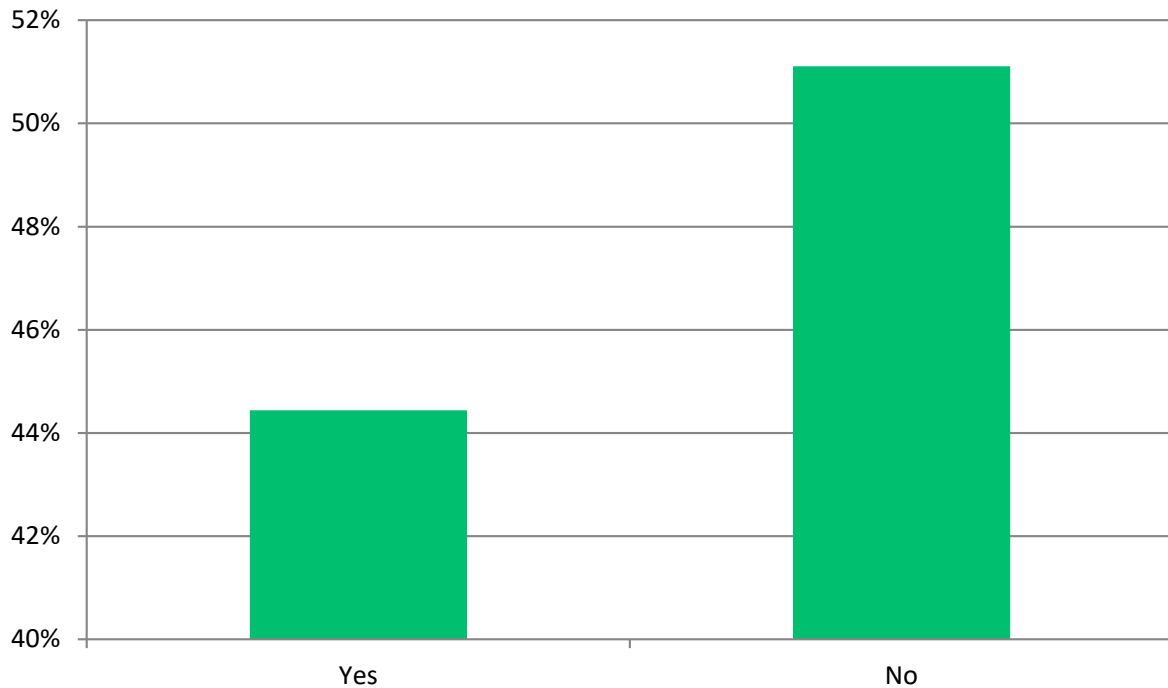


**Q: Please indicate whether the facilities used by your organisation are suitable for your requirements:**



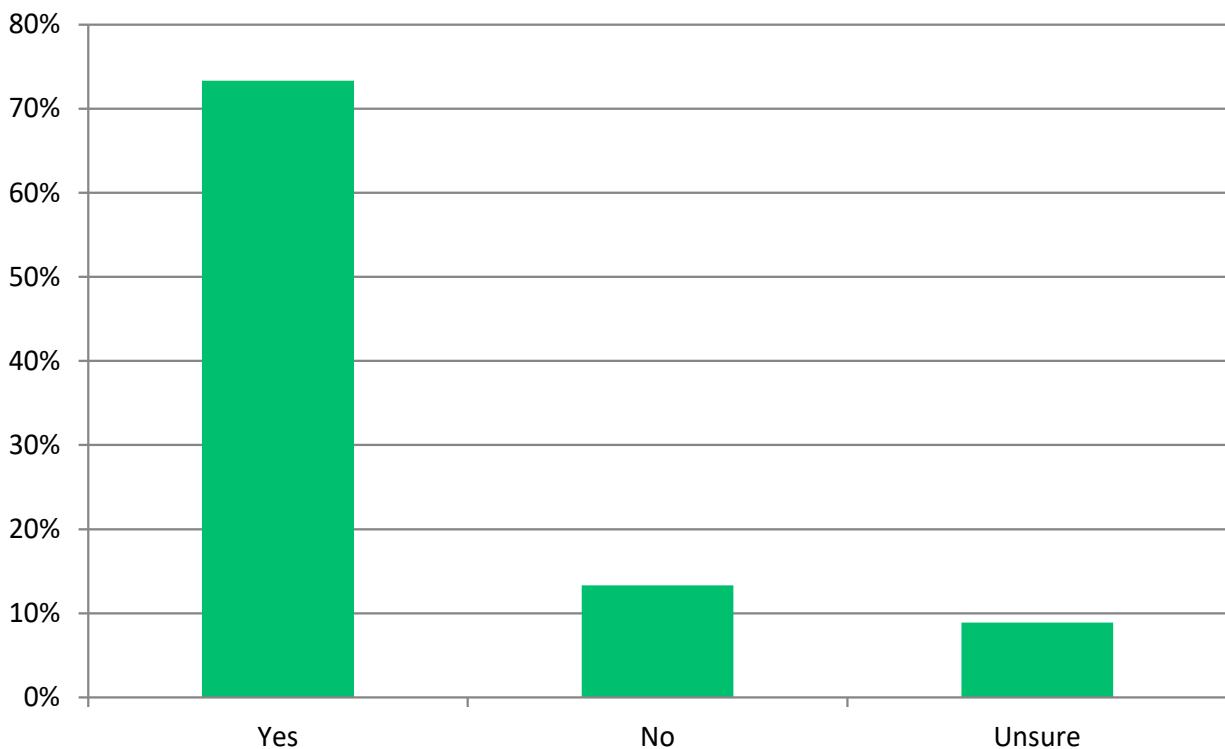
Further establishing that new facilities or major upgrades are not identified as a significant issue across the shire, respondents indicated overwhelmingly that existing facilities are suitable for their needs.

**Q: Does your facility meet your needs (now and into the future), considering factors such as infrastructure needs, issues associated with sharing with another club/group, site constraints, etc?**



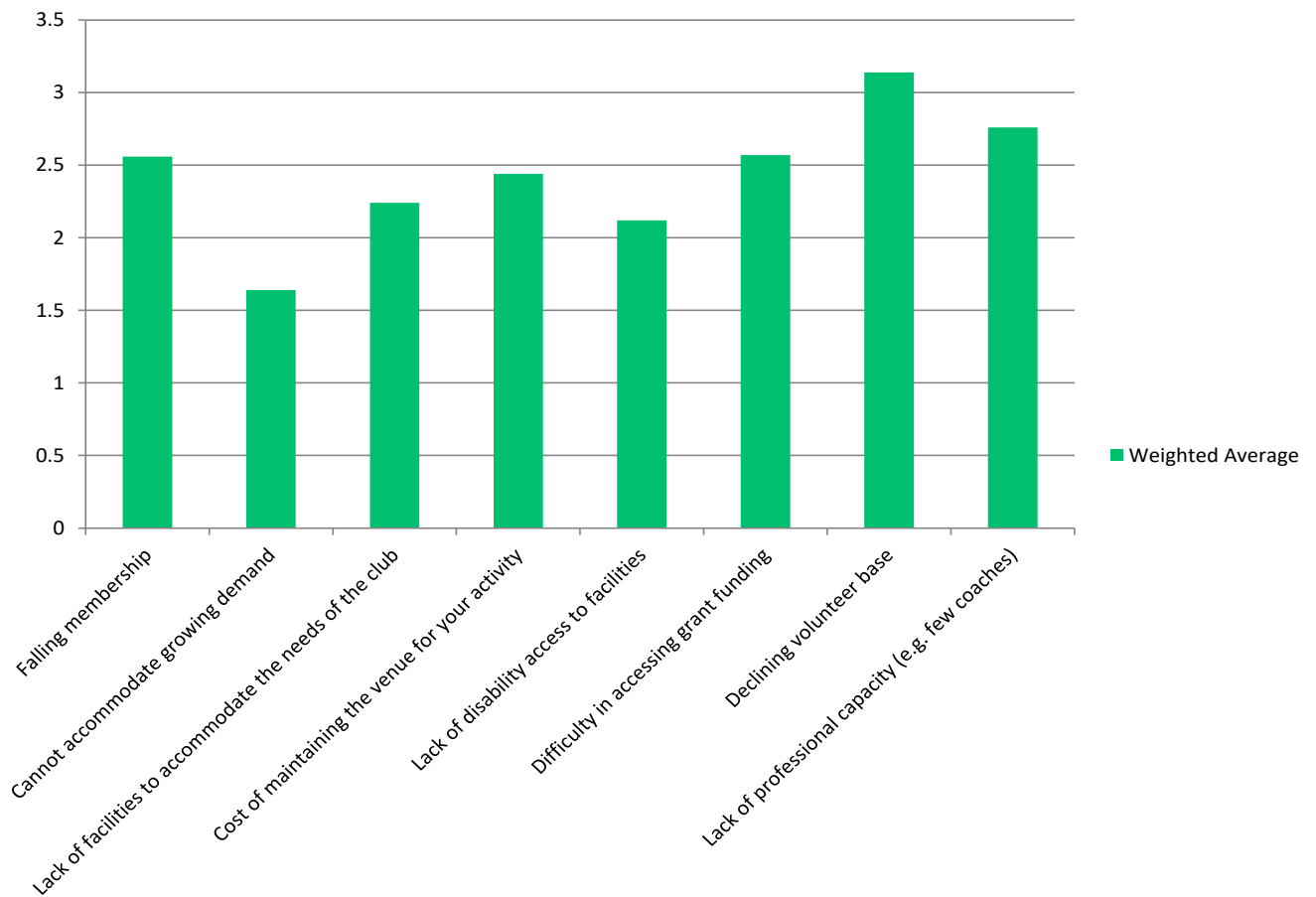
An interesting outcome, considering that few clubs identified specific significant improvements considered necessary for their ongoing viability. The issues identified were generally quite minor with the most common being ageing infrastructure and the lack of storage space.

**Q: Do your facilities meet your sport's minimum requirements for competition?**



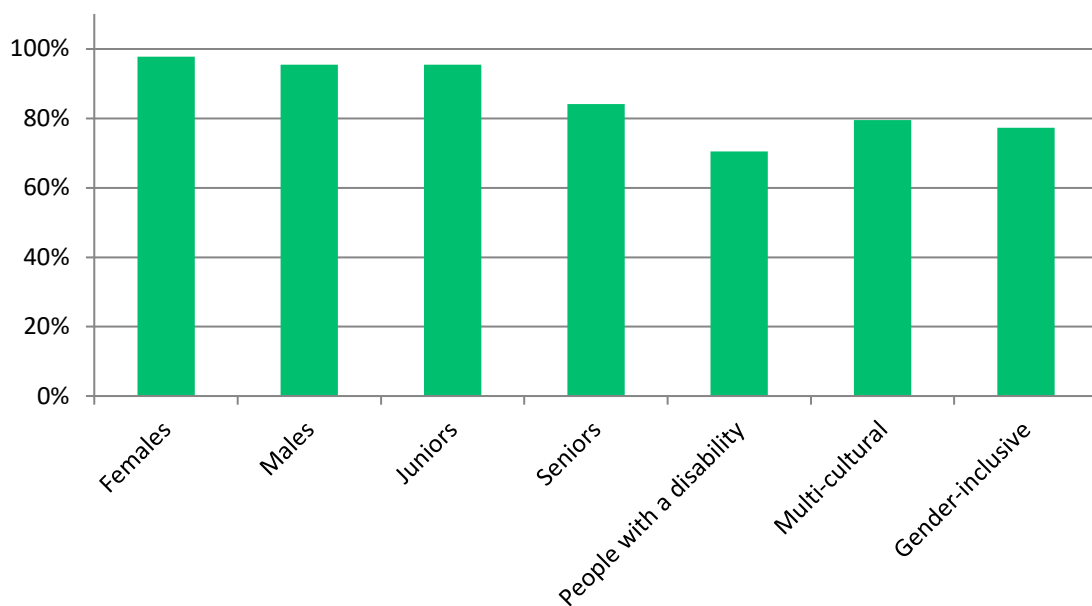
The responses to this question reinforced that the dissatisfaction indicated in the previous question were with minor issues and those that didn't impact greatly on their ability to provide their relevant activities.

