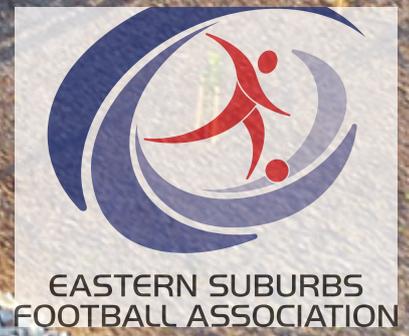




ESFA FACILITIES REPORT 2018



The Eastern Suburbs Football Association are reliant on their facilities to be able to grow and serve the game with the Eastern Suburbs football community.

The Association needs to be able to have a facility to call its own and the game as a whole will prosper in our region.

“You don’t just support the Association, you belong to it”



Introduction

Unlike most other regions, football in the Eastern Suburbs has for decades talked and written about the shortfall of pitches and lights and yet we have been slow off the mark when doing anything as a group about it. Various Councils have written reports submitting to the shortfall fact and it is even something we all know to be true!

This is probably down to various reasons like not enough clubs having their piece of turf, the lack of available turf, not knowing where to start or a person to drive just this project. It maybe all of these and/or more?

The time has come to drive a Facilities Plan for the whole of the Eastern Suburbs but it will not be easy and there are many bridges to cross but if we put down a plan on paper and follow it all through, whoever our leaders of the day maybe, we still have the chance to not only be the largest participant group sport in the Eastern Suburbs, of which we are but one with the best facilities.

The next few months are so very important as there are elections around the corner for both State and Federal governments. There is funding from the two for various projects already in the market place and with more to be announced. We need to be a part of the process now to make sure that we get our fair share of the spoils. This report is that start and the hope is that there is enough drivers from the football community to help move us all into a new facilities era.





KNOX FOOTBALL PARK IN VICTORIA



SPEERS POINT LAKE MACQUARIE

History

The worse thing about history is that it has a habit of repeating itself, especially if this is not kept in mind when advancing your project. The repeating has been the case when the project is football facilities in the Eastern Suburbs.

A facilities document was started as part of the 2006-2009 Strategic Plan but never finished or followed up. In 2016 another facilities document was finalised but not followed up. Both of these were good documents, with great statistics for funding but never used (although this document has used both for information and to keep the story the same).

Around 2005 a proposal was put to ESFA member Clubs to start a Facilities Fund of a dollar from each player each year, following the Blacktown Association example. This was not accepted by the Clubs at the time but around 2012 it was offered to the members again and this time it was ten dollars per player per year and it was accepted.

So, as you can see, history repeating itself! Let it stop here!

A Trust Fund was set up with a Committee of long term football administrators and business brains, where it was indicated, by that Committee, that it would take a few years before the Fund was able to do anything constructive.

ESFA has experienced a massive growth in participation in male and female, junior and adult football over the last 20 years. Data indicates that there has been over a 250% participation growth and that a significant proportion of that growth has been in adult participation. Meeting this increased demand requires ESFA and its Member Clubs, to ensure that it has access to adequate facilities for competition and training purposes and that these facilities are of an acceptable and safe standard.

Until now, the provided facilities required for all levels of football within the Eastern Suburbs, ESFA has and will still need to rely heavily on Local Councils and Centennial Parklands Trust owned and maintained facilities and those developed by Clubs in partnerships, like schools.

This has created a sort of structure where (excepting of the five synthetic grass pitches of which have been created over the last year or so) grass pitches are contracted to football from April until August each year/season. What this has caused is the lack of pitches for pre season trial matches, training and to start the season earlier, so that competitions can be finalised without the need to have 'double-headers' and the sort.

There has been a lot of work done by Football NSW over the last few years in gaining information about the positives of synthetic fields over natural grass fields and passing that information onto Councils. All our Councils have been involved and participated with 'Facility Forums' organised by Football NSW. This has resulted in the amount of Synthetic Fields we now have with some more in the pipeline.

