

HOBSONS BAY FOOTBALL

FORUM ADVOCACY DOCUMENT





HOBSONS BAY FOOTBALL FORUM

Foreword by **Melissa Horne MP**

The growth of soccer in the Hobsons Bay Local Government Area (LGA) has been unmatched over recent years, not only in participation rates but the increase in clubs, spectators and general interest in the sport.

Local sporting clubs are the foundations for tomorrow's stars and bring communities together with the joy of the game. It is for these reasons that our local clubs must be supported in a continued and sustainable way, as they support the health and cohesion of communities.

This document has been developed in conjunction with all clubs in the Hobsons Bay City Council area and Football Victoria, to honestly reflect the growth of clubs and the challenges that they are facing. The document provides a strategic framework to which council can work from to facilitate a continued and sustainable growth of football in our community.

I would like to acknowledge the work of all clubs in the Hobsons Bay LGA for their input in developing this document, as well as their continued work to ensure that football is accessible and enjoyable for all in the LGA. I would also like to thank and acknowledge the work of Josephine La Pila from Football Victoria, her dedication and continued advocacy in this space is admirable.

Together we can ensure that football can continue to grow and prosper for a happier and healthier community.



Melissa Horne MP

State Member for Williamstown



COMMUNITY ADVOCACY DOCUMENT 2024

Overview & Purpose

Soccer participation is rapidly growing within the Hobsons Bay municipality. Such municipal growth to soccer participation requires a guide to future planning and development of soccer facilities.

The football community across the Hobsons Bay LGA has worked together in conjunction with Football Victoria and local MP Melissa Horne to produce the following document to collectively advocate for the needs of football in this community.

The Forum collectively calls upon the Hobsons Bay City Council to work with them as a collective and as individual clubs to ensure the continued growth and participation of residents of Hobsons Bay in football.

Football has grown across our community from participants to officials and spectators with male registration up by 18% and female registration up 29% and the increase of female coaches being 48% all in the last year alone. With this growth in players and coaches there has been a large growth in referees with a 74% growth in male referees and 180% growth of female referees.

The initial forum and following conversations and meetings, aim to create a strategy to help grow and improve football in the LGA. Clubs across the LGA must be supported to meet the growing demands of residents to want to play football, these clubs provide residents with the space to not only remain active and healthy but to grow develop relationships within their community.

Currently within the Hobsons Bay LGA there are nine clubs with nine facilities shared with other sporting codes. As football grows in popularity as well as becoming a year-round sport, there will significant pressures placed on already waning infrastructure.

Background

Whilst the growth of female participation in all areas of football is exponential, the availability of female friendly facilities is virtually non-existent. Many clubs have to share 2 changerooms between their male and female teams, as well as the visiting team, coordinating times to give each team a limited amount of time to change and quickly move out. Some female participants have resorted to changing in their cars, and even have had to share one female toilet at a ground that has a continuously failing sewerage system.

Lighting is a shared concern amongst the clubs both for being able to continue play and have games after dark, as well as for security.

Ultimately the infrastructure that currently exists within in the LGA does not meet the growing demands placed on clubs to accommodate those that want to participate and support their local clubs.



INDIVIDUAL CLUB ASSESSMENTS - KEY CHALLENGES

Altona City SC

Altona City has seen continuous growth over its history and has seen a growth of 3% over the last year. The club is a diverse and inclusive club and one of the biggest community clubs in the Western suburbs of Melbourne. At their home ground of HC Kim Reserve in Altona, there are three pitches, the club has many new participants and is struggling to facilitate everyone and is having to turn away entire teams' worth of people.

The club is looking to have a successful senior team and move from NPL 3 to NPL 1 status. This would help promote and develop juniors' teams for the future. Furthermore, the Women's Senior football side is also in constant development growing and striving for promotion through the State league and then into the NPL System.

These outcomes are hampered by a lack of space to facilitate the rapid growth the club is experiencing across all areas, particularly when it comes to pitch availability. The club is also concerned by inadequate and unsafe carparking, regarding space, sealing of the carpark, and lighting for members and visitors to safely enter and exit the facility.

Altona East Phoenix SC

Altona East Phoenix has experienced significant growth in female participation over the last year expanding from 1 to 6 teams, and significant growth in the junior program. This growth is being hampered by the lack of changing facilities. As the facilities at Paisley Park are shared with Altona Magic, both clubs must work strategically to be able to accommodate teams to have a space to change and quickly move out. This has resulted in female players having to change in their cars.