**Q: Please indicate the extent that your club/organisation is concerned about the following issues (4 being very concerned and 1 being not at all).**



Reflecting the overall satisfaction with facilities, the main issues causing concern for clubs were operational, including declining numbers of volunteers, coaches and participants.

**Q: Please tick the groups below that your club/organisation currently caters for.**



A pleasing outcome, indicating that clubs and facilities across the shire are able (and willing) to cater for a wide range of user groups and participants.

## Other identified issues

The majority of other 'general' issues raised by clubs were related to the shared use of facilities and lack of their own fields and ancillary facilities. These issues were quite specific and unfortunately, it is unrealistic to meet all expectations that individual clubs have regarding their own specific facility, both in capital costs and ongoing viability terms.

It should be noted that when asked about the most important facility improvements required, responses were highly varied across a range of minor improvements. The most common responses however, were:

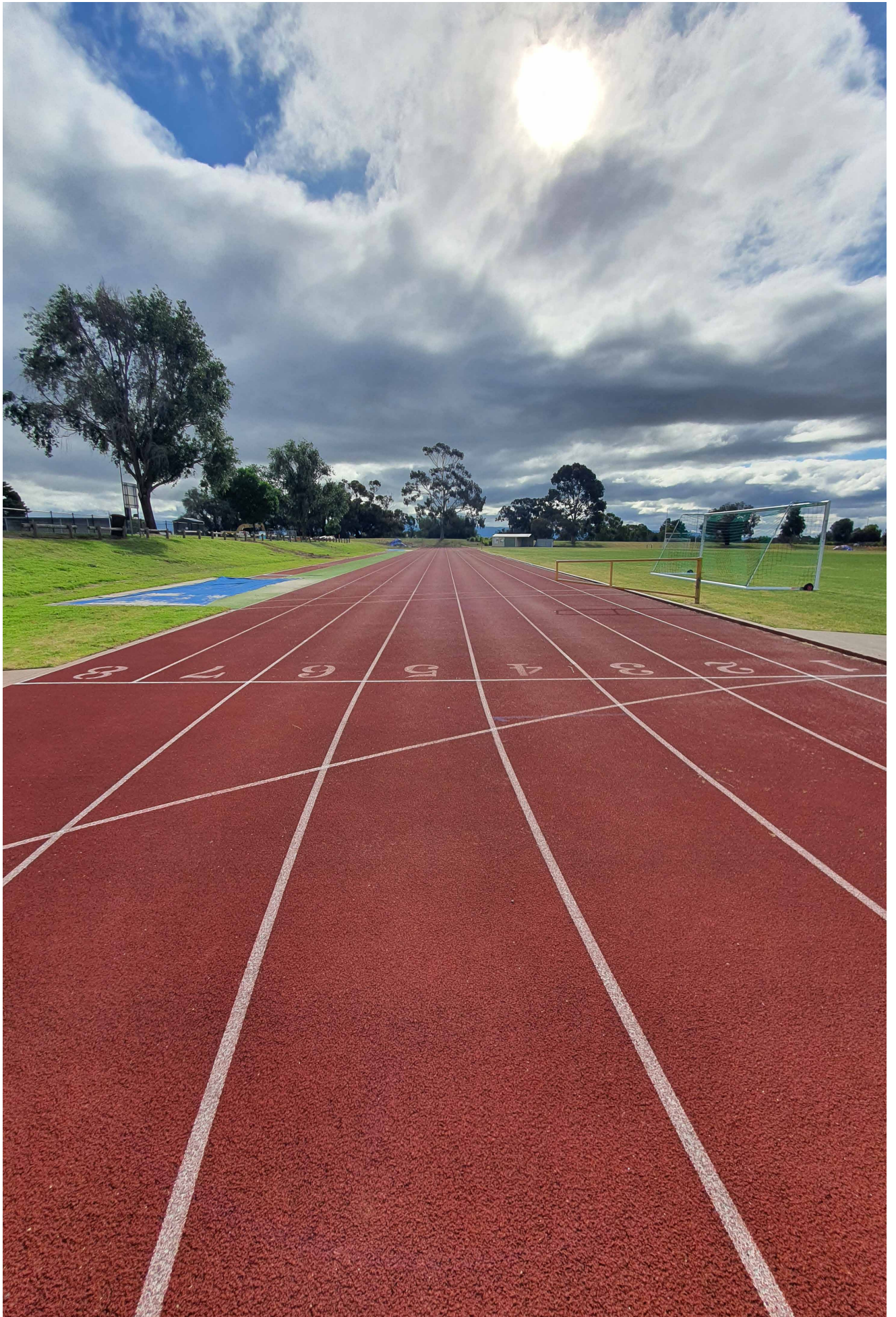
- lack of storage
- inadequate field/court lighting
- disabled access
- lack of gender neutral (female friendly) facilities.

The outcomes of the consultation undertaken has been considered in conjunction with facility inspections, the analysis of relevant trends in sport and active recreation provision and participation data to develop the actions required for this Strategy to guide the direction of sport and active recreation provision in the Shire for the next ten plus years.

### IMPLICATIONS OF CONSULTATION

The outcomes of the consultation process reinforced that there was not a high demand for new facilities across the shire and that council's focus should be on assisting local clubs/organisations to activate facilities through improved operations and the facilitation of appropriate programs/activities:

- there is a general high level of satisfaction with facilities across the shire
- the most common identified issues of concern were operational, regarding the declining number of volunteers, professional coaches and participants
- the identified issues that required facility improvements were only minor.





# Sport and active recreation provision

Sport facilities are a resource for formal sport training and competition and provide open spaces for active recreation such as informal/social sport, walking/jogging, unstructured play and many other activities that encourage physical activity.

The following section provides a summary of the sport and active recreation facilities located in the shire's Planning Areas listed below in alphabetical order (consistent with the draft Open Space and Active Transport Strategy).

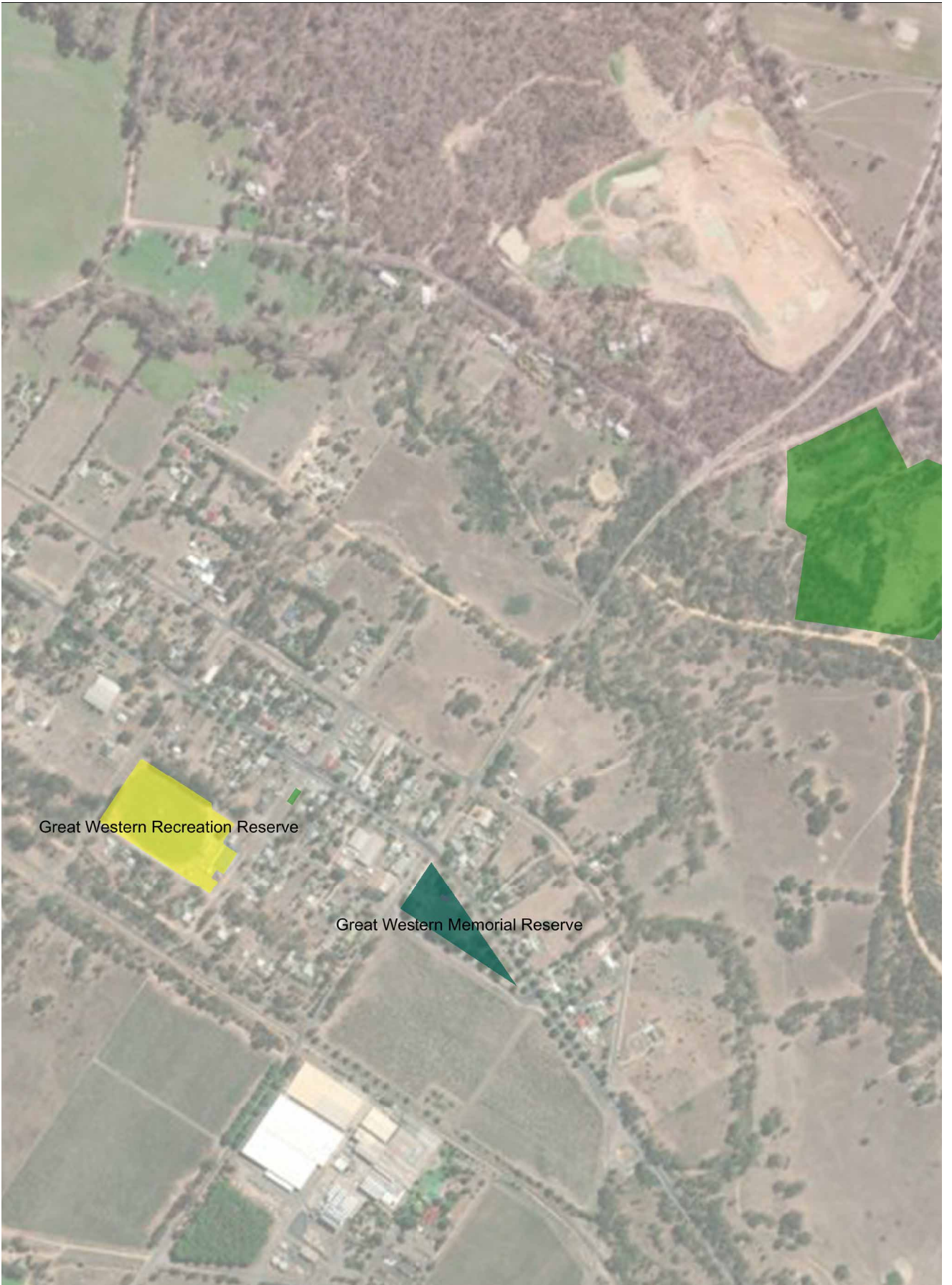
- Great Western
- Halls Gap
- Marnoo
- Navarre
- St Arnaud
- Stawell
- Stuart Mill.

It should be noted that in addition to sport parks provided by Council, most schools provide at least one sport field within their grounds for health and physical education classes, as well as physical activity by students during breaks. With consultation and approval by the school principal, these sport fields can provide additional open space accessible to surrounding residents for appropriate use, outside of school hours and on weekends.

It is important to note that this Strategy is primarily concerned with ensuring public sport and recreation facilities meet the broad sporting and active recreation needs of the community.

