



Sport and Recreation Reference Group

Report SR04 - 16 March 2020

Attachments:

Nil

SUBJECT: Tunks Park Sports Turf

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ENDORSED BY: Rob Emerson, Director Open Space and Environmental Services

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This report presents information on the current difficulties that Council's grounds staff are having maintaining a good grass cover on Fields 2, 3 and 4 at Tunks Park and provides a recommendation for changing the use of this facility to improve the condition of the fields.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

The exclusion of high impact sport at Tunks Park through the period of October to January would result in an income loss of approximately \$20,000.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. THAT Council excludes the use of high impact sports at Tunks Park during the October to January period in line with all other North Sydney sportsfields in order to recover a reasonable coverage of turf through the spring/summer renovation period.

LINK TO COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN

The relationship with the Community Strategic Plan is as follows:

Direction: 1. Our Living Environment
Outcome: 1.4 Public open space and recreation facilities and services meet community needs

BACKGROUND

North Sydney Council has specific terms and conditions of use for all its sportsfields, these usage conditions differ from ground to ground allowing specific types of use at different times of the year.

They are generally based around the turf recovery period from the high impact season (winter) and are implemented through the low impact sport (i.e. Cricket) season of Summer.

The Tunks Park sportsfields are the only fields in North Sydney that are not floodlit and due to this limitation, the fields are not subjected to the full 32 hours of organised sport a week at all other grounds during the high impact Winter season.

Currently Council allows Tunks Park to be utilised for high impact sport (i.e. touch football) between October to January, for a maximum of 10 hours per week, in addition to low impact sport bookings (e.g. cricket). All other sportsfields within North Sydney are rested from high impact sports from the end of the winter season until February whilst Council undertakes a significant renovation program of the sportsfields.

Between February and March, bookings for high impact sports are permitted at all grounds for a maximum of 15 hours per week. The limited hours allow the fields to completely recover before the next Winter season.

CONSULTATION REQUIREMENTS

Community engagement will be undertaken in accordance with Council's Community Engagement Protocol.

SUSTAINABILITY STATEMENT

The sustainability implications are of a minor nature and did not warrant a detailed assessment.

DETAIL

Over the past three spring/summer seasons, Council staff have found it increasingly difficult to recover the grass playing surface at Tunks Park to an acceptable standard for the start of the following winter season. Staff are of the opinion that the high impact sports allowed on the field through the spring renovation period is the sole cause of this difficulty.

The Council’s turf renovation program and the warmer growing conditions has shown tremendous results on all sportsfields in North Sydney with the exception of Tunks Park as illustrated in the following aerial timeline photographs. The images illustrate a significant difference in the recovery of the turf at Tunks as compared to other sportsfields within North Sydney.

Note: Forsyth Park # 1 was fully reconstructed over the spring/summer period.

Tunks Park Oct 2019



Tunks Park January 2020



Primrose Park Oct 2019



Primrose Park January 2020



Forsyth Park Oct 2019



Forsyth Park January 2020



In 2019 Council increased the funding allocated to sportsfields maintenance to enable staff to increase the maintenance and spring/summer renovation regimes to all fields. This has allowed staff to undertake additional topdressing and aeration as well as increasing the nutrition programs to aid in recovery and overall turf health.

The programs for each field are similar with variances only being seen in the fertiliser types of which are based on soil tests specific to each field. This year Council staff have undertaken

additional works at Tunks Park to try and help the recovery and there is still some further works to complete prior to the start of the winter season.

During the months of October to January Council historically allowed Tunks Park to be used for a maximum of 10 hours of high impact sport in addition to the normal cricket usage of which there is no limit.

Whilst 10 hours of use doesn't sound like a lot, Touch Football and Oz Tag have a very high impact on natural turf surfaces, particularly turf surfaces that are already damaged from the high impact winter use. This is due to it being a very quick, up, back and sideways moving sport. Council's terms and conditions of hire specifically indicates sandshoes only are to be worn with bladed shoes prohibited when playing this sport, however this condition is rarely adhered to and for Council is difficult to police.

What is happening at Tunks Park is that any lateral growth of turf at the start of the growing season (when trying to cover a worn area) is being dislodged from its root or completely severed resulting in a poor turf cover and no opportunity for the turf surface to adequately recover.

It is the opinion of the Manager Parks & Reserves and Grounds staff that high impact sport should be removed from Tunks Park during the October to January period to enable a full recovery of the surface of the sportsfields. This would bring Tunks Park in line with all other fields in the local government area, however, would displace the availability of playing principally Touch Football and Oz Tag during this period within North Sydney.

Below is a summary of the programmed high impact bookings during this October to January period:

- Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, senior Touch Football played on all grounds for up to 2 hours.
- Rugby League training starts from November when they utilise Tunks Park on Monday and Friday evenings.
- Junior Oz Tag is run on Tuesday evenings.
- Wednesdays and Thursdays host additional Touch Football from school hirers.

The table below indicates the hours of use per week during the months of October to January on Tunks Park 2, 3, 4 and 5 combined for each hirer:

	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan
Monte	12	12		6
Wenona	10	10		
Sydney Touch	13.5	13.5	13.5	13.5
Brothers Oz Tag	2	2	2	
NS Bears		8	8	8
Total	37.5	45.5	23.5	27.5

The range of booking hours is between 3.30pm to 7.30pm. There is no opportunity to relocate any of these bookings to alternate locations.

It is estimated that around 680 people participate in Touch Football and Oz Tag competitions at Tunks Park throughout this period who would need to find available sportsfields outside of the North Sydney area:

	Touch Senior	Touch Schools	Oz Tag	Rugby League
Average persons per team	10	10	10	30
Number of fields utilised	5	5	5	2
Games played per field	2	2	2	1
Nights per week	3	2	1	1
Total players per group	300	200	100	60
Total Players	660			

Winter Set Up – Football/Rugby Fields



Summer Set Up - Touch Fields