This growth has seen more trainings and games being held at night and both clubs within the Paisley Park complex have flagged lighting as an issue. This is not only for on field play but for security after hours and when committee members are locking the facilities.

Altona East is currently supporting 12 children from Association Islamic Dakwah in Australia to play at their club with more wanting to join. The club is hoping that Hobsons Bay City Council will join them in supporting more children to play.

Altona East is focused on creating a safe, friendly, and welcoming environment for players and supporters alike. With the limited facilities at their site and lack of adequate lighting particularly in terms of security, the club is hampered by the facilities in creating their desired environment and providing a service to the community.



Altona Magic SC

Altona Magic is the only Victorian Premier League ranked club in the Hobsons Bay LGA. The club has seen 12% growth over the last year is striving to be successful in the Victorian Premier League as they are the only club in the west to play in that league. The club would like to provide a pathway for juniors to join the upper league without having to leave the area.

Similar to Altona East Phoenix the shared facilities at Paisley Park are not adequate for the two clubs and put significant pressure on planning and players on game days. Not only is there no dedicated female changing facility, but there is also no space for umpires and officials. Altona Magic hosts over 250 games and 2500 training sessions annually.

As Altona Magic hosts its Premier League competitors it often holds night matches, and the lighting on the field and around the precinct is hampering the ability of the club to compete at its current level.

Altona North SC

Altona North Soccer Club has had a limited growth of 1% due to not having the facilities to be able to accommodate any further growth. For every six teams that were organised to play at the club, the equal amount was turned away.

The club currently only has access to a single use facility due to having 1 pitch at their ground for 12 teams. This places pressure on infrastructure with the pitch being worn down as well as traffic management around the precinct. As the pitch is not fully enclosed, and traffic management is a major issue there has been many near misses with balls, players, spectators, and traffic.

Altona North have also seen growth in female participation, yet this growth is unsustainable as there are only 2 change rooms at DN Duane Reserve Brooklyn. Due to this lack of adequate facilities, the club is receiving poor parent feedback and holds concerns over retention of players and families, particularly females.

Any upgrades required the club struggle to help fund as they have no canteen facilities to create an additional stream of revenue. The club also has no social facilities at their home ground, which limits any other forms of revenue as well as makes it more difficult to hold club functions and foster a sense of community and culture.



Barnstoneworth United FC/ Barnstoneworth United Junior FC

Barnstoneworth United whilst currently operating as two technically separate clubs of the same name, hope to amalgamate later this year. There has been a growth of 15% in senior participation and a 23% increase in juniors, particularly for females.

Whilst the club does enjoy the new facilities at J.T. Gray Reserve, it is struggling with 2.5 nonspecific male female changerooms. With the sport growing in popularity and the fixture constantly expanding, year-round access to training has become difficult. The grounds are shared with a cricket club, and there is an informal agreement with club to be able to train.

The cost to provide affordable football and therefore retain players has been an issue for the club. In particular the cost of lighting has increased and has therefore had to be passed on to players.

Laverton FC

Laverton FC has grown by 1% over the last year and have moved into their new facilities at H D Graham Reserve. The new facilities will enable the club to be recognised and continue their growth. The club has seen growth particularly in junior female players and believe the more female friendly facilities has been beneficial.

The club has found carparking and safety to be an issue and has had to move games to later times to ensure access and safety, as it is shared with the basketball stadium at Altona Sports Centre. The facilities are also shared with a cricket which does cause some scheduling issues.

A lack of rubbish bins around the reserve has been a source of frustration for the club both for their own use and for that of the public. The community often use the space particularly to walk their dogs and have nowhere to dispose of litter. This results in the club have to clean up and dispose of extra rubbish.

Melbourne City FC

Melbourne City Football Club has seen a growth of 36% over the past year. With this rapid growth their limited facilities have suffered. The sewer for the facility is blocked every week, and due to there being only one female toilet, it is the first to block. The showering facilities are deemed female friendly because they have cubicles but are not appropriate for busy game days. The club has also noted some health and safety issues with the pitch itself in the carpark. The club is currently developing their future plans and have concerns that promised upgrades from council will not come to fruition they may have to relocate.