Some Councils have not been easy to deal with but all (Centennial Parklands Trust included) have produced fairly reasonable service over the last 20 years and if they are still to be the providers of our facilities, then we would need to do more to help them and thereby ourselves to get our facilities to be the best they can be.

So and to be perfectly honest with ourselves, history dictates that we haven't been the best at getting our facilities to the standards of which we all know they could be but we know we can do better. There are issues as to why but that aside, doing better is now a must. The opportunity is now with us to make great advances, so lets do it!



CROMER PARK

A Home of Football for all

The Association is setting important goals that, if achieved, will deliver strong and lasting benefits to football and the local community. We are looking to establish a Home of Football for the Eastern Suburbs.

With the assistance of Football NSW and Football Federation Australia, we would like to work with our local Members of both Parliaments to access grants that can help our Councils to fund capital works that otherwise may not be possible.

In many other regions of Sydney, the regional football authority has a home base that serves as a beating heart for the game in that region. Venues like Blacktown Football Park and Cromer Park provide high level match and training facilities, multiple fields and meeting rooms. There is no such facility at present in the Eastern Suburbs.

These facilities allow the local community to benefit through such things as:

- A home base to create a rich carnival atmosphere for events like gala days, finals series, registration drives and coaching clinics
- Ability to run regular coach education and development programs – helping the Association to ‘coach the coaches’, improving the quality of football offering for local clubs and schools
- ‘Home’ grounds for local clubs to play in competitions like the Football NSW Waratah Cup, State Cup and Champions of Champions competitions in the Eastern Suburbs rather than always having to travel to away games
- The capacity to host carnival events like the finals days of State Cup and Champions of Champions competitions along with finals series for Football NSW competitions, bringing high-level footballers and their families to the Eastern Suburbs
- Year-round access to one or more synthetic football fields to run training and development programs for players from grassroots to elite levels
- Capacity to assist local clubs with hosting mid-week games under lights
- A space to assist the Association’s representative teams and local representative clubs to train their players to compete at the highest levels of NSW football
- Community rooms that would be available to local community groups including football clubs to use as a meeting space

Were we to be successful in attracting support and funding for such a facility, we would hope that we could arrange an ongoing non-exclusive tenancy of the venue that would permit us to deliver the above benefits to the football community.

We feel that development of such a facility in the Eastern Suburbs would be a beacon for the game and have benefits that spread far beyond our nearly 9,000 players and their families. We feel that given the nature of benefits that could accrue, a project of this nature could attract support from all levels of government.

The Association has had a meeting with Bayside Council, at their request, about the future of Botany Golf Club. They have asked us to organise the other sports in putting an all sports centre together. It is early days and other meetings with the Council are planned. As are meetings with the other sports.

This is a great opportunity for us to be leaders in the community, let alone an access to our own Home of Football. Your help will be needed, that's for sure. The year of 2019 will be a remarkable year in the history of football in the Eastern Suburbs.

So, be positive about the future of the game, as we embark on a road to the Eastern Suburbs Home of Football.

Homes for all our clubs

We have a large number of football fields in the area, relative to other Associations but many are shared with other sports or other competitions. Very few of our grounds are solely for the use of a single club – very few of our grounds feel like a ‘Home’ ground for an ESFA club. We want to have a situation where ESFA clubs have proper Home grounds, where they can properly set down roots.

ESFA needs to secure more dedicated football venues and work with the other football codes to reduce the need for combination grounds. This would provide greater operational efficiency and enable clubs to invest in storage and canteen facilities so that they do not have to move equipment and goods on a regular basis.

The reduction of combination grounds would also reduce the need for combination markings and could enable grounds to be marked for football more permanently.

The Association, as a Strategy priority, will need to help Clubs to be able to access Local, State and Federal grants with shovel-ready plans, able to be put in place at short notice.

By identifying what clubs ought to have as we have done, we can then help clubs develop their own Facility Plans to make sure that they identify the projects they need and can get them to a sufficiently advanced stage that funding can be put to work quickly.