Additional recommendations for specific parks and reserves that provide a range of informal recreation opportunities (many of which will be active recreation) are also included in the Open Space and Active Transport Strategy.

It should also be noted that Glenorchy hasn't been included in this section due to Council having no responsibilities and limited influence over the Glenorchy Golf Course.



Great Western Recreation Reserve

Great Western Memorial Reserve



# Great Western

The southern-most area within the Shire with a population of 425 people, Great Western currently provides ample sport and active recreation opportunities to residents.

These are provided mainly by:

- Great Western Memorial Reserve
- Great Western Recreation Reserve

To a lesser extent, the Great Western Racecourse and camping area also provides recreation opportunities.



## Memorial Reserve

Predominantly a recreation park, the site contains three bitumen tennis courts in below average condition and small club rooms.



## Recreation Reserve

The site's main features include a lit AFL/cricket oval, large and functional pavilion, new netball court (and existing older court) and associated netball amenities.



## Racecourse and camping area



## *Great Western analysis*

Great Western has adequate sport and active recreation facilities now and for future provision.

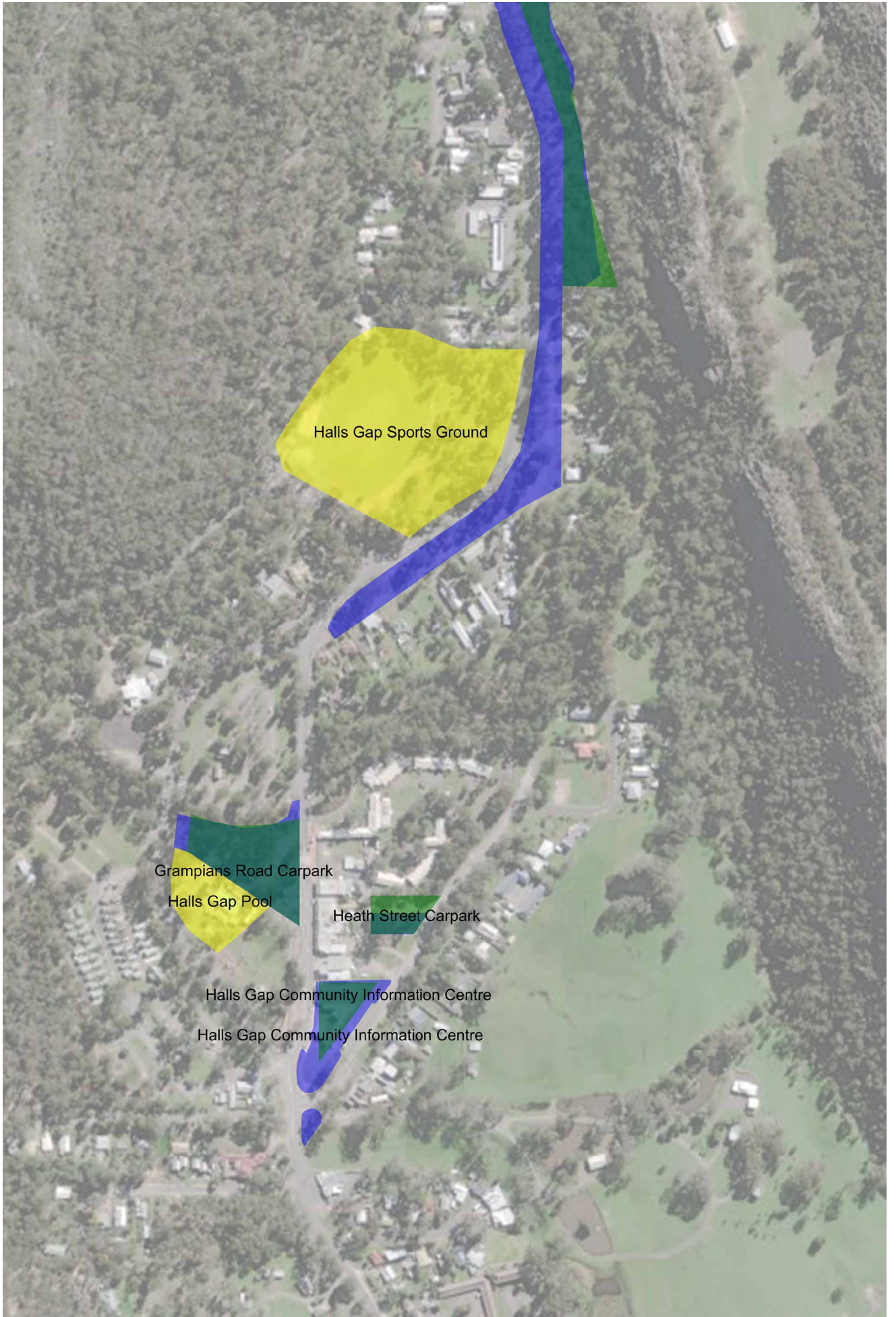
The playing field currently provides for AFL (although the club has identified the need to enlarge the playing surface to meet AFL standards) and has the ability to provide for cricket if a demand is demonstrated in the future.

The new netball court and ancillary facilities will cater for the sport into the future and the second, older court could also be upgraded if warranted by future demand.

If other field sports emerge as popular in the area, the existing field could accommodate their use through removable goals/posts and line-marking.

The Recreation Reserve is well positioned to provide activities and programs but these would need to be coordinated by council, but only if staff resources allow.

The apparent low level of use and poor condition of the three tennis courts at the Memorial Reserve reflect no demand for improved tennis facilities. It is recommended that council applies only a low level of maintenance to these courts and that their use be monitored to determine if it would be more beneficial to repurpose at least one court to an open, hard surface area which people could utilise for informal active recreation such as roller blading, pickleball, scootering, or (with the installation of a hoop and backboard), basketball.



Halls Gap Sports Ground

Grampians Road Carpark

Halls Gap Pool

Heath Street Carpark

Halls Gap Community Information Centre

Halls Gap Community Information Centre

# Halls Gap

Located in the western aspect of the shire, adjacent to the Grampians National Park, Halls Gap's population of 495 people is well serviced by both sport and active recreation facilities and the surrounding natural settings.

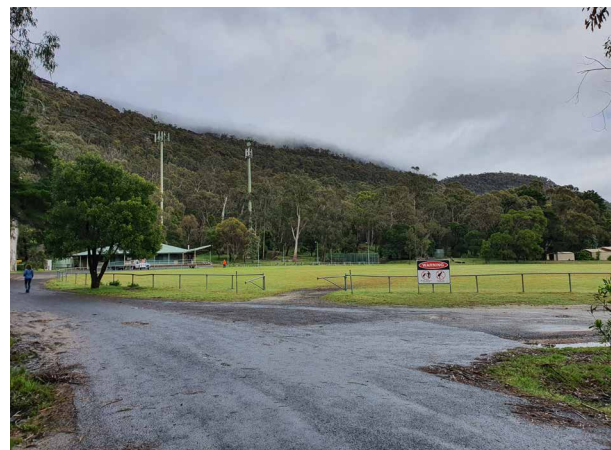
The main council facilities providing sport and active recreation opportunities include:

- Halls Gap Recreation Reserve
- Halls Gap Pool
- Tennis Courts

The Halls Gap Caravan (and Tourist) Park also provides recreation opportunities, including a playground, picnic/barbecue facilities, open grassed areas and internal pathways.

## Recreation Reserve

- well maintained AFL/cricket oval (regularly covered in kangaroo pellets)
- two cricket practice nets in good condition
- well maintained pentanque courts
- attractive, rustic pavilion servicing oval and petanque courts.



### **Tennis courts**

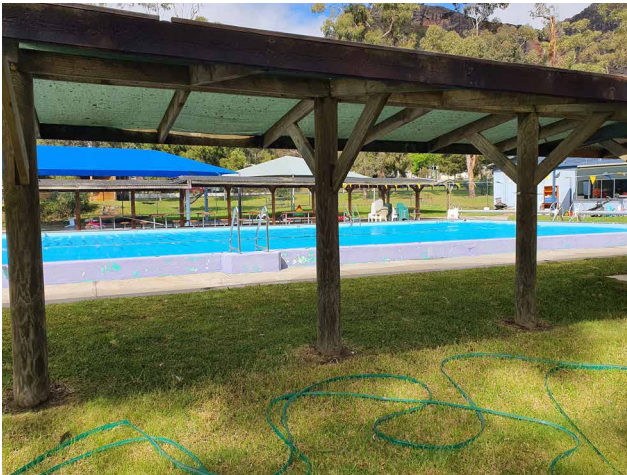
Adjacent to the school and Botanic Gardens, the three courts are in below average condition, serviced by a small but attractive club room building.



### **Swimming pool**

Closed at the time of inspection, the pool is located to the north of the playground

Featuring a 25m outdoor pool (with solar heating) and toddler pool and minor water play features, the facility is ageing and somewhat cluttered. Two shade sail structures cover the toddler pool and water play features with another shade structure on the opposite side.



## *Halls Gap analysis*

Halls Gap is well provided for in relation to sport and active recreation facilities and opportunities. Minor repairs to the cricket practice nets were the only required site improvements identified by user groups.

The Recreation Reserve is a quality facility catering for AFL, cricket and petanque and has the ability to provide for other field sports into the future, including rectangular field sports with the use of movable posts/goals. Although netball is not provided on site, a court be established over one of the existing tennis courts to the south or with proper planning, a new court could be developed somewhere within the Reserve. This latter option should only be considered if a significant demand for netball is demonstrated in the future.

The petanque courts are in very good condition and well maintained, providing a non-traditional activity that also caters for the full range of age groups and those looking for less physical activity.

As in the case at Great Western, the Recreation Reserve and tennis courts are well positioned to provide activities and programs but these would need to be coordinated by Council, but again, only if staff resources allow.

The three tennis courts are in below average condition with the local Community Sports Club believing that if they were resurfaced (including additional line marking for other sports such as netball, basketball and modified soccer), they would be of much more benefit to the community and greater use would result. Given the relatively high number of visitors to the area, the development of pickleball courts could also be considered.

Although with a limited season, the pool is an attractive feature within the park and provides aquatic opportunities to residents in the west of the shire who may not travel to the Stawell or St Arnaud facilities. Given the age of the facility and in particular the main pool shell, council should work with the Committee of Management into the future to monitor its condition and functionality.



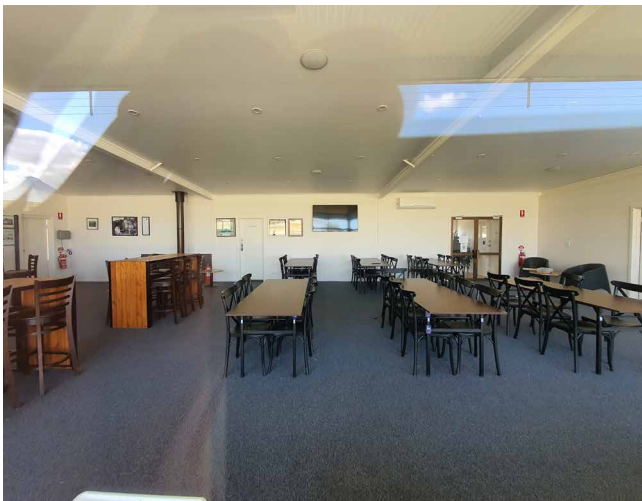


# Marnoo

With a population of 99 people, Marnoo's sport and active recreation needs are fully met by the Marnoo Recreation Reserve. Although the site has no functional netball courts, there is available space to consider their inclusion if a future demand (although unlikely) is demonstrated.

