



**Hobsons Bay**  
CITY COUNCIL

# **Synthetic Sports Surfaces Feasibility Study**

**Executive Summary Report**

**May 2013**

## Introduction

The objective of the Synthetic Sports Surfaces Feasibility Study is to provide strategic direction for the future provision and management of synthetic sports surfaces in Hobsons Bay. The Synthetic Sports Surfaces Feasibility Study – Executive Summary contains:

- A set of **Principles** to guide future decision making with respect to the provision and management of synthetic sports surfaces.
- An **Implementation Plan** detailing specific recommendations to help the Council achieve the overall objective of this study.

The study has been built on an assessment of all synthetic sports surfaces in Hobsons Bay, a review of relevant literature and stakeholder consultation. The findings from this research are contained in an associated background report.

The Synthetic Sports Surfaces Feasibility Study replaces the Council's Sports Facility Synthetic Surfaces Study (2002) and Synthetic Surfaces Policy Draft Discussion Paper (2004).

Hobsons Bay City Council manages and maintains more than 65 sports fields catering for a wide variety of sports and used by a wide range of sport and recreational clubs. The majority of these facilities consist of a natural turf playing surface. The following facilities have a synthetic sports surface:

- The Newport Park Athletics Track, which was recently resurfaced at a cost of over \$900,000 to the Council;
- A hockey pitch, leased to the Altona Hockey Club;
- Three tennis courts, leased to the Altona Tennis Club;
- Two lawn bowls greens, leased to the Altona Bowls Club and Laverton Bowls Club; and
- Multiple cricket wickets.

The effects of climate change including prolonged drought conditions and recent heavy rainfalls have negatively impacted many of the Council's natural turf playing fields. Many of these fields have also been negatively impacted as a result of overuse caused by a lack of alternative venues, pre-season training and growth in participation. The provision of one or more synthetic sports fields is viewed as an option to address these issues and would also provide an alternative venue when sports fields are closed due to renovation or repairs.

Whilst the Study did not identify any immediate need for a new major synthetic surfaced sports facility, the Council's role in planning, providing, maintaining and managing synthetic sports surfaces is a highly valued service that will be guided by this study.



## Guiding Principles

The following principles will guide future decision making with respect to the provision and management of synthetic sports surfaces in Hobsons Bay:

1. **Determine and meet needs:** Support the planning for new or redeveloped facilities where both the needs of sport and the Hobsons Bay community can be met.
2. **Capacity and quality:** Increase the capacity of existing synthetic sports surfaces and ensure the ongoing provision and maintenance of high quality synthetic sports surfaces is achieved.
3. **Targeted provision:** Prioritise the renewal of existing facilities based on need, demand, financial sustainability and the ability to increase participation in a range of sport and physical activities.
4. **Funding contributions:** Ensure that fair and equitable contributions are made towards the ongoing management and redevelopment of existing facilities, including financial contributions from Council, tenant clubs and other users.

## Implementation Plan

The following recommendations will assist the Council in achieving the overall objective of the Synthetic Sports Surfaces Feasibility Study. The implementation Plan is based around four key themes:

1. Policy
2. Enhancing what we have
3. New provision
4. Management

### Theme 1: Policy

- a) Ensure that consideration of synthetic training and/or competition facilities are a mandatory component of future sport and recreation reserve master planning projects.
- b) Inspect and assess all existing cricket practice wicket facilities and develop a hierarchy of provision and associated 10 year capital works plan based on competition levels played, community access and age, gender and number of players/users that are likely to benefit.
- c) Review and update all current lease and management arrangements for facilities that provide synthetic sports surfaces and ensure practical and achievable renewal expectations are provided in-line with any new capital contributions policy.
- d) Develop a capital contributions and approvals policy specifically for synthetic training and competitions facilities, with Council contributions weighted towards the provision of community accessibility and benefit as a priority. Sport specific drivers and influences will need to be accommodated within this policy.
- e) Explore the extent of Council's ability to contribute financially to the provision and enhancement of synthetic sports surfaces over the next five to ten years and where appropriate determine external funding opportunities.

## Theme 2: Enhancing what we have

- f) Explore programming and ground occupancy efficiencies in-line with club competition and training demands.
- g) Develop a fully costed five-year floodlighting renewal and installation program across Council's recreation reserves and sports grounds that prioritises winter sporting facilities where club and community demand is increasing and multiple sports are accommodated. Consider partnerships with schools to install floodlighting at existing and proposed synthetic facilities where community access can be negotiated.
- h) Assist Hobsons Bay sporting clubs to negotiate affordable access to synthetic sports facilities located at schools to utilise for pre and during season training activities.
- i) Explore (through Master Planning and Feasibility Studies) 'synthetic training' facilities for use at high wear sites allowing natural turf pitches to rest and be used largely for competition.
- j) Partner with neighbouring municipalities to gain affordable access to existing synthetic sport surfaces and facilities to meet future growth in training demands, and promote their use to Hobsons Bay based sporting clubs.

## Theme 3: New provision

- k) Develop a synthetic sport surface approval policy clearly stating the scenarios by which the development of a synthetic surface would be considered. The provision of a synthetic sports surface will only be considered if:
  - Demand has exceeded capacity of an existing facility.
  - No programming solution can be identified.
  - No other training alternative or site alternative exists to offset use.
  - No other site is available for relocation opportunities.
  - Adequate support amenities, facilities and floodlights are available / provided to ensure surface use can be maximised.
  - Funding is available for the development, ongoing maintenance and renewal.
  - The synthetic sports surface provides access and benefit to more than one user group.
  - Public access level is maintained to an appropriate level.
  - Appropriate design and project management methodologies are followed.
- l) Adopt the above recommended facility development principles into relevant Council policy.



## Theme 4: Management

- m) Ensure every existing Hobsons Bay facility that provides a synthetic sports surface has a documented lease or management agreement that outlines key requirements including:
- Expectations of use including public access and multi-use.
  - Annual or periodical fees charged (and paid to Council).
  - User fees and charges (paid to lessee or facility manager).
  - Maintenance requirements, roles and responsibilities.
  - Surface renewal responsibilities.
- n) For any new synthetic sport surface, develop a management and user agreement and business plan in association with core user(s) and governing bodies that delivers on Council use and accessibility policies.
- o) Annually request up-to-date facility development guidelines from State Sporting Organisations and other Government bodies and keep track of products standards and installation requirements.
- p) Review Council's fees and charges policy and incorporate review outcomes into lease and management agreement documents (upon their renewal).
- q) Source and distribute relevant surface maintenance specifications to all clubs and facilities that currently maintain a synthetic surface.
- r) Investigate, with contractors, the opportunity to introduce a Council wide contract maintenance program for existing synthetic surfaces. Include additional fees into club leases and management agreements to reflect costs.

