

Mildura Recreation Strategy 2021-2031



Mildura Rural City Council



About this document

This document is the Mildura Recreation Strategy, 2021-2031.

Other documents prepared for this Recreation Strategy were Volume 1: Demand and Consultation Findings and Issues and Opportunities.

An inventory of facilities including parks has also been prepared and is attached to this document.

Please note: The views expressed in the consultation section of this document are those provided by the Mildura Rural City. They do not necessarily reflect the views held by @leisure or Council.

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1. GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Accessibility

“Accessibility” in this document means physical accessibility for people with a disability. This is in addition to inclusivity; accommodating people of all ages, cultures and abilities in a sensitive and welcoming way.

Recreation opportunities

“Recreation opportunities” describes the services, facilities and experiences that influence recreation. This term is used to emphasise the focus not just on facilities, but on the activities that occur as a result of organisations, programs, and the qualities of places and spaces.

Equity

Equity means both the distribution of opportunities according to need, to create fairness. This is in addition to servicing the needs of people of all ages, abilities, cultural backgrounds and settlement types.

Passive and active

These terms (“passive and active”) are not preferred as their meanings are not clear. Typically these terms are used to distinguish organised sport from everything else - but passive is not a good description of non-organised activities such as walking and cycling that are inherently active. Organised and non-organised activities are the preferred terms.

Organised and non-organised activities

AusPlay defines an organised activity as one conducted by an organisation or venue (outside school). Non-organised activities are not conducted by an organisation, venue or school. They may be individual or “informal”.

Target groups

Target groups are those population groups who are less likely to participate in sport, physical activity or recreation without interventions. Target groups include older adults, people with a disability, disengaged young people, indigenous people, people on low incomes, people born in non-English speaking countries, or who live remotely.

2. INTRODUCTION

This strategy

This strategy is an overarching strategy that addresses sport and recreation. The strategy sits along side and relies on a number of other Council plans for its implementation. This is the only Council strategy that addresses sport, whereas other plans such as the open space strategy, the tracks and trails strategy, and the play strategy will provide the details to how the goals and actions of this strategy can be addressed on a facility type, and site-specific basis.

Project aim

This Recreation Strategy aims to establish the strategic direction for sport and recreation provision for the next ten years, and address relevant actions not yet completed in the last plan. Key tasks undertaken included:

- A review of the previous Recreation Strategy and identification of issues that need to be addressed in the new strategy
- An inspection of existing facilities and the preparation of an inventory of facilities
- Engagement with local communities, sporting clubs, sports associations and peak bodies to identify issues, trends and demand
- Collecting club and peak membership data and state participation rates
- Benchmarking with comparable Councils
- Identifying local, state and national sport and recreation industry trends
- Reviewing Council's policies, community plans, master plans and other strategic plans. Actions are included by site
- Developed this issues paper with issues to be considered in the development of the new strategy, the principles to be adopted, as well as directions with respect to capital works.

Community and stakeholder engagement methods included:

- Telephone interviews of clubs, sports associations, schools, peak bodies and providers
- An online community survey
- Promotion of the survey by Council staff at a local farmers market
- Council's Have Your Say (HYS) page and a communications strategy to promote visitation to the HYS page and survey link
- Councillor and Internal stakeholders workshop
- Community meeting held in Ouyen, and
- Circulation of a draft to senior staff.

The detailed finding of the community and stakeholder engagement is provided in a separate volume; Demand and Consultation Findings.



3. DEMAND FOR RECREATION

3.1. Demographic influences

Context

Mildura Rural City (MRCC) is the largest municipality in Victoria, covering an area of 22,330 sq.km. Located in north-west Victoria, it shares borders with New South Wales and South Australia.

The population of the local government area is approximately 55,000, dispersed across isolated rural townships, horticulture dependent satellite towns and one central regional city of Mildura township.

The township of Mildura is an important regional hub, due to the distance from other regional Cities, Melbourne, and proximity to other states.

Mildura township is located on the Murray River near its junction with the Darling.