The facility is of very high quality and immaculately maintained. The main features of the site include:

- ❑ high quality AFL/cricket oval (with white picket perimeter fence)
- ❑ attractive and functional pavilion (including commercial kitchen and large function room) with viewing area shaded by large parasols
- ❑ three hard court tennis courts in fair condition with shade structures.



## *Marnoo analysis*

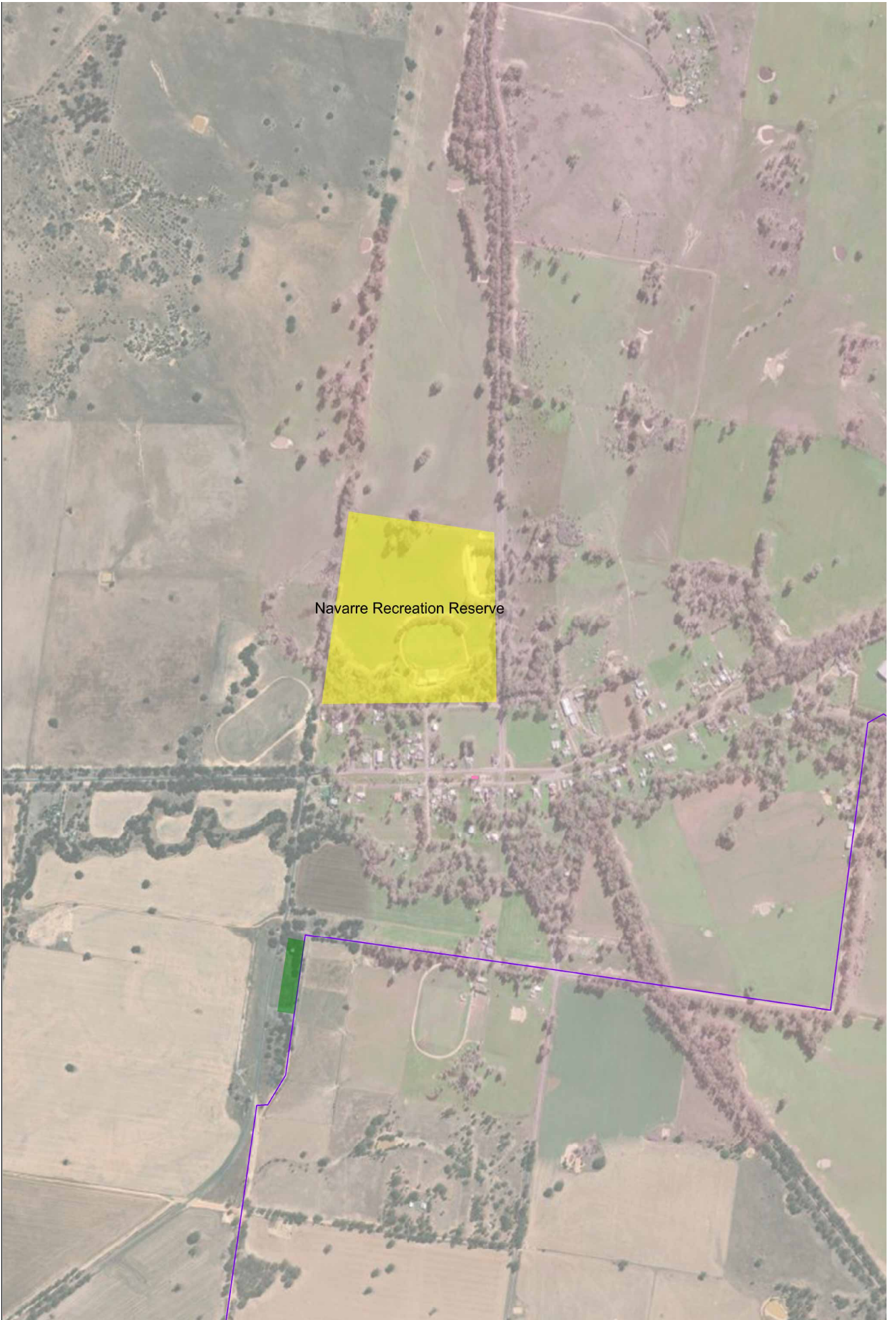
Although not council-managed, the Marnoo Recreation Reserve is a very high quality facility with an obvious high level of maintenance.

Offering AFL and cricket via the quality playing surface, the cricket club has identified the need for the installation of practice nets and a turf wicket block to enable the hosting of more representative games. Council could liaise with the Park Committee in relation to the practice nets but it is not clear if the committee has fully considered the ongoing maintenance burden of a turf wicket at the site. The benefits of this development would be unlikely to warrant such a burden.

The three, synthetic hard court tennis courts are in fair condition but seemingly don't receive the same level of maintenance as the playing field. It is unlikely that all three courts are heavily utilised, so the future repurposing of one court to a netball court could be considered in the future if a demand for netball is identified. Otherwise, there is available (and obvious) space for the development of a standalone court if considered more viable at the time.

Given the high quality of the facility, the Recreation Reserve is well placed to continue meeting the sport and active recreation needs of the community into the future. Additional activities could be catered for and if council increases its resources in relation to activating such sites, such staff could work closely with the Park Committee in this regard.

This page is intentionally blank



Navarre Recreation Reserve

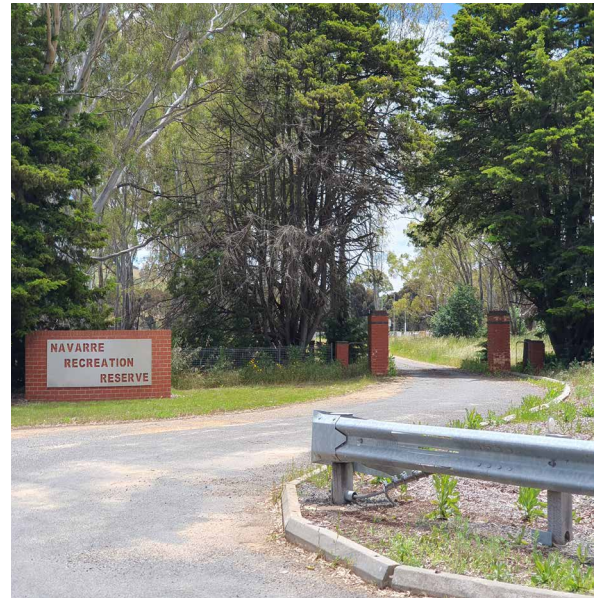
# Navarre

Also with a population of 99 people, Navarre's sport and active recreation needs are fully met by the Navarre Recreation Reserve.

The high quality facility has a functional layout and significant open spaces throughout.

The main features of the site include:

- high quality AFL/cricket oval
- good quality, lit synthetic hard court netball court, immediately in front of large grandstand and with some additional bench seating
- two main buildings catering for football and netball with associated change, toilet and canteen facilities
- small, fenced playground
- two synthetic grass tennis courts in below average condition with uneven surrounds and old shade structure in poor condition.



## *Navarre analysis*

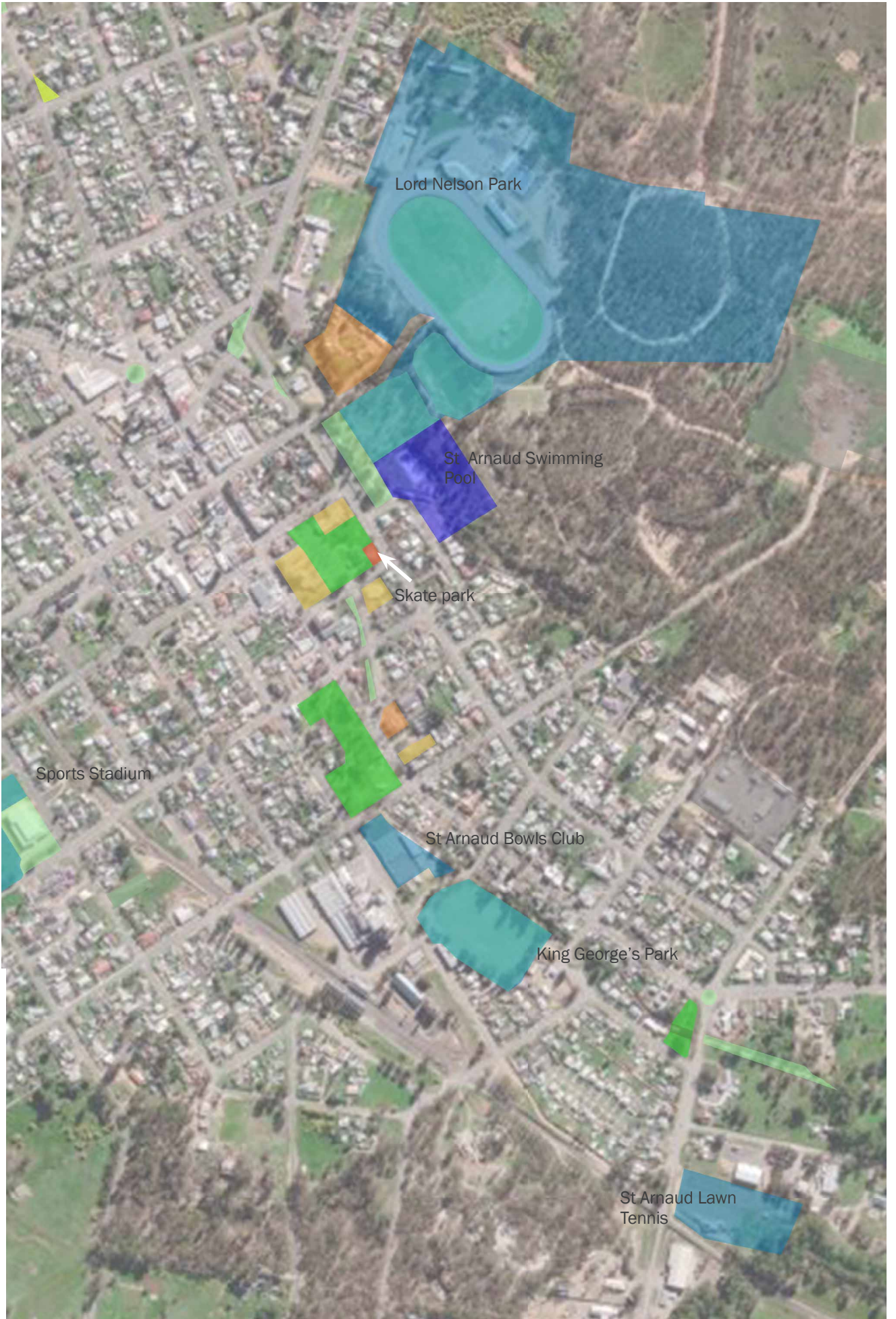
With maintenance fully the responsibility of the club (with assistance provided by council when necessary, at the club's cost), the Reserve and its facilities are generally in very good condition.

