



28 March 2018

NSW Government – Department of Planning & Environment  
GPO BOX 39  
Sydney NSW 2001

Dear Department of Planning & Environment,

Thank you for the opportunity to make comment on the Draft Camellia Town Centre Master Plan.

By way of background, Football NSW is the state governing body of football (soccer) in New South Wales. A member based organisation we currently have 31 associations throughout the state – 17 of which are in metropolitan Sydney. Recent Federal Government research, 'AusPlay' has put football as the largest team participation sport with some 1.1 million players nationally. In NSW (Football NSW and Northern NSW Football), we have over 350,000 registered players making it the largest sport in the state. Further, our own independent research shows one in every 25 residents is a registered player. Football is by far the most popular sport in the State, with 22% more players across the state than the other NSW football codes of rugby league, rugby union and AFL combined.

Within Football NSW, our Facilities and Advocacy Unit's role is to grow, develop and promote the game by building, protecting and enhancing sustainable football facilities. The Facilities and Advocacy Unit is a centralised joint venture between Football NSW and Northern NSW Football, that provides tangible assistance and advice to clubs and local government authorities throughout NSW.

From a football perspective, the Draft Camellia Town Centre Master Plan is critical to the future of football in the City of Parramatta. Football has been experiencing an under supply of football fields for many years now. Football participation numbers can no longer be ignored in the City of Parramatta region. The quality and quantity of facilities across the City of Parramatta needs to match the current and expected growing demand of football now and in the future.

Regular participation in physical activity provides significant health benefits to individuals from both a physical and mental perspective. Football's appeal as the most popular sport in NSW makes it a vehicle to support the development of healthy and inclusive communities, providing improved social, health, educational and cultural outcomes for all.

The number of children and adults playing the game are soaring, making it the most popular team sport among children and adults in Australia. There are over 1 million football participants (1,086,986) across the country, which equates to almost 5% of the population (AusPlay, 2017). A snapshot of Football NSW participation figures in 2017 are as follows:

<b>Football NSW Participation Highlights</b>	<b>Numbers</b>
Registered Players	227,274
Registered Coaches	15,626
Registered Referees	5,583
Registered Volunteers	11,872
<b>TOTAL PARTICIPANTS</b>	<b>260,355</b>

Granville and Districts Soccer Football Association (GDSFA) had 6,297 active playing numbers (2017). In addition, a further 2,051 registered players are participating in summer football also known as six-a-side football, totalling 8,348. These figures are growing every year with the popularity of summer football growing across the state, with 37,987 participants.

A snapshot of winter participation figures in GDSFA (2017) are as follows:

<b>GDSFA</b>	<b>Numbers</b>
Registered Players	6,297
Registered Coaches	324
Registered Referees	140
Registered Volunteers	176
<b>TOTAL PARTICIPANTS</b>	<b>6,937</b>

Female football has also grown incredibly in recent years, in 2017, GDSFA female participation represented 16% of the overall registered players. The facilities across the City of Parramatta area have not matched the increase in female participation. Women and girls in some areas don't have a change room to get changed in, with players having to change in cars. We know the female numbers are large, therefore it is now time to act.

Football's participation levels are already expecting double digit growth because of the increasing population levels and public's growing appreciation of football. Following the Socceroos' recent qualification for the 2018 FIFA World Cup in Russia and the continued success of the Matildas, we are extremely confident that the popularity of the sport – particularly in grassroots participation numbers will continue to accelerate.

In addition to the various priorities and challenges stated in the Draft Camellia Town Centre Master Plan, Football NSW has provided several action items to help address the playing fields/multi use active recreation space and changing recreational demands within the precinct. Our comments concerning each of these action items are as follows:

**Sporting fields should be synthetic turf fields to accommodate usage and carrying capacity**

Synthetic fields are becoming ever so popular for sporting codes and local councils across the state. The carrying capacity of synthetic fields certainly outweighs natural turf fields. The usage benefits for football have been astronomical, the number of people and the number of hours that the surface allows will benefit football immensely in the Camellia Town Centre.