Mildura has a typical Mediterranean climate with hot and dry summers and mild winters, but prone to winter frosts. This climate and location make it an ideal place for sport and regional sporting tournaments and events but provide challenges for turf and sport field management.

The significant size of the river and its corridor is a competitive strength for Mildura and provides a focus for recreation and water sports.

Nature of settlements

Mildura township is a regional hub surrounded by the satellite suburbs of Irymple, Red Cliffs and Merbein.

Ouyen is the principal rural township in the south of the municipality, and there are many other smaller settlements throughout the rural areas, including

Meringur, Werrimull, Cullulleraine, Koorlong, Cardross, Nangiloc, Colignan, Walpeup, Underbool and Murrayville.

Many of the small rural settlements are relatively remote, with limited services. As farms have become larger and are now being managed off-site, the local population has become older and fewer.

Population

The resident population of the municipality in 2018 was approximately 55,500. Council expects the population grow to 62,500 by 2036. Mildura township has about 38,000 residents and has identified growth areas to its south and east. Mildura South will have a new sporting precinct including a major indoor six court stadium, and other outdoor sports and recreation facilities.

The main urban area includes Irymple (5,300) and Nichols Point (1,551). Both are experiencing residential growth and express a high demand for additional or better quality facilities.

Based on the ABS quick stats for 2016, there were three other localities with a population of over 1,000 people; Red Cliffs (2,900), Merbein (2,700), and Ouyen (1,200). Twelve other localities had a population of approximately one hundred or more. The majority of these small localities (except for Meringur and Werrimull) have some form of sporting or recreation facility.

Anecdotally the demographics of small areas are changing, to include fewer people with professional training that are willing and able to volunteer or manage sports clubs.

However, clubs are more important than ever in providing social connections and physical activities for these smaller communities.

Remoteness and state borders also offer challenges in running sports competitions, access to training and seeking support and funding.

Age, gender, ethnicity and social disadvantage

The main demographic influences affecting recreation and sporting participation are age, gender, income, cultural background and education.

Age

The median age of people in MRCC is 40 years. Children aged 0-14 years made up 19.0% of the population and people aged 65 years and over made up 18.7% of the community. The population shows a higher proportion of school-aged people than for Victoria, but a lower percentage of young adults than Victoria.

The age profile suggests that participation in team sports should be strong in juniors. Still, senior teams may find it challenging to maintain participation, even though the overall population is increasing. As the proportion of older people increases, more older people will need to be encouraged to be active.

Promotion of gentle exercise through group exercise classes, swimming, walking and cycling, and supporting sports that typically attract older adults such as tennis, bowls and golf will be essential. Affordable community gyms will assist older adults with supervised rehabilitation.

Cultural background

In MRCC, 79.3% of people were born in Australia. This proportion is high compared to the Victorian average, but not for regional Victoria. The most common non-English speaking countries of birth were Italy, India and Turkey. There is a range of other cultures now emerging in Mildura, including Egyptians. The diversity in cultural background is likely to be reflected in a diversity of sport and recreation activities.

Aboriginal people and those born overseas in non-English speaking cultures and typically have lower physical activity rates, but also bring specific cultural preferences for activities. The strength in sports such as motor sports, soccer-football and rugby is likely to be influenced by cultural background. Mildura has a high proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (3.8% compared to 0.8% for Victoria). There are a number of organisations representing aboriginal communities in MRCC. The Mildura Local Indigenous Network Yuranga Aboriginal Committee Community Plan identifies sport as very important for Aboriginal people. Priorities in the plan include Accessible Koori Sporting Facilities to ensure our people are active; Establish a Koori Dance group; Source funding to cover costs of joining sporting activities and Develop partnerships with existing Sporting agencies and schools.

Additional and ongoing engagement with groups who have a lower propensity to participate and specific cultural preferences for activities will be important.



Social disadvantage

Social disadvantage and remoteness affect access to recreation opportunities. The SEIFA Index (which provides an index of social disadvantage, with larger numbers representing a relative lack of social disadvantage) is 921 for MRCC and 913 for the Mildura township. The SEIFA Index for Victoria is 1010 and Australia 1002. The State of Mildura Report (Local Logic Place. 2016) identifies Mildura as ranked the fifth most disadvantaged out of 79 Victorian Councils. One rural settlement Colignan has a SEIFA index of 874.