With the netball court immediately in front of the large grandstand, the layout of the Reserve differs from many across the shire. This provides a consolidated site, with flexible open spaces able to cater to a wide variety of activities in addition to the traditional sports.

In addition to utilising the existing oval, there is ample space across the site to provide other sports fields into the future if necessary. To ensure the site can better accommodate the existing sports (and possibly others in the future), upgrades to change and toilet facilities (including those appropriate for increased female participation) could be considered. This was also identified by the tenant football club, as was improvements to the main pavilion's kitchen and social space.

The two, synthetic grass tennis courts are in fair condition but the surrounds are unkempt and uneven. Given the playing surface of the courts, they are limited in their ability to provide activity opportunities other than tennis. If the second court is considered unnecessary in the future, consideration could be given to repurposing it as a multi-use hard court area, catering for a variety of uses such as basketball, pickleball, roller blading, scootering or modified soccer.

This page is intentionally blank





# St Arnaud

The second largest population centre of 2,318 people within the Shire, St Arnaud offers a range of sport and active recreation activities distributed across the area.

The main council facilities (in alphabetical order) are:

- King Georges Park
- Lord Nelson Park
- St Arnaud Bowls Club
- St Arnaud Lawn Tennis
- St Arnaud Sports Stadium and sports field/oval
- St Arnaud Swimming Pool.

## King Georges Park

- well maintained, high quality playing field
- synthetic cricket pitch
- public toilets
- small storage shed
- small, informal gravel car park.



# Lord Nelson Park

St Arnaud's premier sporting facility,, the site recently enjoyed major upgrades to pavilion and netball facilities. The main features of the site are:

- new modern pavilions and surrounds
- sporting club building
- old football club pavilion
- two new netball courts with lighting
- netball club room
- cricket practice nets
- small hockey pavilion/shed at south-eastern aspect within harness track, overlooking hockey pitch
- harness racing track around perimeter of sporting fields
- sports field lighting (with a planned upgrade)
- stables and storage sheds
- large open 'sheep' pavilion
- large, sealed car park.



## St Arnaud Bowls Club

- ❑ total of three greens with evidence of main use being on the one synthetic and some use on a second natural grass green. Third green not currently used
- ❑ old, unattractive club building
- ❑ large informal parking areas
- ❑ very limited visibility of the site.



## St Arnaud Lawn Tennis

- ❑ space available for up to 17 natural grass courts, but it appears only 6-8 in use at the current time
- ❑ two synthetic grass courts in the north-eastern aspect of the site in average condition
- ❑ two hard surface courts in the south-eastern aspect in disrepair with no evidence of current use
- ❑ new neat and tidy clubrooms and surrounds
- ❑ small, informal gravel car parking.



## St Arnaud Sports Stadium

- indoor multi-purpose court currently offering basketball and netball, also with badminton and volleyball court markings
- squash/racquetball also offered
- interior inspection unable to be conducted
- seemingly unused sports field adjacent.



## St Arnaud Skate Park

- located across Dundas Street from the pool at Market Square
- basic concrete with metal ramps catering for lower skill levels
- limited street elements.



## St Arnaud Swimming Pool

- outdoor 50m pool (with two diving boards)
- toddlers pool
- old entry, change rooms, kiosk building
- large, well maintained grassed surrounds with various shade structures (some under repair at time of inspection).



## *St Arnaud analysis*

### *King Georges Park*

A relatively small and constrained site, it provides a quality playing surface catering for cricket with a synthetic grass pitch. The club has identified that the pitch surface needs replacing in the near future, or more desirable, be replaced with a turf pitch.

While the club shed is currently adequate for the site, consideration should be given to the trend of increasing female participation in the sport and the possible future development of gender neutral change facilities.

It should be noted that the site could cater for junior soccer demand into the future as the sport has flexible small-sided field configurations and utilises movable goals.

### *Lord Nelson Park*

Although a large site, it is highly developed with existing infrastructure, including new major buildings.

Inside the harness racing track are playing fields catering for AFL, cricket and hockey, with two netball courts at the northern aspect of the site. All these facilities are of high quality, although the hockey club has identified minor desired improvements such as shaded areas and 'proper' toilet/change facilities adjacent to the field. Given the use of the harness track, further investigations are required for these improvements. The netball club has identified the need to appropriately complete the surrounds areas of the new courts (possibly with synthetic grass).

No major improvements are recommended for the site and other sites within St Arnaud are considered more suitable to cater for the future growth/needs of other sports and activities.

### *St Arnaud Bowls Club*

The club has submitted a proposal to Council for the installation of large dome structures to cover two synthetic greens at the site. With the existing greens showing evidence of being under-utilised and low membership numbers, it is difficult to see a significant benefit to the proposal, especially considering the estimated cost of \$2.75million. Current membership numbers provided by the club are:

- Senior male: 35
- Senior female: 10 (and identified as declining)
- Juniors: nil.

Further to this, it must be identified that lawn bowls has been suffering declining participation rates over the past ten plus years.

It is recommended that council continues to liaise with the club and explain why the proposal in its present form needs to be reviewed for the above reasons. There may be less significant improvements that can be undertaken to assist with increasing participation.

### *St Arnaud Lawn Tennis Club*

Although showing signs of under-utilisation, this facility offers high quality lawn tennis courts, something of a rarity compared to the much more common synthetic grass and hard courts. However, the much higher level of maintenance required for such courts must be noted and this is usually balanced by higher levels of use and the resultant revenue generated.

With only 76 members in 2022, the large number of courts is not needed, even taking account casual court use by the public. Use would expect to increase if lighting was provided to at least two courts, making evening/night tennis available. This was identified as desirable by the club (that requested 2-4 courts being lit).

It is also noted that this is another facility where resources are being wasted maintaining unused features and consideration should be given to the ability of unused courts (especially the two hard courts) catering for other community activities that can utilise flat, hard outdoor surfaces or provide additional activity space for the resident playgroup.

### *St Arnaud Sports Centre*

One of only two indoor sports stadiums in the shire, it will be important to maintain this facility so that a range of indoor activities can be offered in the shire.

While it is not recommended that council focus on working with the Stadium Association on major improvements to the venue, the creation of council positions aimed at delivering/facilitating activities and programs from council reserves and facilities could work closely with the Association to increase use of the venue, providing a wider range of physical activity opportunities for residents. These activities/programs could also make use of the adjacent reserve if required.

### *St Arnaud Skate Park*

While a basic and 'old style' skate facility, the skate park still serves a purpose, especially catering for newer uses without the desire for more challenging elements. It also serves the secondary purpose of such facilities, that of providing a gathering point for younger residents to 'hang out'.

Given the recent upgrade to the Stawell skate park, it is reasonable that council only considers upgrading the facility in the medium to long term. At that time, it is recommended to heavily consult the local youth in the design of any proposed improvements and that the existing features of the Stawell facility be considered, so that duplication is minimised.

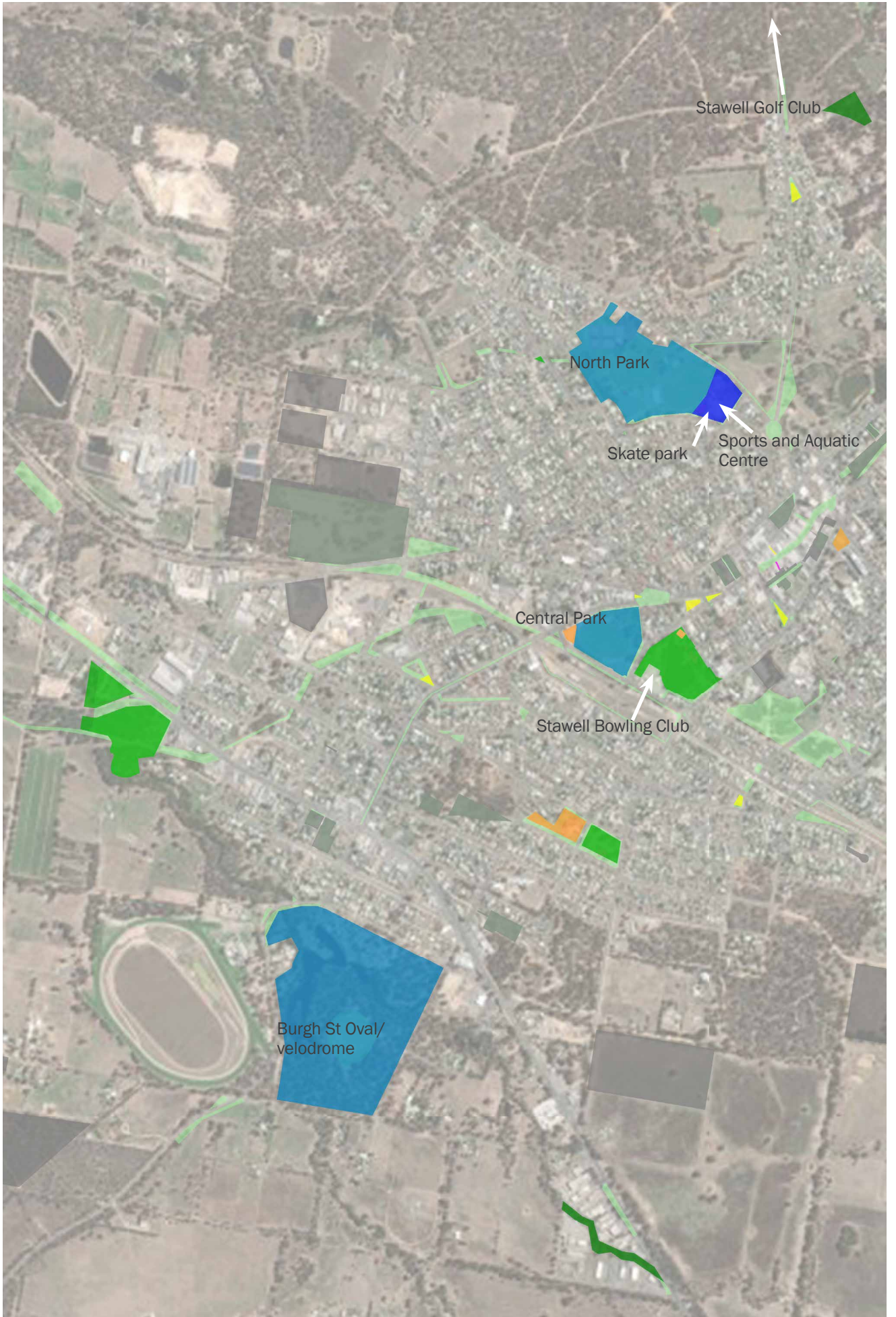
### *St Arnaud Swimming Pool*

While an attractive and popular facility, the pool shell is nearing the end of its life with a recently completed integrity report revealing that the existing water leak is due mainly to the old piping of the filtration system.

No major facility improvements are recommended for the site until the necessary works are scheduled, and this work will be subject to quotations received for the required repairs.

It is likely the cost of such repairs will be significant and there will be a need to budget accordingly. During this process it will be important to consider the importance of this facility to the ongoing provision of aquatic opportunities to the community and the large numbers of participants the facility serves now and will into the future.

It is also recommended to review the free entry to the facility, especially considering the approximate \$120,000 annual operating costs and making it consistent with the Stawell pool. This review should include an incremental increase to assist in addressing expected community resistance.