Football NSW and GDSFA fully supports and encourages building synthetic fields at Camellia Town Centre. There is no doubt that the introduction of synthetic surfaces will continue long into the future and we hope the Department of Planning & Environment will be the leaders in supporting installations of synthetic surfaces especially when building new sporting fields.

Synthetic surfaces create a safe and level playing field every time participants step onto the field, unlike natural turf fields which are severely hampered when wet weather occurs. In many instances, heavy use of a field has required a field to be closed because the surface becomes unsafe to play on.

The number of games and training sessions that are lost each year due to wet weather can be reduced if more and more synthetic surfaces are constructed in the City of Parramatta and within the Camellia Town Centre.

## **Supporting infrastructure should help enhance the user experience**

### Floodlighting

Installing floodlighting on all sporting fields in the Camellia Town Centre is a key way to improve the capacity of football fields. Many of the football fields across the City of Parramatta do not meet the minimum Australian Standards for training and or competition. By improving and installing lighting across all sporting fields (including football fields) this will allow more people to use a sporting field. There are fields in the City of Parramatta municipality where the floodlights only light up sections of a football field, therefore leaving sections of the football field unused. If the entire football field is lit up it would allow more participants to use each venue and reducing wear and tear in concentrated areas of the field.

LED lighting technology is fast approaching and there are a number of councils across the state that have already embraced the technology. Football encourages the Department of Planning & Environment to advise the use of LED lighting because of two main benefits:

1. Low cost – the end user being the football club will see reduced electricity bills.
2. Minimal to no maintenance. Once the lights are installed there is no need to replace globes.

### Surface quality

Surface quality is a key ingredient to the game of football, without a good surface the quality of football starts to decrease and turns players away from participating. Turf quality and the type of turf is another item that should be considered to assist in carrying capacity of a field. Studies have shown that couch turf provides a higher resistance in term of carry capacity compared to kikuyu turf. Therefore, it would be in the Department of Planning & Environment interest to recommend installing fields with couch turf species to assist in carrying capacity of fields if synthetic turf is not an option.

Football encourages the Department of Planning & Environment to engage with a soil scientist or similar professional to assess the building scope of sporting fields in the Camellia Town Centre, and with that assessment provide reports on how sporting fields should be constructed, how to maintain them and other detailed information.

### Amenity Buildings

With the creation of new sporting fields, amenity buildings need to be built to accommodate the participants utilising the fields. Buildings that were built 50 years ago do not meet the required need in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Some football clubs are experiencing a number of issues with amenity buildings, for example, there are some canteens that do not meet the required health and safety standards, female friendly and not enough adequate storage.

Clubhouses and canteens are basic elements of a football club, and are a key to fostering a sense of community among participants. They provide the infrastructure to store equipment, serve food and beverages and conduct administration. They also provide a home for the club where memorabilia and awards can be displayed, and club members can meet and be social.

## Changing recreation needs

### Demand

The Department of Planning & Environment needs to determine how future sporting fields can best meet users' needs in the long term especially when considering ground allocations. There are already not enough grounds to support the current demand. To put this into perspective, in 2011, there was 203,100 resident population living in the City of Parramatta Council municipality. In 2016, there was a resident population of 238,850, which saw an 85% increase of 35,750 over a 5-year period. At the current growth rate, it is envisaged that in 2021 there will be 296,450 residents and in 2036 there will be 416,750 residents. This results in a 71% increase in population within 15 years. Between 2011 and 2036 there will be a total increase of 213,650 residents, which equates to an overall increase of 105.2% over this period and will see the City of Parramatta Council host the largest population increase across the state.

Using the population statistics of 2016, 6,297 of the City of Parramatta Council residents participated during the winter football season. By 2036 there will be close to 19,000 residents playing the game based on current figures, seeing an increase of 12,700 players sport based on the estimated population increase. Football NSW envisages a vast increase in the number of players to play the game over this period due to the popularity of the world game.

