

2.1 MELBOURNE OUTER EAST HOCKEY FEASIBILITY STUDY

(JG)

Responsible Director: Julie Salomon

RECOMMENDATION

That Council notes the overall findings detailed in the Melbourne Outer East Hockey Feasibility Study and specifically the recommended actions relevant to Monash, which include:

- a) Undertaking a feasibility study with the view to developing a sustainable management model (capital and operational) for a potential second competition level synthetic hockey pitch at Ashwood Reserve; and*
- b) Subject to the findings of the Ashwood Reserve Feasibility Study and the provision of external funding:
 - i) Undertake detailed design for a second competition level synthetic pitch with floodlights at Ashwood Reserve; and*
 - ii) Construct a second competition level synthetic hockey pitch with floodlights at Ashwood Reserve.**

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to note the findings of the *Melbourne Outer East Hockey Feasibility Study* and the key recommendations relevant to Monash.

BACKGROUND

Melbourne East Regional Sport and Recreation Strategy (MERSRS) has been developed to support and guide councils and stakeholders in the Eastern Metropolitan Region in the planning and delivery of regional level sport and recreation facilities and shared recreation trails.

In accordance with MERSRS principles and regional planning priorities, a subset of Melbourne Councils from the Eastern Metropolitan Region including Monash, Knox, Maroondah and Yarra Ranges agreed to partner on a project titled the *Melbourne Outer East Hockey Feasibility Study (the Study)* to understand the current and future needs for hockey in the Eastern Region more broadly.

The Study aims to guide future planning and development of hockey in the East and delivers the following outcomes:

- A comprehensive participation analysis to understand the existing hockey climate in Melbourne's East;

- An overview of current issues and challenges facing hockey participation and sustainability;
- Key findings from stakeholder consultation and priorities for the future hockey provision development;
- Existing facility access analysis including travel times for participants;
- An overview of existing and future programming;
- Investigation of proposed future sites for the development on new facilities;
- A prioritised implementation plan for the next 10 years, aligned with stakeholder responsibilities; and
- An overview of development cost, viability and preferred management models.

The key catalyst for this project (although not the sole driver) is the pending closure of the Knox Hockey Club pitch, currently located at the Knox School, in October 2021. Knox Council will use the findings from this study to inform its decision making to support the Knox Hockey Club in finding a new home.

DISCUSSION

The Study provides information on existing facility classification levels identified by Hockey Victoria which have been used to inform future facility recommendations that are applicable to the Outer East Region (refer Attachment 1).

Key Findings

Consultation with clubs within the study area and across the broader Melbourne East Region identified the following key themes:

- Limited hockey infrastructure to support the future growth of hockey;
- Limited access and development opportunities at existing facilities; and
- Replacement pitch required for Knox and additional pitches required to meet current and future demand.

The continued growth of Hookin2hockey and junior hockey, and the emergence of new social and modified programs such as Hockey Sixers and J-Ball, will drive future facility development opportunities.

The delivery of new hockey facilities in the East should be guided by the principle of shared use to accommodate the trends in unstructured participation being offered at flexible times.

Hockey Participation and Facility Usage

The broader Melbourne East Region provides a strong market for hockey with over 3,000 registered participants contributing approximately 15% of the total number of players across the state. High participation rates combined with gaps in facility provision and an additional 100,000 people expected in Melbourne's East over the next 10 years, suggests that a regional solution will be required to address the future needs of hockey.

Hockey across the four (4) municipalities involved in the Study consists of four clubs (one premier league, Ashwood Reserve), four synthetic pitches across four venues and a total of 1,263 players connected to clubs within the study area.

Overall, hockey player numbers in the Study catchment area experienced an increase of +108 participants (9%) from 2015 to 2017.

Other relevant participation statistics include:

- There are a total of 1,404 registered hockey players living in the Study, including 1,263 at clubs within the study area.
- The Waverley Hockey Club has a total of 540 playing members including 328 living in the study area.
- 438 hockey players live outside the study area but are members of clubs inside the Study area.
- 372 resident hockey players live in the study area but play at clubs outside the Study area.

An analysis of the current usage at all four hockey pitches within the Study area was undertaken to determine if pitches were exceeding recommended usage guidelines.