# Stawell

The population centre of the shire (5,627 people), Stawell is well provided for in relation to sport and active recreation facilities with a variety of opportunities being offered.

The main Council facilities offering these opportunities are:

- Burgh Street Oval/velodrome
- Central Park
- North Park
- Stawell Bowling Club
- Stawell Golf Club
- Stawell Sports and Aquatic Centre (and skate park).

## Burgh Street Oval/Velodrome

- bitumen velodrome/cycling track, reasonably well maintained
- playing field, but little evidence of sporting use
- ageing but seemingly functional pavilion, small and old terraced spectator seating.



## Central Park

The premier sporting facility within the shire and home to the Stawell Gift, Central Park has high quality sporting facilities and very well maintained and attractive surrounds. The site is completely fenced, restricting public access.

The main features of the site are:

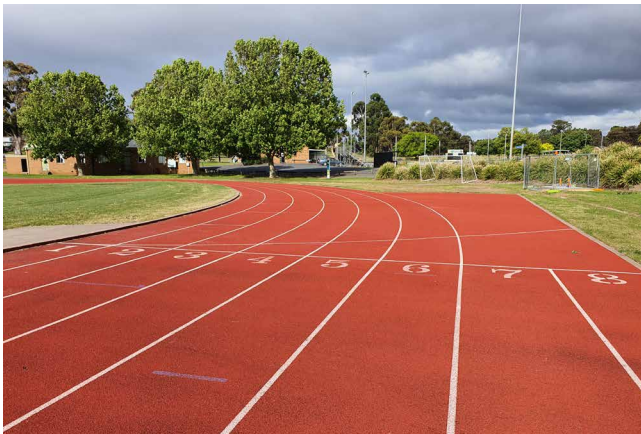
- high quality AFL and cricket oval
- large heritage grandstand
- two, two-storey pavilions
- lit bitumen netball court with shaded player/spectator shelters and movable tired seating (x2)
- Stawell Gift Hall of Fame building
- manicured gardens.



# North Park

## Sporting facilities

- ❑ synthetic athletics track (6-lane, with 8-lane 100m straight) and associated throwing and jump areas
- ❑ rugby/soccer playing areas within athletics track
- ❑ older but functional athletics club rooms
- ❑ new, modern netball and football pavilion (with older pavilion still in place)
- ❑ three netball courts
- ❑ AFL/cricket oval (with synthetic pitch)
- ❑ two practice nets
- ❑ 12 synthetic grass tennis courts and large, functional tennis club rooms.



## Stawell Bowling Club

Located in the south-western aspect of Cato Park across Victoria Street from Central Park, features include:

- two synthetic greens (that may need replacement in the near future)
- pavilion effectively in two parts with older brick building fronting Napier Street and newer component located between the two greens



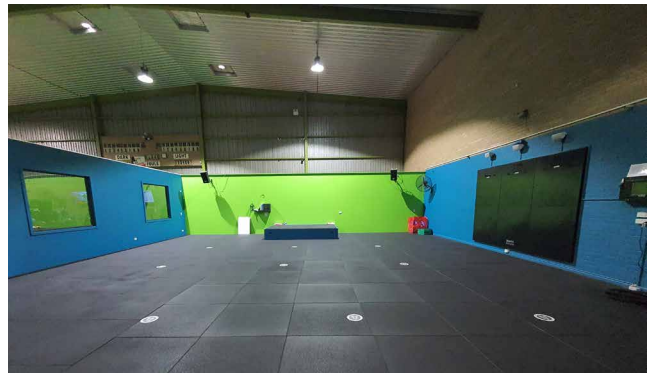
## Stawell Golf Club

- 18 hole course
- small but functional club rooms with kitchen and hall
- lawn bowls green



## Stawell Sports and Aquatic Centre (SSAC)

- ❑ indoor heated 15m pool
- ❑ outdoor 25m pool and water slides
- ❑ toddlers pool
- ❑ shaded and grassed outdoor areas
- ❑ multi-purpose indoor sports courts
- ❑ squash racquetball courts
- ❑ gymnasium and exercise class area.



## Skate park

Recently upgraded, the new modern facility caters for both new and experienced riders.



## Stawell analysis

### *Burgh Street Oval/velodrome*

Relatively hidden, the site shows signs of limited use, especially the large field in the centre of the velodrome/cycling track.

The pavilion provides the basic amenities required for activities at the site and the track is in fair condition. Although many such tracks across Australia are being removed due to low utilisation, it is believed that this facility should be retained as it provides alternative sport/active recreation opportunities from traditional field sports that are already well catered for in the shire. It also allows council to cater for the growing popularity of cycling in general, providing an off-road facility for cyclists, removing the barrier to participation of safety concerns.

The large field area within the track also provides council with options for the provision of future field sports and other activities into the future, should a demand arise.

### *Central Park*

While Central Park should continue to be maintained/developed as the premier sporting facility within the shire, it is believed minor initiatives could be undertaken to make it an even more attractive and functional site.

While the sporting, ancillary and spectator facilities are of high quality, the development of gender neutral toilet/change facilities should be investigated. Initiatives involving other features of the site include:

- improving the frontage of the site bordered by the intersection of Main and Napier Streets. The informal gravel overflow/truck/van parking area serves a purpose that should continue for large events (and could be landscaped and bitumen applied), but the rear of the Hall of Fame and adjacent solid fencing could be made a consistent surface (and possibly softened through the use of appropriate mural art)
- while serving a purpose, the perimeter fencing could also be replaced with a more attractive style, at least that with a dark green or black powercoated/PVC coated version of the existing chain wire and barbed wire. This would greatly reduce its visible impact and be more consistent with the quality of facilities within
- included in the upgrade to the perimeter fencing, it would be highly desirable to increase the number of access gates around the site's perimeter to promote increased public access when not in use for formal activities/events. This will still allow ticketing for these events to occur, but promote community use of at least the non-sporting areas within such as the manicured 'formal' gardens and other outdoor spaces along the northern and eastern edges of the site.

It is also recommended that a long-term project of investigating improving the connection between Central and Cato Parks be considered. This could result in a regional attraction that takes advantage of two adjacent high quality sport and recreation sites. The project would need to undergo significant planning, as it is proposed to include investigations into changing the use of Victoria Street to either a one-way thoroughfare with traffic-calming and shared-use zone, or possibly even its closure to vehicles altogether, creating an appropriately landscaped vehicle-free avenue connecting both existing sites.

Further, Council has received requests from the tenant club for an additional netball court at Central Park which is currently not feasible without the removal of significant infrastructure or flora. It is therefore proposed that this project consider in its design the inclusion of an additional netball court adjacent to the existing court, including the relevant ancillary facilities and lighting required.

### *North Park*

Another major sport and active recreation facility for the shire, North Park has recently undergone major improvements, guided by its 2022 Master Plan. The Strategy supports the continued implementation of the master plan, especially investigating increasing the synthetic athletics running track from a 6-lane to 8-lane facility, as supported by the tenant Little Athletics Club.

Another master plan recommendation of particular note to the Strategy is the proposed improvements to the field area within the athletics track and associated ancillary facilities. This will allow the site to cater for growth in the currently offered sport of rugby league (and rugby union if necessary) and the expected significant growth in soccer.

Improvements to other non-sporting areas of the park are discussed in the Open Space and Active Transport Strategy.

### *Stawell Bowling Club*

Although with effectively no role with the management or maintenance of the facility, ongoing liaison with the club should occur to ensure that opportunities for use of the facilities by the community are not missed.

The facilities are quite different from most of those managed by council and as such, could be used for future programs/activities that have different requirements. Further, if council staffing resources increase as suggested in the Strategy, these staff could play an advisory role in activating the facility, especially in regard to programs/activities for elderly or very young residents.

### *Stawell Golf Club*

As in the case of the Bowling Club, council has no role in the ongoing management or maintenance of the golf course. However, due to the specific nature of golf courses, there is limited opportunities to increase their use through community programs/activities.

### *Stawell Sports and Aquatic Centre (SSAC)*

The premier aquatic and indoor sports centre in the shire, concept designs and schematics for the upgrade of the SSAC are currently being developed. Given the anticipated significant costs of proposed improvements, actual work is expected to occur in the medium-long term and will need to be budgeted for accordingly. It is also expected that external funding opportunities will need to be explored.

Given the specific nature of the work currently being undertaken, and the likely significant costs of any recommended facility improvements, the Strategy has not undertaken any detailed investigations regarding the future of this facility, except for identifying the above funding sources.

### *Stawell skate park*

With completion of the new skate park occurring this year, no detailed investigations regarding the facility were undertaken.





# Stuart Mill

Stuart Mill Oval has the capacity to serve the sport and active recreation needs of this community, with a population of 78 people, now and into the future.

The site also serves as a recreation park with a small playground and social gathering spaces and there is little evidence of current sporting use.

The main features of the site include:

- large oval, in apparent disuse at time of inspection
- small canteen building.



## *Stuart Mill analysis*

Although the maintenance of the Reserve is technically the responsibility of the Stuart Mill Community Reserves Committee, council has historically done so (including the playground).

At the time of inspection, the Reserve was in poor condition with little evidence of sport or regular use.

Given this level of use and low population of the town, the Reserve should continue to be maintained at a low level, with the opportunity to increase the quality of the facility in the future if a demand is demonstrated. If other sports or activities emerge as popular, the Reserve has the ability and space to cater for a wide range of possibilities.

The Stuart Mill Racecourse Reserve is located approximately 4km north-east along the Stuart Mill Low Road. The racecourse is a specialised sport facility currently managed by the Stuart Mill Racecourse Reserve Riding Group and is another option to cater for future activities in the area if required.

This page is intentionally blank



# Demand assessment

This section provides a summary of the demand snapshots provided previously in the individual planning areas section.

The current and future demand for each sport and for this summary has been based on:

- national and state participation rates and trends
- club survey responses
- input from Council staff
- generally accepted provision rates for those sports where they are available
- feedback from State Sport Organisations
- facility inspections that helped determine:
  - current use
  - quality and functionality
  - future carrying capacity
- the distribution of facilities across the region.