The community engagement process highlighted that many residents experience some form of social disadvantage, and this will affect access to recreation and sporting opportunities. The community survey in particular suggested that many sports opportunities are not affordable.

Some further consideration of opportunities to target people experiencing social disadvantage and those with low discretionary incomes will be important in programming and facility provision.



3.2. Potential demand for recreation facilities

Potential participation and use by facility types

The assessment of membership numbers and the community survey findings showed very strong demand for a wide range of organised sports, increasing demand for non-organised activities such as walking and cycling, in addition to gym and fitness facilities. Increasing demand was also observed in those activities which reflect Mildura's competitive strengths; water based recreation and motor sports.

Currently there is a strong focus on providing for the traditional sports. However, trends (see separate chapter on trends) suggest that non-organised, as well as social and virtual forms of physical activity are in demand (such as group exercise).

Nearly twice the number of people who use outdoor playing fields are likely to use off-road trails and one a half times the people will use a gym, swimming or fitness facilities. The reach of these non-organised sports facilities is a much wider diversity of people in term of age and ability. Trails and spaces for group fitness can also be made more accessible to residents in their own neighbourhoods.

Based on state participation rates from AusPlay 2019, there may be as many as 28,000 residents in MRCC that may, walk or cycle or use off-road trails and some 16,000 may use a gym, swim or fitness facility.

There has been a lag in providing local places to be active, and there is an opportunity in existing community infrastructure and sporting precincts to accommodate gym and fitness facilities and additional tracks and trails.

A greater focus on designing residential environments to facilitate play, walking, cycling and social and active pursuits, is needed.

More sharing of sports and school based infrastructure may also be needed and continued promotion and encouragement of activities, including water based and activities in river corridors, and places to walk and cycle is desirable.



3.3. Community preferences and participation

Most popular activities

Sporting and recreation is very popular within the Mildura Rural City. Following community consultation, the 10 most popular sporting activities amongst those surveyed are listed below.

- Hockey
- Off-road cycling (MTB)
- Walking
- Football (Australian rules)
- Cricket (outdoor)
- Exercising the dog
- Netball (outdoor)
- Swimming
- Basketball
- Cycling (road/track)



The sports participated in most by males within the survey sample were cycling (off road), cricket (outdoor) and football (Australian rules), while the most popular activities among women were hockey, walking, and netball (outdoor).

Activities liked but not undertaken

Over 30% of those surveyed would like to participate in activities within Mildura Rural City that they don't currently participate in. Of these, the top sport and recreation activities residents would like to do but don't currently were:

- Off-road cycling
- Group exercise classes
- Archery
- Climbing
- Yoga

These sport and recreation activities were mostly not participated in due to distance of facilities from the participants homes, or poor quality facilities.

The top ten recreation facilities used

The top ten types of recreation facilities used by respondents are:

- Outdoor grass sports playing field
- Social/family recreation park including large play space
- Off-road shared trail for walking, cycling, skating, etc
- Outdoor swimming pool
- National/nature park/conservation area
- Splash park
- Mountain bike trails
- Hockey pitch
- Boating/fishing facility
- Dog exercise space

The overarching issues

The overarching issues raised by the community were about improvements to recreation facilities in Mildura Rural City. Issues related to:

- The poor playing surfaces (throughout all sporting codes) and lighting
- The need for more maintenance
- Poor change rooms or amenities (e.g. pavilions, grandstands)
- A lack of proper signage
- A lack of mountain biking/cycling/walking trails (or poor condition)
- A lack of adequate fencing, additional provision of public toilet facilities, shade/seating for spectators and at recreation parks, and
- Free outdoor recreation (no basketball courts, outdoor gym equipment etc).
- Many clubs are concerned about keeping sport affordable and seek support to train officials and coaches, and apply for grants.

4. EXISTING FACILITIES-(RURAL TOWNSHIPS)

Mildura has an extensive range of facilities for a wide range of sports and recreation activities.