The hockey pitch at Ashwood Reserve in Monash is the most heavily utilised for both training and competition within the Study area. The pitch is currently used approximately 43 hours per week in-season for training and competition to service the club's 540 members. Importantly, due to high membership numbers, the club plays matches at alternate venues to accommodate the number of teams it has.

The next most heavily utilised pitch is Monash University which is used by the Monash University Hockey Club on an average of 32.5 hours per week in-season to service their 216 members.

Access to Facilities

The model of community hockey facilities being located within schools and universities is a potential issue in the East that will need to be addressed to support club sustainability. In addition to the pending closure in Knox, two of the remaining three hockey venues are located on land not owned by local government. Yarra Valley Grammar and Monash University (Clayton Campus) provide facilities for the Croydon Hockey Club and Monash University Hockey Club respectively.

Implications for Monash

Pitches at Full or Near Capacity

Current pitch usage was analysed to determine the capacity of existing pitches in the Study area. Usage of Ashwood Reserve field is exceeding capacity (due to high numbers of membership), with Monash University and Knox operating at approximately 88% and 66% respectively. A breakdown of pitch usage and capacity is detail in the report (refer Attachment 1).

Limitations in Delivering New Social Hockey Programs

High pitch usage during peak times by clubs creates challenges for Hockey Victoria in accessing facilities to run the new social hockey formats and promote the game to new markets. Investigating the use of alternate facilities and surfaces will be required to facilitate social hockey in the region.

A two pitch hockey facility Ashwood Reserve

The findings from the Study supports the recommendation in Hockey Victoria's Strategic Facilities Master Plan to develop a second pitch at Ashwood Reserve. The Waverley Hockey Club has 540 members (8th largest in the State) and is unable to service the needs of existing players due to the limitations of a single pitch facility.

The priority recommendations detailed in the *Melbourne Outer East Hockey Feasibility Study* relevant to and/or impact the City of Monash are:

| Timeframe | Recommended Action | Status |
|-----------------------------|---|--|
| Year 1 Immediate Term | Undertake a feasibility study to identify capital funding opportunities and the development of a sustainable operating model for a second competition level synthetic hockey pitch at Ashwood Reserve. | Council has committed \$20,000 in the 2018/19 capital works budget to undertake a feasibility study into the development of a second synthetic hockey pitch at Ashwood Reserve. The feasibility study will include the investigation of all funding opportunities, management and operating options to mitigate the any potential impact to Council resources. |
| Year 2-4 Medium Term | Subject to the findings of the Ashwood Reserve Hockey Feasibility Study and Council approval, consider the option to undertake detailed design for a second competition level synthetic hockey pitch with floodlights at Ashwood Reserve. | The feasibility study as detailed above will include a financial analysis of the proposal including all life cycle costs for funding, maintenance and renewal. It is important to note that this stage of the project is subject to the viability of the proposal above and contingent on the availability/commitment of external funding. |
| Years 5-10 Long Term | Subject to the detailed design, construction costs and confirmation of available external funding, construct a second competition level synthetic hockey pitch with floodlights at Ashwood Reserve. | As per above. |

CONCLUSION

The *Melbourne Outer East Hockey Feasibility Study* has been developed through detailed consultation and research to identify future hockey facilities and priorities in the outer east region. This study identifies the existing single hockey pitch at Ashwood Reserve is at capacity and supports the development of a second synthetic hockey pitch at this venue to meet club and community demand.

It is recommended that Council notes the overall findings of Melbourne Outer East Hockey Feasibility (Attachment 1) and specifically the recommended actions detailed in the study relevant to Monash, which include:

1. Undertake a feasibility study with the view to developing a sustainable management model (capital and operational) for a second competition level synthetic hockey pitch at Ashwood Reserve; and
2. Subject to the findings of the Ashwood Reserve Feasibility Study and securing external funding:
 - i. Undertake detailed design for a second competition level synthetic hockey pitch with floodlights at Ashwood Reserve; and
 - ii. Construct a second competition level synthetic hockey pitch with floodlights at Ashwood Reserve.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Draft Melbourne Outer East Hockey Feasibility Study