An issue that weakens clubs’ arguments for facility development is that very few of our clubs are ‘comprehensive’ clubs, offering all types of football. This limits their community reach and thus arguably impedes their ability to seek grants. It is simpler to make an argument for a facility improvement if the improvement is going to be enjoyed by the widest possible audience.

Equally, many of our grounds don’t have comprehensive offerings. Ideally, anyone who lived near a football ground would be able to take their children (or themselves) to a club based at that ground and be able to sign up to play football. Unfortunately, many of our grounds have only limited options and there are many grounds in our region that have no clubs there at all.

At the same time, some of the clubs and grounds that have comprehensive offerings have inadequate facilities to be able to provide the sort of service to the communities that are commonplace in other regions. This puts a brake on the development of the clubs and limits the benefits that the clubs can provide to their communities. For ESFA clubs to be able to have true homes of their own, we need to recognise that small clubs with limited offerings are not able to lobby as effectively for improved facilities as those with broader community reach. Consequently, we need to consider whether this is the best approach for the future.

We could seek to group clubs together in order to manufacture a broader offering at each venue. We could seek to have the Association itself (as the organisation with the broadest reach of all) become responsible for ground bookings.

Alternatively, rationalise the number of clubs we have in order to be able to have fewer and larger clubs, offering a comprehensive suite of footballing opportunities to male and female players of all ages.

ESFA will consider a club development plan that identifies pathways for clubs to build up to delivering a comprehensive suite of offerings to their local communities and in so doing provide more to their communities. For those clubs that do offer comprehensive services, ESFA will look to offer support to ensure that they have the right mix of offerings at their home grounds to allow them to grow to their potential and provide maximum benefit to their communities.

By working together as one community in football, we can ensure that we are all able to grow together for the good of our communities and for the good of the game.



5SPORTS FOOTBALL CENTRE





LAKE MACQUARIE FOOTBALL PARK



The financial contribution

As stated earlier, our Member Clubs did endorse in 2012, that every registered player contribute \$10 a year to an ESFA Ground Development Fund in Trust to put towards facility development. Blacktown Association started off by collecting 50c from each player from 1988 and 23 years later they had put together well over a \$1m of which combined with \$5m from the State Government was enough to build them a fantastic facility called Blacktown Football Park.

So we created a Ground Development Trust Fund, of which the purpose was to gather funds:

- Towards creation of new ground capacity with Local Councils, schools or other bodies with access to land suitable for football
- Towards installing lighting
- Towards improving quality of the playing surface of grounds
- Towards improving quality of facilities and amenities such as dressing rooms, toilets and equipment storage, irrigation and drainage
- Towards installing artificial surfaces
- Towards other similar ground and facilities improvements or developments

Our fund now totals over \$540,000 and is growing by roughly \$90,000 every year. The Fund has been audited as of the 30 September each year. It may be that this amount can't be directed to a purchase or contribution towards buying or developing land but it could be directed towards securing access (through lease or licence arrangements) to a facility on an ongoing basis, thereby satisfying the requirement that it be directed towards improving access to facilities.

In the course of the Association's own operations, we spend approximately:

- \$75,000 per annum on fields for development programs and representative pathway programs;
- \$20,000 per annum on securing fields to facilitate catch-up games;
- \$25,000 per annum on securing fields for the ESFA Grand Finals Series, and;
- \$40,000 per annum on leasing office space.

The Association could therefore redirect some \$160,000 per annum towards an Association home ground or use it to help access Homes for our Clubs or upgrades of Club facilities.

Be aware that often when grants become available that the question is always asked as to how much funding you will be contributing to a project. Yes, this also includes supplying labour and items that are required for the project that maybe supplied via private supporters or sponsors. For a large project like a Home, then an amount of self funding is vital.

The Association has now just enough funding to be able to call a hearing with various levels of government to get involved with a large project, like the Botany Golf Club and ask for large funding. This is why we started the Trust and need it now more than ever to take football forward in the Eastern Suburbs.