In addition to these, a good network of trails are developing.

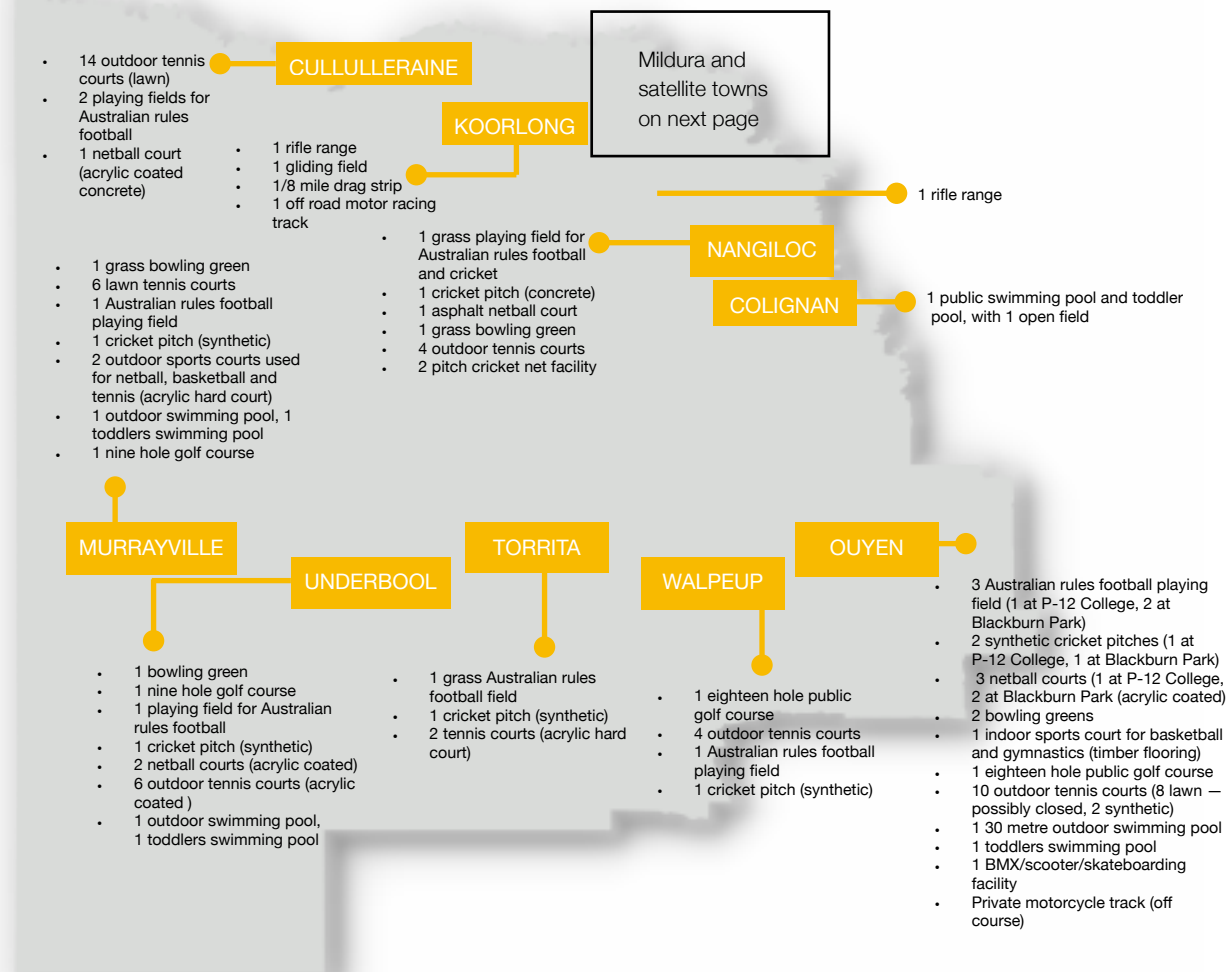
MRCC is punctuated by the Murray River and a number of lakes that provide an important setting for non organised recreation, as well as water sports.