Having adequate and sufficient sports fields based on demand (number of participants) is one way to help suit the needs of the community. In the coming years GDSFA will have to turn people away from participating in football and therefore the community will be worse off when it comes to their health and wellbeing.

### **Participation Programs**

Football is no longer seen as a sport that is played in the winter months. Football is now considered as a year-round sport.

There are a number of targeted participation programs that local clubs and associations are promoting or presenting to local communities via the assistance and guidance of Football NSW, they are as follows:

- Walking Football – this program is aimed at targeting inactivity in over 50's and promoting an enjoyable and active social gathering. The program has been trialled in a few football associations across the state with more football associations to take on the program in the coming years <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y5HHpVXJBAA>
- Football for Migrants – is a fundamental program designed to engage newly arrived refugee and migrant participants. The project utilises football as a key driver towards social and cultural cohesion by breaking down the existing barriers to participation, and removing the stigma and societal issues faced by cultural communities settling in NSW. This program will be trialled in 2018 in various areas of NSW.
- Football 4 All – was established in 2008 to further develop the special needs football programs of Football NSW and create a support network for volunteers, coaches, parents and players involved in special needs football.

- ALDI MiniRoos Kick-Off – is a fun, safe sport taught in a friendly environment for children aged between 4 and 9. Delivered weekly through 45-minute sessions that builds skills through games and simple drills delivered in an engaging and inclusive environment.
- Summer Football – a growing part of the football landscape which is becoming increasingly popular with people of all ages. Summer Football is a shortened form of the game played in the summer season.
- Futsal – is played on a hard court, smaller than a football pitch, and mainly indoors. It can be considered a version of five-a-side football. Futsal is played between two teams of five players each.
- Street Football – Football can be played by anyone and at any time. Football NSW encourages the Department of Planning & Environment to consider supplying multiuse courts where social and recreational footballers can participate in a casual, safe and cost-free environment.

### **Do nothing and accept the shortfall in supply**

Doing nothing and accepting the shortfall in sporting fields in the Draft Camellia Town Centre Master Plan would be detrimental for all sporting codes in the City of Parramatta. With the pressure of demand already causing issues for football now, doing nothing would certainly hamper the growth of the sport in future years.

The Camellia Town Centre and City of Parramatta Council have an important role in addressing the childhood obesity issue that exists in NSW (1 in 4 children are clinically overweight) and Australia (2 out of 3 Australians are overweight). By not providing the relevant facilities to encourage participation in sport the Camellia Town Centre residents would suffer immensely in health ratings in the future. Some key economic, health and social findings relating to football are as follows:

- \$417 million total economic contribution by football.
- Football's physical health benefits contribute \$2.5 million per year due to the prevention of ischaemic heart disease, type 2 diabetes, stroke, colorectal cancer and breast cancer.
- The total health contribution of football participation in NSW is \$4.5 million per year.
- Whilst the minimum level of physical activity recommended in order to prevent disease is based upon 5 x 30 minutes per week, football participants on average play for 330 minutes per week.
- 86% of football club stakeholders believe that their football environment is inclusive for female participants.

Lastly, there are 3 major documents that the Facilities and Advocacy Unit holds at its core, these documents will provide the Department of Planning & Environment a fantastic synopsis of football in the state of NSW at this present time and where it plans to be in the future.

- [Meeting the Future Needs of Football in NSW: A Partnership Approach](#)
  - Noting this document is being updated in 2018
- [The Community Impact of Football in NSW: Economic, Health and Social](#)
- [Facilities Strategic Plan 2014 – 2024](#)

Football NSW congratulates the Department of Planning & Environment for taking a step in the right direction in creating the Draft Camelia Town Centre Master Plan that will play an important role in shaping the future of sport in the City of Parramatta. Please don't hesitate to contact the Facilities and Advocacy Unit if you require any further information related to football facilities. Football NSW in conjunction with Granville and Districts Soccer Football Association looks forward to working with the Department of Planning & Environment to provide football fields in the Camellia Town Centre and ensure that football remains the number one participated sport across the City of Parramatta.

Yours in Football,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jas Virdee', written over a horizontal line.

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