

Mayor Melva Hobson

Community Sport Symposium Key note presentation

Places - Community Facilities
'Enhancing the long long-term viability of community sport through sustainable planning and maximising facility usage.'

Monday 13 July 2009

**Undumbi Room
Parliament House
Corner George and Alice Streets Brisbane**

Note: The Mayor's 20 minute presentation is scheduled to begin 11:15 am and will follow a presentation on the same topics by Paul Pisasale, Mayor of Ipswich City Council.

The symposium begins 8:15 am (registration) through to lunch 12:30 am to 1:15 pm

Acknowledgements:

- Councillor David Mason Ipswich City Council
- *(Sporting identities and organisational representatives)*

Thank you for the opportunity to join you here today for this symposium.

Providing and maintaining sustainable community sporting and recreation facilities is about people as well as infrastructure, and I want to touch on both elements today.

Our community of the Redlands is very active and engaged.

It takes a passionate interest in the shape and future direction of the city.

Part of that active interest was a wonderful sports breakfast held in May this year.

One of our Redlands 2030 community plan consultation activities this year, it was attended by over one 140 representatives from a range of sports, sporting clubs and organisations, and government.

Without a doubt, this very successful forum highlighted the benefits of joining together in conversation about issues, much as we are doing today.

The breakfast group acknowledged the sporting successes and achievements in our community, with many quality sporting facilities and thousands of users participating in activity every week.

Among the positive features of sport in the Redlands were:

- the strong community engagement and effort of volunteers
- willingness of clubs to support each other
- the beautiful natural setting of the Redlands
- access to sports for all ages on water, land and air
- proximity to quality sporting fields and venues.

There was also acknowledgement of many issues and challenges for sport groups in the community that I think you will find are common to your own experience.

There is ready agreement that we need quality community sporting facilities, open spaces and recreational land for the health and vitality and strength of our community.

A Sport and Recreation Facilities and Services Study conducted by council in 2004 showed there is a much greater awareness in the community of the major role physical activity plays in physical and mental health and wellbeing.

There is also an expectation that facilities will be available to enable particular pursuits.

We already have a wealth of traditional facilities in our community, ranging from national and international grade softball facilities, multiple playing fields for all ball codes, and tennis and golf facilities, through to indoor training pavilions for everything from karate to skipping.

The rich bay and natural environment of the Redlands also provides the opportunity to develop many new water based and nature based sporting and sports tourism pursuits such as mountain bike trails on North Stradbroke or geocaching, a free high-tech treasure hunt where you use your GPS receiver to find caches hidden by other players.

But there is a continuing need to develop facilities to meet current demand and to cater for every type of user.

Analysis provided to Council shows that the demand for sporting facilities will continue as the population grows.

An ageing population also has the potential to bring a new emphasis on particular sporting activities.

Planning for these facilities is a continuing challenge for councils and the pressure is on councils and governments to make more facilities available for a range of users – but of course no increase in rates!

For city and regional planners, recreational and sporting outcomes may be measured in terms of open space per head of population, or distance to sporting facilities.

But these averages can disguise issues for the community in providing all users with equitable access to quality and sustainable sporting facilities.

Finding land for sports facilities

This is exacerbated in the Redlands by;

- the combination of rapid population growth over the past two decades and
- past neglect of infrastructure and services such as on the Southern Moreton Bay Island communities.

Residential and urban development pressures mean that suitable land is often unavailable, expensive, or earmarked for other uses.

Land use pressures have important consequences on the quality and viability of facilities.

One consequence is that sporting complexes and facilities are regularly constructed on former landfill sites or on land that may be subject to flooding or storm surges.

e.g. SET – open space/having implications

The cost to councils and users can be dramatic.

For councils and government there is the increased cost of;

- addressing existing land quality issues such as site clean up - ongoing
- and retrofitting sites to make them suitable for sporting use such as managing flooding from storm surges.

These costs can be prohibitive

For organised sporting groups, the consequence can be;

- severe disruption to competition and
- increased burdens on teams, players, parents and administrators.

Recent wet weather and flooding of facilities in the southeast meant that disruptions were experienced by tens of thousands of users across the region for teams in organised competition.

Like all councils across our region, Redland City Council is working actively to address community needs, and to find suitable options for providing sustainable sporting facilities for the community.

Advanced planning of major regional facilities

One solution is to identify quality sites that provide multi use facilities for a range of sports and users.

Redland City Council is examining proposals for a 35 hectare regional sports facility on a preferred site in the city's planned Thornlands enterprise area to meet community demand for the next 30 years.

Initial stage one plans for the facility suggest it could include;

- a six court tennis complex
- 25 playing fields, catering for senior and junior competitions in touch football, soccer, rugby league, hockey.

To establish this important regional facility will require significant funding support from government.

But even with this facility, the analysis also argues that there will be an ongoing shortfall for sporting facilities.

Use of school sporting infrastructure

The report to Council on this a major regional sport facility was produced with support from the Queensland Department of Sport and Recreation.