A recreation inventory for Mildura

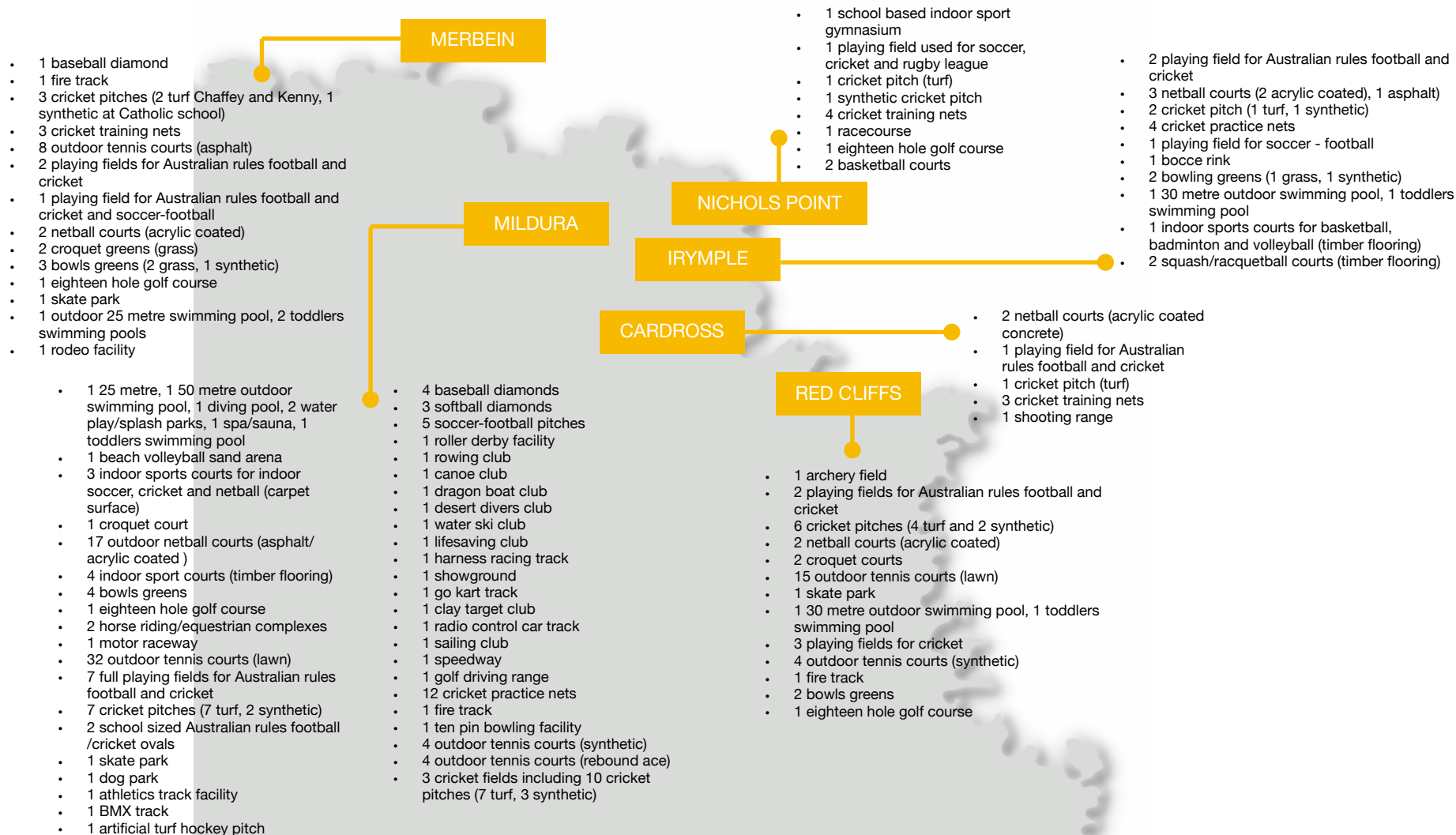
Council does not have a recreation inventory. However, an inventory is an important planning tool and should be used to promote available opportunities.

