



**COMMUNITY CONSULTATION
SYNTHETIC PLAYING SURFACES
at MIDDLE HEAD and GEORGE'S HEIGHTS OVALS**

The main objective of Mosman Parks & Bushland is the protection of Mosman's natural environment and public land.

We understand the reasons for the proposal to use synthetic turf at Middle Head and George's Heights. However we do not believe its use is in the interest of the natural environment or of the general public's enjoyment of its parkland.

The Mosman Parks and Bushland Association opposes the use of Synthetic turf on sports ovals.

1. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

The impact on biodiversity

Synthetic turf cannot support an ecosystem. Natural grass grows in soil which supports invertebrates which support birdlife. Some of the birds seen on the ovals are Masked Lapwings, Magpies, Magpie Larks and Willy Wagtails. With bird species and bird numbers in decline everywhere including in Mosman, it is essential that their food sources are maintained.

Run off management

Synthetic turf areas do not have the permeability of grass. The impact of large areas offering minimal permeability is a significant problem in an urbanised area like Mosman. Stormwater management is a concern for the environment, property and people safety and for Council finances. The current trend is to "de engineer" stormwater management where possible. It makes no sense to undertake activities which might require increased engineering intervention and cost to maintain the current water regime. An hydraulic report outlining the run off impacts of the proposal, and costs of any mitigation required must be provided before Council makes any decision on this matter.

Other environmental issues

- a) The time taken for synthetic grass to break down when it has to be renewed. Where is to be disposed of safely?
- b) Safety in a bushfire prone area
- c) The use of algacides and moss killers in the maintenance of the synthetic turf.

Climate Change

Grass, being photosynthetic, provides oxygen and absorbs carbon dioxide. Grass lowers air temperature; synthetic grass is known to be hot.

2. PUBLIC ACCESS

The alienation of a large area of public open space in parkland intended for the use of the wider Australian public

Sporting groups are not the only users of the ovals. When the ovals are not in use for sport, the general public uses them for passive recreation - walking, picnicking and enjoying views and the natural environment. The particular ovals proposed for synthetic turf are part of a Federal parkland intended for the enjoyment of a wider public than just Mosman. We submit that using synthetic turf to increase capacity for use by one section of the community will not enhance passive enjoyment by the wider public.

Capital Cost

Sporting clubs have indicated a willingness to contribute significantly to the capital costs involved. If they were to be given greater control over the ovals in return, that could result in a further restriction of access by the general public.

Aesthetic value

We note the comment in the Council report on the Open Space Recreational Needs Assessment that 'projects in open space park areas should not interfere with passive recreation or detract from the natural beauty of these areas'. Synthetic turf, we believe, *will* detract from natural beauty.

Safety

We have received anecdotal evidence that contact with synthetic turf can cause skin irritation including skin "burning". If there is any chance that the use of synthetic turf can lead to such an outcome, Council should not consider this option in public playing areas.

Conclusion

Given the ecological arguments in favour of natural grass, and the potential loss of enjoyment of public land by the wider public, Mosman Parks & Bushland supports increased and improved maintenance of natural turf surfaces rather than the installation of synthetic turf. We are aware that this may not solve all the problems of those using the ovals for sports. **However we believe that conservation and protection of the natural environment is in the interest of all, including those who play sport - now and into the future.**



Kate Eccles

President

28th August, 2015