The report made it clear that as well as the investment in new facilities, meeting continuing demand for sporting facilities could be addressed through partnership with schools,. Something we share with Minister Reeves.

[There is at least 30 hectares or more of school playing fields in both private and public schools in the Redlands.](#)

These facilities represent a major investment by all levels of government and the community.

Encouraging partnership between both government and independent schools and community sporting groups for the use of these important facilities, whether for training or competition, would make these investments more efficient for the taxpayer.

Partnership arrangements might include upgrading facilities to include lights, irrigation and a higher level of field maintenance.

Partnership could also include the early stage involvement of council on behalf of the community, in the planning of new school facilities so that they are designed to maximum benefit for both the schools and the wider community.

These are important recommendations.

I would like to encourage both the state government and Independent Schools Queensland to help establish these partnerships with schools, perhaps by appointing an officer to support the negotiation of arrangements between sporting groups and schools.

Better utilisation of existing facilities

Designing facilities for use by multiple users is another element in ensuring long term sustainability of sporting facilities.

This includes the multi-use of existing facilities like hard court surfaces for netball, tennis, basketball or options such as the incorporation of cycling facilities or BMX facilities on the perimeter of playing fields.

Sporting clubs need to help by being more accommodating of other users.

Encouraging non exclusive use of facilities and continuing collaboration between different clubs and user groups is fundamental.

Managing sporting clubs for long term sustainability

Sustaining the health of sporting clubs and organisation is vital for the long term viability of community sports.

The increasing demands on club volunteers in managing their clubs and the difficulty of finding volunteers to help support the sporting clubs, is an increasing issue in many forums.

Club volunteers are now required to do much more than cutting oranges and posting rosters.

They now have to do risk management and water efficiency planning in support of their clubs activities. They have to meet obligations today that encompass first aid and safety certificates, liquor licence and food supervision requirements and financial compliance obligations such as BAS payments.

Greater assistance provided through professional training and management kits would help club volunteers to meet the management demands of their clubs.

Clubs may also need to rethink the way their sport operates and find new ways for managing their sport.

Encouraging the closer collaboration, networking or even integration of sporting clubs, offers the potential for less burden on individual volunteers, and the increased option for stronger clubs to pay to maintain facilities and club services.

Rather than volunteer their time, club supporters might simply opt to pay a fee or a bond in lieu of volunteer hours.

Many clubs could benefit from support as part of a professional kit provided to help them establish this fee or bond system.

Redland City Council believes strongly in customer focus.

We believe councils are an important and vital access point in support of community clubs and sporting groups and we have an important partnership role in supporting and strengthening clubs.

Councils have the capacity to bring clubs, community groups, peak bodies', service providers and all levels of government together to work on outcomes for sport in the community.

In pursuit of this role, Redland City Council will this year provide four specific club workshops in partnership with the Queensland Department of Communities.

The workshops will draw on our collective resources to help club participants with their network development and understanding and access to funding for both facilities and programmes.

Our council also makes grants available to support club development and provides a front door for clubs seeking advice and support.

Whether it is the management of playing turf or working with clubs to support their grant and funding applications to state and federal governments, Redland City Council officers provide tens of

thousands of dollars worth of free advice and assistance each year to our cities sporting clubs.

New approaches to sporting activities.

The success of touch football is perhaps another guide to how some sports may rethink their approach to activities.

Touch football is phenomenally successful as a group competitive sport and is an example of a strong growing sport with unmet demand for facilities.

The estimate in the Redlands is that the touch football competition could use another six fields to accommodate current competition demand.

As many as 2,000 players compete each week on up to 10 fields at venues such as the Norm Price Park - Redland Showground in Cleveland.

It requires little more than good athletics shoes, an open field and hour or so of time at night or lunch time each week.

While that formula does not simply translate for all sport, looking at new ways and times for playing competitive sports such as night time competitions for time poor workers may help to sustain both facility use and healthy competition in other sports.

Collaboration and cooperation in both the planning and use of facilities and in the organisation and management of sporting clubs has benefits for the long term sustainability of organised community sporting activities.

But I want to close my remarks today by suggesting there is a strong role for more innovative thinking among facility planners, sporting organisations and funding bodies.

Traditional organised sports will continue to have their place and be an important part of our sporting culture.

But as well celebrating 150 years of Queensland's past, I think we should also look to the future design of facilities that are able to accommodate a diversity of users.

There needs to be an active encouragement for the design of more multi-use flexible facilities.

Private public partnership may be part of these arrangements.

Sporting facilities that encourage and enable woman to continue to participate in sport are essential.

Paying attention in the design of facilities to the lifestyle challenges that confront many working mothers for example by incorporating child minding and food services, may help to encourage more women to participate.

Planning for sporting needs of our aging population will also have a bearing on many new facilities.

Facilities that allow non team-based sports participation, whether it be cycling or running or rowing, are also important in an inclusive society.

In the Redlands we are blessed with our beautiful natural environments that encourages, cycling, swimming, paddling and walking.

We should help to encourage these positive sporting pursuits that require little more in sporting facilities than a healthy natural environment.

Thank you

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