This project compiled an inventory of known facilities (provided in a separate attachment to the Issues Paper). This should be refined and built on.

The inventory contains improvements suggested in the consultation for this plan, and from previous master plans.



(MILDURA AND SATELLITE TOWNS)



4. LEISURE TRENDS RELEVANT TO MILDURA ISSUES, THAT SHOULD BE CONSIDERED

Leisure behaviour changes over time. Council needs to be able to respond to the likely issues that will arise, as well as changes in demand.

The following trends respond to issues raised locally and that are likely to arise due to external influences and societal changes.



Gender equity and identity in sport

An increasing number of people with a diversity of gender identities want to play sport. There is also a growth in competition opportunities for and participation by females in a sport requiring infrastructure to be more female and family friendly.



User expectations of facility quality and maintenance are increasing

More peak bodies have infrastructure standards seeking consistent safer facilities and sports turf technology improvements. Community expectations are increasing and out of step with funds available for maintenance and facilities, along with the costs of these.



Casualisation of sport

There is an increasing demand for sports and organised recreation other than in clubs' teams sports. Parkrun, "rock up" and "pay as you play" sport and mixed-gender social sports are increasingly relevant.



Urban consolidation at the expense of farm-based rural populations

More workers live in towns, and rural communities find it difficult to sustain community infrastructure which they need more than ever for social connection.



Sport and health benefits

There is a greater legitimisation of sport and recreation based on health and wellbeing benefits. However, there is a corresponding assumption that the Council will provide for the increasing expectations of facilities.



Growth in community gyms

The growth in demand for gyms where the commercial sector and local governments are not able to provide them, have seen communities and clubs provide these.



Artificial playing surfaces

More sports rely on artificial playing surfaces, changing the economics of sport and maintenance needs. There is a reduced time to raise capital for replacement, however yields higher carrying capacities.



Shared use vs multi-purpose

Sharing of facilities is more important than ever, but there is increasing pressure to be multipurpose at the expense of fit-for-purpose. Many surfaces are specific to the nature of the sport, and a significant compromise in player safety and functionality occurs when seeking to make them "multi-purpose."



Climate change and sport

Users seek more shelter, shade and lights at pools and sports facilities with increasing temperatures and storm intensity. The river is a more sought after destination, and sports clubs have to manage the risks of heat and storms.



Sport is challenging in schools

Schools are finding it increasingly difficult and expensive to travel to sporting venues and provide sport in a crowded curriculum. Schools are seeking more ready-made programs and facilities.



Increasing value of pets

More people want their "fur kids" to participate with them, and expect pleasant places to socialise and exercise their pets close to home. Furthermore, there is an increased demand for dog parks through residential areas.



Growth in e-sports

The growth of e-sports allows a mass audience to connect, play and watch online. There is a growth in team e-sports that allow for social connection during distancing. Some live sports are offering e-sport counterparts, and some are finding e-sports are driving interest in the sport (EA Sports' FIFA series).



