

10.6. Season Extension for Winter Sport

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ATTACHMENTS	Nil
CSP LINK	1. Our Living Environment 1.4 Well utilised open space and recreational facilities

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is to seek Council's approval to extend the 2024 Winter sporting season due to prolonged wet weather conditions.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

- The 2024 winter season to date has seen an unusually high amount of rain, resulting in prolonged closures of many sports fields.
- The Northern Suburbs Football Association (NSFA) has approached Council to request a one-week extension of the current Winter season.
- Council staff have contacted other sports field season hirers, who have expressed interest in this proposal.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. THAT Council endorse the extension of the 2024 Winter season by one week to 1 September 2024.

Background

The 2024 winter sports season has experienced exceptionally high rainfall to date, leading to extensive periods of waterlogged turf sports fields. As a result, organised sporting associations have had to cancel numerous training sessions and competitive matches, making it difficult to accommodate their full competition schedule.

Council staff have been collaborating closely with all hirers to accommodate as much sport as possible. In recent months, staff have kept grounds open over the weekends and left their use to the discretion of the hirers. If hirers decide the surface is suitable and safe for play, they have the sole discretion to go ahead with games. Council staff have also allowed the movement of games or training to alternate grounds if available

Report

Since the start of the winter season in April this year, the North Sydney Local Government Area has been subjected to extreme amounts of rain. The weather station located at the Waverton Coal Loader site has recorded the following rain amounts

Month	Rainfall in mm
April	273
May	273
June	425
July (till 11th)	61

The rain has had a detrimental impact on organised sports competitions, making it challenging for organisations to accommodate full match schedules. Clubs have been making every effort to schedule competition matches throughout the week and, where feasible, host double headers on both Saturdays and Sundays.

This is the second season in three years where community sport has been heavily affected by ongoing wet weather within the winter season. In some cases, more games have been cancelled than have been played.

The current winter sport season runs from 6 April to 25 August 2024. Extending the season by one week would shift the end date to 1 September 2024. The additional week will fall within the closed period between seasons; thus, it will not affect the upcoming summer sport season, which begins on 16 September 2024.

The one-week extension of the winter season has already been implemented on the Northern Beaches, and is being considered by Wollongong City Council at its next meeting.

It is proposed that sporting organisations will not be required to make additional bookings for the extension period; bookings for that week would align with those of the previous week.

Council's booking policy includes a 10% fee reduction for sports field hirers to account for wet weather closures throughout the season. This reduction is applied to their invoices for each respective sporting facility.

Options

Council has the following options in relation to this matter:

1. Do nothing/take no action
2. The recommended option

These options are assessed in the table below.

Option	Finance/Resourcing	Risk/Opportunity	Consultation
1.	No additional funds or resourcing is necessary	Community and sporting group dissatisfaction impacting community relations/ council demonstrating its commitment to supporting community sport during challenging times by actively promoting and sustaining participation.	Not Applicable
2.	No additional funds required. Council staff to rearrange season change over schedules. No additional resourcing required	Minor maintenance and work scheduling impacts to Council staff/Council supporting the needs of community sport to contribute to the overall health, social cohesion, and quality of life within the community	Not Applicable

Option 2, is recommended for the following reasons:

- There is minimal impact in relation to resourcing, and no financial impact.
- The minor work scheduling changes will have minimal impact on the season change over.
- By endorsing the additional week, Council will demonstrate its commitment to supporting community sport during challenging time

Consultation requirements

Community engagement is not required.

Financial/Resource Implications

Due to the severity of this season's closures, it is proposed that there be no ground hire charges implemented during the one-week extension period. Typically, Council does not generate revenue for hire during this period under normal circumstances, so there is no

financial loss incurred. However, it is proposed that any lighting required during this period will be charged according to the adopted Council fees and charges for the 2024/25 financial year.

Council staff will need to adjust their work schedules to ensure a smooth transition to the summer sport season without disruption. Minor overtime may be necessary to meet these adjustments, which will be accommodated within the 2024/25 recurrent budget allocation.