## *Participation data*

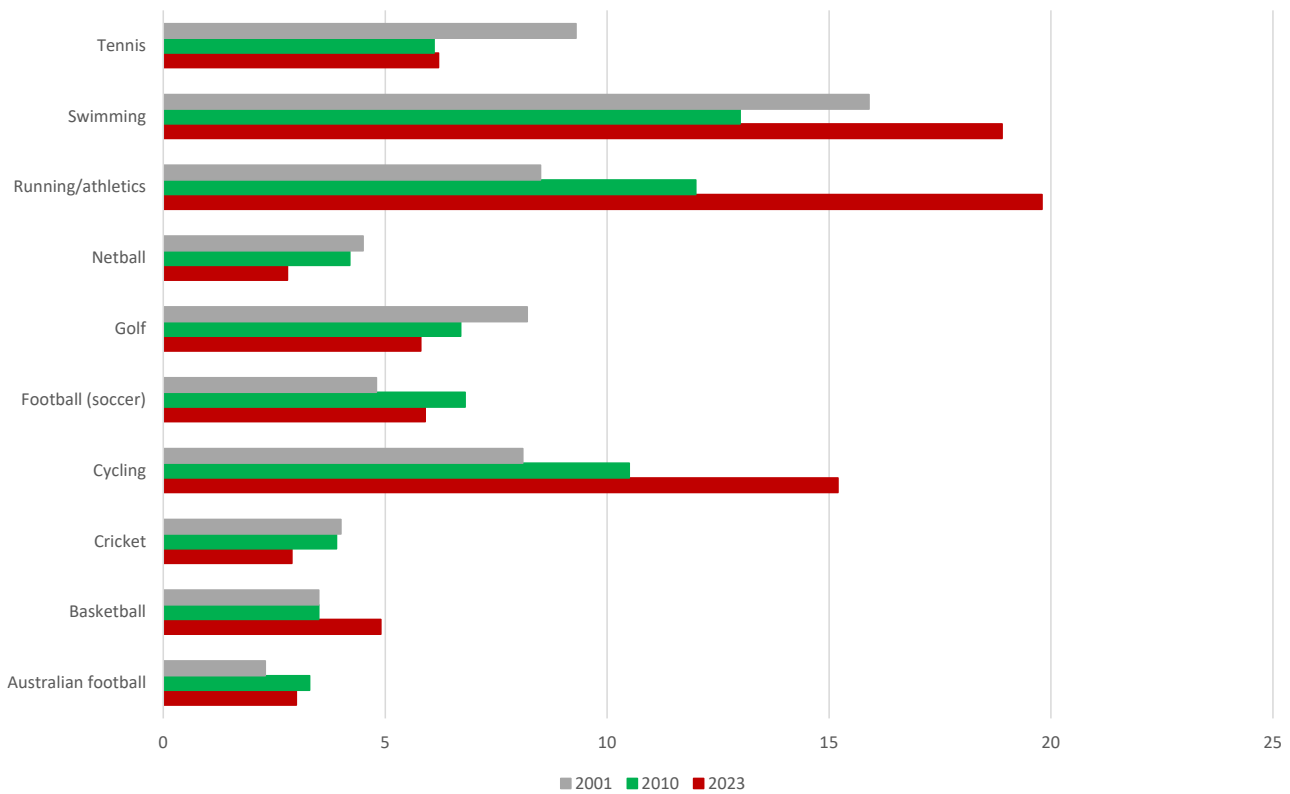
At a national level, the reduction in available leisure time has resulted in a trend for adults to move away from organised sport toward physical activity and non-organised (social) sport. The ABS conducted a nation-wide Participation in Sport and Physical Recreation Survey for adults over 15 years of age in 2005/06, 2009/10 and 2011/12. The survey showed that participation in organised sport reduced slightly while non-organised sport reported increases. This trend has continued to the present and is expected to continue into the future.

The data utilised to provide the following summaries was sourced from AusPlay, a large scale national population tracking survey funded and led by Sport Australia (<https://www.clearinghouseforsport.gov.au/research/ausplay/results>). This data was last updated in October 2023.



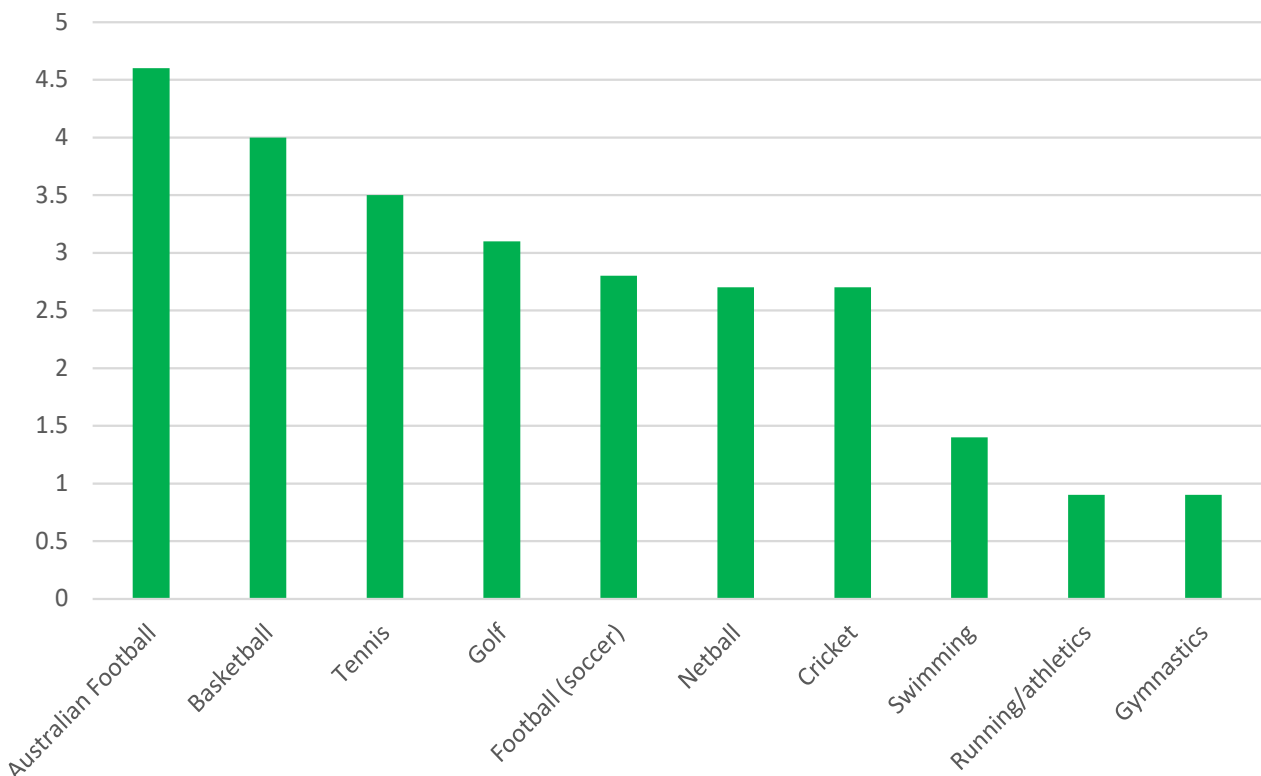
## National participation

The graph below shows a summary of the national participation rate (% of National population) trends for the 10 most popular sports across Australia from 2001 to 2023.



## Victorian participation

The following graphs represent the 2023 participation rates (% of State population) for the 10 most popular sports in Victoria.



Northern Grampians provides opportunities for all of the ten most popular sports identified by the Ausplay data. In metropolitan Councils, demand for facilities can be determined by comparing this participation data with the number of the relevant facilities for each sport provided, thus determining if deficits or surpluses exist for facilities.

As an example, for the sports where state participation rates in Victoria are available (only available for the ten most popular sports in each state), calculations can be undertaken to determine if the current provision of fields/courts is in surplus or deficit .

It should be noted that:

- given the lack of reliable local participation data, Victorian participation rates for the sports were used
- these participation rates have been applied to the current population for the Shire (11,948 people) to estimate the number of players for the relevant sports in the region
- this estimated number of players has then been applied to the generally accepted players per field/court to determine any current surpluses or deficiencies.

It should also be noted that while basketball does not have a preferred player/court ratio, the generally accepted court provision rate is 1 court for every 10,000 residents. Therefore, based on current supply, the sport is catered for now and into the future by the St Arnaud and Stawell indoor facilities.

Sport	Participation rate (%)	Field/court to player ratio*	Estimated current players	Required current fields/courts	Current fields/courts	Current surplus
AFL	2.9	1:210	348	2	8	6
Cricket	2.3	1:96^	276	3	8	5
Netball	2.6	1:154	312	2	9	7
Tennis	2.9	1:64	348	6	33	27
Soccer	2.8	1:150	335	2	2	-

**NOTES:**

\* Preferred provision ratios were developed in consultation with SSOs and field capacity experts. The ratios reflect service delivery that will not result in facility over-use and meets demand for training and/or matches.

^ The cricket ratio reflects demand for matches only given these are far more difficult to cater for due to the duration of the game and low number of participants.

As mentioned, this type of analysis is effective in metropolitan council areas, but in the case of the Northern Grampians Shire, it does not take into account the needs of local towns with small populations that may not regularly access facilities in the larger towns. If this analysis was the sole method applied to determine demand, the numbers would suggest that the Northern Grampians Shire is significantly over-supplied in facilities and should rationalise many. It should be noted that the relatively lower provision of soccer facilities is addressed in the following summaries.

## Meeting future demands

Given the nature of sport and active recreation provision across the shire, it is suggested that council focuses more on a needs approach to determine the future needs for sport and active recreation facilities.

The following is a summary of that analysis, based on the information provided previously in the Sport and Active Recreation Provision section of this report. For ease of reference, demand is summarised for each Planning Area (towns).

It should be noted that for the purposes of the Strategy, Glenorchy was not analysed as a specific planning area due to the sole identified facility being the Glenorchy Golf Club, which is not council managed. The club has a membership of only 18 senior males and 1 senior female and in its response to the on-line survey, identified new maintenance machinery as its only desired improvement.

### Great Western

The Recreation Reserve provides sufficient sport and active recreation needs now and has the ability to continue to do so into the future.

- the playing field currently provides for AFL and has the ability to provide for cricket or other field sports if a demand is demonstrated in the future
- the new netball court and ancillary facilities will cater for the sport into the future and the second, older court could also be upgraded or re-purposed if warranted by future demand
- the Recreation Reserve is well positioned to provide activities and programs but these would need to be coordinated/facilitated by council, but only if staff resources allow.
- future use of the tennis courts at the Memorial Reserve should be monitored to determine if it would be more beneficial to repurpose at least one court to an open, hard surface area which people could utilise for informal active recreation such as roller blading, pickleball, scootering, or (with the installation of a hoop and backboard), basketball.

### Halls Gap

Halls Gap is well provided for in relation to sport and active recreation facilities and opportunities.

- the Recreation Reserve is a quality facility catering for AFL, cricket and petanque and has the ability to provide for other field sports (in addition to AFL, cricket and petanque) into the future, including rectangular field sports with the use of movable posts/goals
- if warranted in the future, a netball court be established over one of the existing tennis courts to the south of the reserve or with proper planning, a new court could be developed somewhere within the reserve
- the Recreation Reserve and tennis courts are well positioned to provide activities and programs but these would need to be coordinated/facilitated by council, but again, only if staff resources allow
- Council should work with the swimming pool's Committee of Management into the future to monitor its condition, use and functionality.

### Marnoo

Although not council-managed, the Marnoo Recreation Reserve is a very high-quality facility with an obvious high level of maintenance.

- in liaison with the Park Committee, the future repurposing of one tennis court to a netball court could be considered if a demand for netball is identified. Alternately, there is available space for the development of a standalone court if considered more viable at the time
- the Recreation Reserve is well placed to meet the sport and active recreation needs of the community into the future. Additional activities could be catered for if council increases its resources in relation to activating such sites, with staff working closely with the Park Committee in this regard.

### Navarre

With maintenance fully the responsibility of the club (with assistance provided by council when necessary, at the club's cost), the Recreation Reserve and its facilities are generally in very good condition.