Keeping seasonal pools running

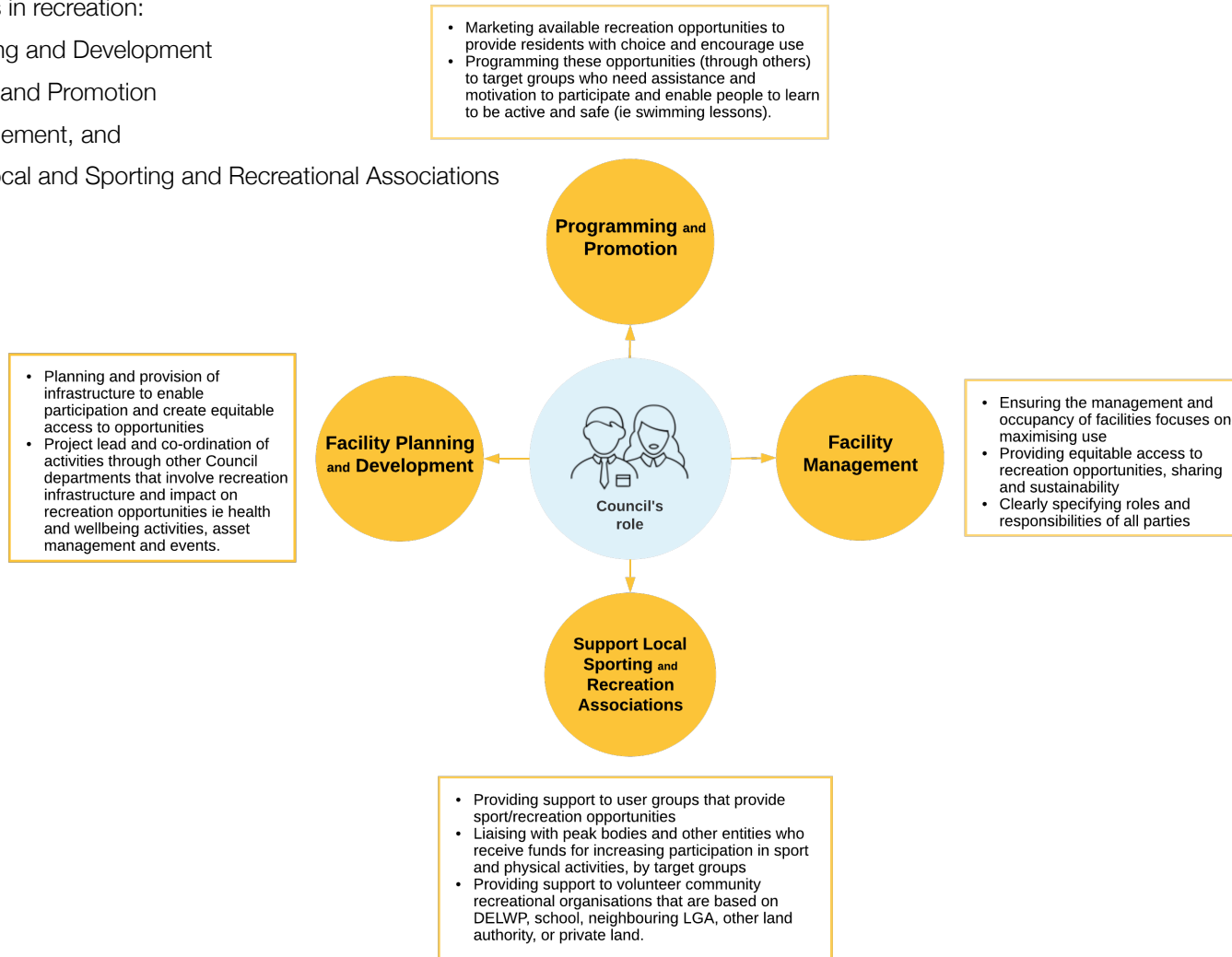
The declining financial return is favouring splash parks over outdoor pools that can teach swimming. This is challenging ageing community pools that are unable to include everyone, while there is a high demand for pools in locations with limited community infrastructure, more stringent supervision standards, need for water safety skills and desire for warm water and programs.

5. COUNCIL'S ROLE

Council has four “levers” which it may use to increase participation in recreation that promotes social interaction and connection, and physical activity.

These are its key roles in recreation:

- Facility Planning and Development
- Programming and Promotion
- Facility Management, and
- Supporting Local and Sporting and Recreational Associations



6. GOALS

1. Equitable sport and recreation opportunities
2. Diversity of recreation opportunities
3. Effective and sustainable clubs and user organisations
4. Adequate resourcing based on need
5. Strategic investment in infrastructure
6. Strategic planning and development



7. ACTIONS BY GOAL

7.1. Equitable sport and recreation opportunities

Issue

Many facilities are not accessible or inclusive of a diverse population.

The development of a policy is required to improve facilities and sports administrators' knowledge that will encourage greater participation by females, older adults, people with a disability, young people, indigenous groups, remote rural residents and other cultural and gender diverse groups (Target Groups).

A greater understanding of the need for sport and community infrastructure in remote communities is required as compared to urban communities.

Council no longer has a Rural Access worker or a champion to progress improving the physical accessibility of facilities and ensure all new facilities are compliant and inclusive.