Melbourne City also shares its facility with a cricket club as well and do run into some scheduling issues, but their main issue is with local Australian Rules football clubs using and taking over their facilities, forcing the club to go and hire other grounds. The club



is interested to see what governance structure exists within HBCC for how grounds are allocated, and if this is available in the public domain. Melbourne City is happy to work with the council to upgrade their facilities and ask that Council supports them in application they make to alternative forms of funding.

Melbourne City FC are in need of a pavilion upgrade and pitch redevelopment to cater for both football and cricket during the off season. Melbourne City FC requires access to 40 weeks of the year due to their community connection programs such as Go Girls, Go Soccer Mums and other informal programs during the year.

Newport Storm FC

Newport Storm is the newest club to the LGA and has seen growth of approximately 50% since turning its focus to juniors including 6 under 7 squads, and 2.5-5-year-old program to introduce to players to the sport. Most of the clubs' participants are new to organised sport. The club focuses on creating a warm and welcoming environment and understanding, and providing for, the cultural and religious background for participants especially women.

Newport Storm's current home at A W Bond Reserve does not meet the needs of the club and its players. Safety and wellbeing of all who are at the club and use the facilities is paramount for Newport Storm, particularly cultural wellbeing. Currently the facilities are not female appropriate and what is there is run down and undersized.

The club also holds safety concerns around the fencing at the reserve, particularly at the Chambers Rd end where there is a playground adjacent to the road, and around the carpark. Better fencing would also go a long way in deterring hoons from entering the reserve and tearing up the ground with their cars. Appropriate lighting for both game play and security would also improve the safety and usability of the reserve.

Newport Storm has a young and growing community, and it hopes it foster community leaders on and off the pitch. Currently the club has no social space to hold events or meetings or even shelter for players and spectators to stand under. Currently the only space the club has at the moment is a shipping container for storage which has been broken into many times. The current infrastructure for the club is only temporary and the club feels unsure about its future due to a lack of assurance from council.

The current facility at AW Bond reserve is deemed unsafe and raise concerns around OHS standards for user groups and community.



Williamstown SC

Williamstown Soccer Club has seen an increase of 20% and is currently filling its new upgraded facilities at J.T. Gray Reserve. The new facilities have been described by the club as changing the user experience in improving basic hygiene, health and safety, and providing some female facilities. Despite this the club is looking at possibly having to cap numbers next year as it is quickly outgrowing the shared space.

The continuously expanding fixture of football is making it more expensive to play, given the current economic climate the club is trying to not have to pass these costs onto the players.

The lighting at J.T. Gray is just meeting the minimum standards of the club to host games and trainings. Much like Barnstoneworth at J.T Gray, Williamstown is competing for use of the facilities at different times of the year as different clubs and codes use the facilities.



SUMMARY OF CONSTRAINTS

- **Review of Ground Allocation Policy:** The existing ground allocation policy must undergo a thorough review to ensure fair and optimal use of available facilities. This review regards the share use of grounds with other sports.
- **Maintaining Affordable Football:** Measures must be implemented to keep football accessible and affordable for all participants, minimizing financial barriers for clubs and players.
- **Retention of Female Participation:** Initiatives must be prioritized to retain and increase female participation in football, promoting gender equality and inclusivity.
- **Simplifying Council Policy Navigation:** The process for clubs to navigate council policies and achieve necessary upgrades must be streamlined, facilitating easier and more efficient facility improvements.



RECOMMENDATIONS

■ Review of Ground Allocation Policy

- Conduct a comprehensive audit of current ground usage and allocation.
- Implement a transparent and data-driven allocation system to ensure fair access to facilities.
- Engage with all stakeholders, including clubs, councils, and community groups, to gather feedback and improve the policy.

■ Maintaining Affordable Football

- Ensuring that clubs have sustainable facilities that do not require extra expenditure for maintenance.
- Allowing for clubs to have spaces to set up new streams of revenue (e.g. canteens and social spaces)
- Advocate for grants and subsidies from local governments to support affordable football initiatives.

■ Retention of Female Participation

- Adequate and appropriate facilities are available to all users
- Ensure equal access to facilities, resources, and opportunities for female players and teams.
- Encourage and promote female programs within the LGA

■ Simplifying Council Policy Navigation

- Establish supports to assist clubs in navigating council policies and procedures.
- Create clear, step-by-step guides and online resources to simplify the application and compliance processes.
- Advocate for policy reforms to reduce bureaucratic obstacles and expedite approval processes for club upgrades.



For help with State Government
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