- the site has flexible open spaces able to cater to a wide variety of activities in the future in addition to the traditional sports
- to ensure the site can better accommodate the existing sports (and possibly others in the future), upgrades to change and toilet facilities (including those appropriate for increased female participation) could be discussed with the club
- if the second tennis court is considered unnecessary in the future, consideration could be given to repurposing it as a multi-use hard court area, catering for a variety of uses such as basketball, pickleball, roller blading, scootering or modified soccer.

## St Arnaud

### **King Georges Park**

- resurfacing the cricket pitch may be required in the near future.
- consideration should be given to the trend of increasing female participation in the sport and the possible future development of gender-neutral change facilities
- the site could cater for junior soccer demand into the future (small-sided field configurations and movable goals).

### **Lord Nelson Park**

- any improvements to hockey ancillary facilities will need to consider the use of the harness track
- the netball club has identified the need to appropriately complete the surrounds areas of the new courts (possibly with synthetic grass)
- no major improvements are recommended for the site and other sites within St Arnaud are considered more suitable to cater for the future growth/needs of other sports and activities.

### **St Arnaud Bowls Club**

There is an opportunity to work with the club to increase participation and programming through responsible development of the facility.

Current membership numbers provided by the club are:

- Senior male: 35
- Senior female: 10 (and identified as declining)
- Juniors: nil.

Further to this, it must be identified that lawn bowls has been suffering declining participation rates over the past ten years.

It is recommended that council works with the club to leverage the greatest opportunity to maintain and/or increase participation and programming through responsible development.

### **St Arnaud Lawn Tennis Club**

- use would expect to increase if lighting was provided to at least two courts, making evening/night tennis available
- discussions with the club regarding the resources being wasted maintaining unused features could be held
- consideration should be given to the ability of unused courts (especially the two hard courts) catering for other community activities that can utilise flat, hard outdoor surfaces or provide additional activity space for the resident playgroup.

### **St Arnaud Skate Park**

Council should only consider upgrading the facility in the medium to long term. At that time, it is recommended to heavily consult the local youth in the design of any proposed improvements and that the existing features of the Stawell facility be considered, so that duplication is minimised.

## Stawell

### **Burgh St Oval/velodrome**

- the velodrome/cycling track should be retained as it provides alternative sport/active recreation opportunities from traditional field sports, and caters for the growing popularity of cycling in general
- the large field area within the track provides council with options for the provision of future field sports and other activities into the future, should a demand arise.

### **Central Park**

- the development of gender-neutral toilet/change facilities should be investigated
- improving the frontage of the site bordered by the intersection of Main and Napier Streets - the informal gravel parking area could be landscaped and bitumen applied
- the rear of the Hall of Fame and adjacent solid fencing made to be a consistent surface (and possibly softened through the use of appropriate mural art)
- site perimeter fencing could also be replaced with a more attractive style with an increased number of access gates around the site's perimeter to promote increased public access when not in use for formal activities/events
- a long-term project of investigating improving the connection between Central and Cato Parks be considered and should also consider in its design the inclusion of an additional netball court adjacent to the existing court, including the relevant ancillary facilities and lighting required.



### **North Park**

- continue implementation of the master plan, especially investigating increasing the synthetic athletics running track from a 6-lane to 8-lane facility
- other proposed improvements to the field area within the athletics track and associated ancillary facilities will allow the site to cater for growth in the currently offered sport of rugby league (and rugby union if necessary) and the expected significant growth in soccer

### **Stawell Bowling Club**

If demand is demonstrated, and in liaison with the club, future programs/activities could be catered for. It is recommended that council play a facilitation role in activating the facility, especially in regard to programs/activities for elderly or very young residents..

### **Stawell Golf Club**

As in the case of the Bowling Club, Council has no role in the ongoing management or maintenance of the golf course. However, due to the specific nature of golf courses, there is limited opportunities to increase their use through community programs/activities.

### **Stawell Skate Park**

With completion of the new skate park occurring this year, the ongoing monitoring of use is recommended.

## **Stuart Mill**

Given its low level of use and low population of the town, the Reserve should continue to be maintained at a low level, with the opportunity to increase the quality of the facility in the future if a demand is demonstrated. If other sports or activities emerge as popular, the Reserve (and the Stuart Mill Racecourse Reserve) has the ability and space to cater for a wide range of possibilities.

## **Aquatic and indoor sports centres**

### **St Arnaud Sports Centre**

While it is not recommended that Council focus on working with the Stadium Association on major improvements to the venue, the creation of Council positions aimed at delivering/facilitating activities and programs from Council reserves and facilities could work closely with the Association to increase use of the venue, providing a wider range of physical activity opportunities for residents. These activities/programs could also make use of the adjacent reserve if required.

### **St Arnaud Swimming Pool**

The recently completed integrity report will determine the future work/improvements required for this facility.

No other major facility improvements should be considered until the necessary works are scheduled, and this work will be subject to quotations received for the required repairs.

It should be noted that it is likely the cost of such repairs will be significant and there will be a need to budget accordingly. During this process it will be important to consider the importance of this facility to the ongoing provision of aquatic opportunities to the community and the large numbers of participants the facility serves now (approximately 10,000 visitations per year) and into the future.

### **Stawell Sports and Aquatic Centre (SSAC)**

The premier aquatic and indoor sports centre in the Shire, concept designs and schematics for the upgrade of the SSAC are currently being developed. Given the anticipated significant costs of proposed improvements, actual work is expected to occur in the medium-long term and will need to be budgeted for accordingly. It is also expected that external funding opportunities will need to be explored.

Given the specific nature of the work currently being undertaken, and the likely significant costs of any recommended facility improvements this Strategy has not undertaken any detailed investigations regarding the future of this facility, except for identifying the above funding sources.

Although significant, the costs involved in upgrading this facility must be balanced against the large number of users it caters for. Last year, visitors exceeded 75,000, and given this facility's role as a community hub, this is expected to continue to increase in the future.



# Key directions/actions

The Strategy provides a key guiding vision for council and the community, with the overlaying issue being the capacity to fund it.

However, the focus is not on funding significant new infrastructure, but making improvements to existing facilities and identifying their ability to provide a wider range of sport and active recreation opportunities.

Integral to the increased activation of existing facilities across the shire will be the creation of additional staff resources to facilitate/coordinate activation initiatives. The facilitation of initiatives to increase participation across the shire needs to be actively promoted, with any initiatives being regularly reviewed to monitor their effectiveness. Although it is not suggested that council completely manages all such programs/initiatives, council staff will be required to drive the process through active liaison with clubs and organisations across the shire, empowering them to develop the appropriate outcomes for their respective communities. Council resources should also be utilised to promote any such initiatives.

Exact individual project timing will be dependent on the availability of necessary funding (be it from local clubs, council, State or Federal Governments).

The recommendations of the Strategy are grouped into three strategic areas. Priorities are assigned for each action. A high priority recommendation should be undertaken as soon as resources allow while medium (in the next 5 years) and low priorities (in the next 5-20 years) are not as urgent.

1. Management (policy and procedures)
2. Existing facilities and programs
3. New facilities, programs and initiatives.

## ***1. Management directions focus on improved management of existing facilities to improve diversity and effectiveness of use.***

Action No.	Actions for management	Priority
M1	Partner with local community sport and active recreation organisations to conduct regular health checks to better understand the current and emerging sport landscape, and to build their sustainability, capacity and programming (e.g. Professional Coaches)	High
M2	Develop/continue relationships with Park Committees/Committees of Management to ensure facilities meet their potential in facility/program provision. Activation to provide identifiable data responding to ROI outcomes	High
M3	Continue to develop a community directory of recreation and sporting clubs on the website to ensure they all include the location (facility or reserve) where their activities are run	High
M4	Work with the State and Federal Governments, State Sporting Associations, and other peak agencies to ensure adequate policies (including relevant clauses in tenancy agreements) are in place for equitable access to facilities for females, people with a disability and other under-represented cohorts of the community	High
M5	Ensure future policies and procedures reflect the trend of increased participation in informal/active recreation activities	Medium
M6	Establish an equitable and sustainable budget for the maintenance of sport and active recreation facilities	Ongoing
M7	Develop new and continue existing partnerships with relevant service providers and government departments in the delivery of sport and recreation programs	Ongoing
M8	Consider reviewing the free entry at the St Arnaud Swimming Pool to gain consistency between it and the Stawell pool and allow partial recovery of operating expenses. This review could include a staged implementation to deal with expected community resistance	Ongoing

**2. Existing facilities and programs directions focus on improvements that allow facilities to provide increased and more diverse use of existing facilities, thus ensuring they act as true ‘community’ facilities.**

Action No.	Actions for existing facilities and programs	Priority
E1	Ensure the ongoing development of gender-neutral facilities when facility improvements are undertaken	High and ongoing
E2	Support emerging and innovative sporting and active recreation clubs (such as the St Arnaud Bowling Club) to leverage the greatest opportunity to maintain and/or increase participation and programming through strategic planning and responsible development	High
E3	Budget accordingly for the repairs/improvements identified by the current investigations for the Stawell Sports and Aquatic Centre and the St Arnaud Swimming Pool. Budget considerations must include the significant use of and benefits provided by both facilities	High
E4	Develop a work plan to implement the minor improvements identified for specific sites across the Shire as identified in the Meeting Future Demands section of this Strategy	High
E5	Implement outstanding recommendations of Recreation Reserve Master Plans	Medium
E6	Develop consistent signage (both informative and directional) for Recreation Reserves	Medium
E7	Support the Halls Gap Recreation Reserve to identify opportunities to grow usage and participation (including through investment in improvements such as lighting and power)	Medium
E8	Consider the long-term possibility of making improved connection and land-use of Central and Cato Parks (including necessary alterations to Victoria Street)	Medium/ Low
E9	Monitor and respond to emerging sports and active recreation through engagement with sporting and community groups. Council to explore adapt/utilise existing multiuse infrastructure to facilitate these emerging sports	
E10	Where appropriate, investigate the removal of facility perimeter fencing to increase community access and awareness	Ongoing
E11	Lighting upgrades to sport fields/courts or active open spaces should only be considered if an evidence-based need is demonstrated	Ongoing

**3. New facilities and programs directions focus on the development of new programs and initiatives at existing venues to provide a wider variety of sport and active recreation opportunities to the community and visitors. As mentioned previously, the Strategy has identified a higher need for improving existing facilities and developing new programs, not the creation of new facilities.**

Action No.	Actions for new facilities and programs	Priority
N1	Investigate activating parks and other places/spaces with physical activity programs, offering free/low cost activities for seniors, adults and youth. The proposed new council positions (at least one in the Active Communities Section) should liaise/partner with sport and recreation providers to facilitate the activities.  This may depend on funding availability from Sport and Recreation Victoria or other sources	High
N2	Ensure preparation is undertaken for appropriate submissions for the up-coming Commonwealth Games funding	High
N3	Explore opportunities to add or enhance water play/blue spaces across the Shire	Medium
N4	Investigate the inclusion of outdoor fitness stations at appropriate Recreation Reserves	Medium/ ongoing



recreation  
open space  
and sport  
specialists



ross  
planning



## ROSS Planning Pty Ltd

ABN 32 508 029 959

Upper floor, 63 Bay Terrace  
Wynnum QLD 4178

PO Box 5660  
Manly QLD 4179

Telephone: (07) 3901 0730  
Fax: (07) 3893 0593