

19 February 2016

The President
Sydney Pacific Athletic Club

Dear Sir

Re: Narrabeen Athletics Track – application for re-surfacing

Athletics New South Wales (ANSW) is the peak state sports body for athletics in NSW with more than 11,000 registered members. ANSW has a strong interest in ensuring that athletics facilities are available throughout the state - improved facilities are a key strategic objective. Our association is fully supportive of any proposal to redevelop and refurbish Narrabeen Athletic Track, given that the present track surface is overdue for re-surfacing. Please forward this letter of support on to the appropriate body.

The Athletics Track at the Sydney Academy of Sport and Recreation, Narrabeen is currently the only facility of its kind servicing the entire north of Sydney, yet it is not currently in the proper state of repair to encourage participation. The impacts of this include:

- The local community is discouraged from using the track in its current state, in particular in the Masters age groups due to fears over the impact that regularly running on the surface will have on their bodies;
- The local senior athletics community is unable to train for some field events given the lack of facilities;
- There is no high performance training facility for local youth seeking to develop their skills within athletics; and
- There is an increased litigation risk involved in having people running and using wheelchairs on a surface that has deteriorated markedly since its installation.

With respect to participation rates amongst children, the latest Roy Morgan research, released in November 2015, shows that Athletics/Track is the fourth most popular sport for children throughout Australia¹. Similarly, we know that athletics was the most requested sport in Australia as a part of the Federal Government's 'Sporting Schools' program in 2015. Basketball, cricket, netball, AFL and rugby league are all less popular than athletics amongst 6-13 year olds – it is submitted that all of these other sports have quality facilities within the region for their young members to develop.

¹ <http://www.roymorgan.com/findings/6563-more-girls-now-playing-soccer-than-netball-201511240022>

All of the research undertaken by various government departments shows that it is imperative to provide people with the opportunity to lead active, healthy lifestyles. This is particularly the case for this facility which hosts two of the groups we need to specifically target in terms of healthy lifestyles:

- Young people – the track is the home to Manly Warringah Little Athletics Centre, one of the largest and most successful Centres in New South Wales, as well as the Junior and Opens athletes of the Sydney Pacific Athletic Club; and
- Masters athletes – athletics is one of the most accessible sports for older people keen to remain active and healthy and Sydney Pacific has one of the strongest Masters squads in New South Wales.

An upgrade to the Narrabeen Athletics Track provides a focus for increased community benefits through athletics, the foundation for all sports movement.

Finally, it is clear that the intention of Government was that the Narrabeen Athletics Track be a high performance venue. Indeed, on the Office of Sport and Recreation website, this Sydney Academy of Sport and Recreation facility is promoted as having “world class sports training grounds and facilities”. The reality is that the track is not currently of a sufficient standard for NSW to consider it for the hosting of a high performance event. There are nine tracks within NSW which are capable of hosting NSW Championship events² – Narrabeen is not one of them.

A re-surfaced track at Narrabeen would have benefits to local users as well as enabling the facility to be used for regional and state wide competitions. Athletics NSW looks forward to working to ensure the revitalized facility encourages greater participation in sport for members of our association as well as for the broader community.

Regards



Duncan Tweed
CEO Athletics NSW

² SOPAC Competition, SOPAC Warm Up, Bankstown, Campbelltown, Blacktown, Glendale, ES Marks, Dubbo, Illawong

