

Message to members and supporters of Grafton SOS.

Grafton SOS are appealing to its members and supporters to write in support of a council motion to alter the Council Sports Management Policy.

Many of you will be aware that Council Staff prevented Grafton SOS from using Field 1 for our winter season. Grafton SOS have followed all the correct channels to appeal the decision with Council Staff and ultimately the Acting General Manager, but have been unsuccessful.

We are most grateful for the support of Clarence Valley Councillors who voted unanimously in July to alter the Sports Management Policy to make it more difficult for Council Staff to discriminate against Grafton SOS. This change has now gone out for public consultation but we need you to help us by making a submission and contacting Councillors to support their motion.

To make a submission, please click on this link. A list of the councillors and their email addresses are given at the bottom of this letter if you would like to contact them directly.

[Amended Sports Management Policy | Clarence Valley Council \(nsw.gov.au\)](#)

The issue!

- Field 1 has been shared by Rushforth Park Town Clubs and Grafton SOS during the winter for many years. This is the first time we have been prevented from using it.
- The upgrade of Rushforth park has cost NSW taxpayers and Clarence Valley ratepayers \$2,000,000.
- During the Winter Season, Rushforth Park field 1 has been used for an average of 2 games a week as we have not been able to use it.
- Apparently, the young people who play for RPTC teams cannot tell the difference between the white lines used for the full field play and our black lines and Council Staff have given this reason for the ban.
- Council Officers have refused to tell us whether it is Grafton United and/or Majos and/or the umbrella organisation (RPTC) that asked that we be prevented from booking Field 1.

Rushforth Park Fields 2 and 3 are unsatisfactory for Grafton SOS Winter Games.

- Field 2 and 3 are vastly inferior to Field 1 in terms of playing surface and lighting.
- Both fields are used for training during the week and this has caused considerably on one corner of field 2 which has been used for shooting and corner practice by RPTC teams.
- Field 2 is some way from the Canteen, toilets, internal room and shelter which is a real issue in cold weather.
- On Field 3 the goalposts would have to be dragged some distance in the dark at the start and end of our games, whilst the drainage and the discharge from the gutters of the new building that run directly across that field would mean we would almost certainly lose more games due to a boggy field.

The effect of this ban on Grafton SOS has been dramatic:

- Player numbers have dropped from 130 per week to 90 due to the
 - Distance from the canteen, toilets and a warm, dry place for children and spectators during wet and cold weather. It is not fair.
 - Poor playing surface and lighting
- The Misfits winter team has folded due to lack of players meaning another team has to have a bye.
- Few players have been coming to the canteen due to its distance from the games and canteen takings have collapsed.
- The social aspect of the club has been significantly reduced.

Examples of double marking of soccer fields.

- Please see the pictures of Wembley stadium, the most famous soccer stadium in the world in a game between Tottenham Hotspur and Manchester City in 2018 a few days after an American Football game. There were complaints afterwards about damage to the pitch, but not the markings.
- Please see pictures of Lane Cove Council multiuse fields.
- The final of the North Coast Football Premier League was often held on double marked fields in Coffs Stadium.
- Iluka soccer field is also used in the same competition as the RPTC teams and is marked for rugby and full and half field soccer.

Other points:

- The fields have been paid for by us, as both local rate payers and as taxpayers. It is wrong that we are being prevented from using facilities we have helped pay for.
- The council policy itself states that the fields are “The sporting facilities are multi-use, allowing a much wider use of the grounds.” This decision makes Field 1 a single use, single organisation field. Council staff have given RPTC exclusive use.
- According to the NCF website there are only 51 games scheduled for Rushforth Park Field 1 this season and of those only 28 under lights. This is a very poor use of this expensive facility which is lying idle when we wish to use it. In comparison, Grafton SOS has over 100 games scheduled during our Winter season.
- The existing policy states that the council is intent on providing equitable use of its sports fields and facilities for all users. Our competition allows middle aged and older players of all abilities, genders, ethnic groups and disabilities the opportunity to play in a friendly and inclusive competition. Council is discriminating against our players.
- The council strategic plan states that council will “1.2.1 – Provide, maintain, and develop sport and recreational facilities and encourage greater utilisation and participation” yet the actions of Council staff have reduced utilisation and participation.

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Tottenham Hotspur vs Manchester City, Wembley Stadium 2018. Note the NFL markings on the field. The player in the white shirt number 10 is Harry Kane, possibly about to be sold to Manchester City for \$237 million. Good enough for two of the biggest clubs in the world at arguably the most famous stadium, but double marking is not good enough for Grafton United vs Majos at Rushforth Park.



Lane Cove Council multiuse fields. Note soccer, AFL and cricket markings amongst others.