Recommended Actions

- Remove the physical barriers that prevent easy access to all sport and recreation facilities, over time
- Work with key disability groups and NDIS to provide increased physical access to facilities and information about physical accessibility to help people plan their activities
- Consider developing a grant program in conjunction with a partner to improve physical access to existing infrastructure
- Collect participation data by target group, from users of Council facilities
- Partner with external organisations to develop/deliver programs that address equity issues
- Work with partners that deliver suitable facilities and programs for high participation activities such as group fitness for all
- Communicate with peak bodies to facilitate accessible programs
- Consult further with indigenous people through local Registered Aboriginal Parties, to encourage more residents to participate in sport and recreation activities
- Increase the play value and accessibility of play spaces across MRCC
- Ensure facilities are socially inclusive if they cannot be made fully physically accessible (i.e play facilities)
- Ensure internal grant programs encourage clubs/organisations to welcome and encourage target groups
- Ensure alignment with Council's strategic objectives through the implementation of internal grant programs

7.2. A diversity of recreation opportunities

Issue

A good mix of facilities for organised and non-organised activities is required, including those with free access, and available at different times of the day.

A large number of requests were made by survey respondents for improvements related to trails and places to walk or socialise dogs.

Younger and older respondents tended to use off-road trails more than any other type of facilities.

Approximately 34% of respondents want to undertake sport or recreation activities that they do not do now. Females accounted for 72% of those.

The top non-sporting activities that residents would like to do, but they are unable to, are: cycling (off-road and track), climbing, group exercise, archery, yoga, Pilates, aquatics fitness classes, and bushwalking.

The community survey found more parks are needed for social and family recreation, skate parks and additional fenced play spaces and those with better accessibility and higher play value. The community value the scheduling of twilight and social team sports.

A diversity of recreation opportunities is needed in all communities, from organised sport, social and non-organised physical and environmental based activities when people can connect with and appreciate nature.

Recommended Actions

Walking, cycling and tracks and trails

- Acknowledge the importance of providing for cycling, running, walking, skating and using wheeled mobility devices, away from traffic, to encourage:
 - independent mobility
 - being outdoors and connections with nature
 - physical activity
 - younger and older people to stay connected to country and community
- Provide a diversity of tracks and trails including sealed and unsealed paths, shared paths and single tracks that suit different activities, levels of ability and challenge
- Provide off-road trails through residential areas, open space corridors and around parks
- Develop a hierarchy of tracks and trails across Mildura Rural City.
- Plan trails in circuits, with connections to local community infrastructure and natural areas
- Provide at least one shared trail circuit in very locality
- Develop facilities in select nodes that support cycling skills development and cycle sports
- Map existing and potential trail routes and circuits
- Promote opportunities to walk and cycle off-road.

- Review and update Council's track and trails plan to create an extended network of off-road trails, trail circuits, accessible routes and park perimeter exercise circuits
- Provide a good distribution of off-leash areas throughout the urban area for dog exercise and socialisation

Non organised sports and physical activities

- Encourage and promote social and non-club sports opportunities using existing infrastructure; through the operations of the Mildura South Regional Sporting Precinct, and at non-peak times
- Add opportunities for non-organised and social physical activity at sporting reserves, including a perimeter trail, as well as environmental features, to encourage contact with nature, increase amenity and reduce the heat island effect
- Prepare a recreation inventory that classifies facilities and open spaces by function, and landscape setting type so a diversity of recreation experiences including nature based activities can be preserved for future generations
- Continue the focus of work to enhance recreation opportunities and environmental experiences, along the river corridor
- Investigate the provision of further water based recreation opportunities.



7.3. Effective and sustainable clubs and user organisations

Issue

Council supports volunteer clubs and seeks to strengthen the capacity of community organisations in delivering community recreation opportunities (that Council cannot directly deliver), becoming self-sustaining and inclusive organisations.

Current grant programs do not appear to meet the needs of the intended targets

Clubs said grant policies and processes tend to favour large and more commercially focused clubs and need to support those in small rural communities more who may have a greater need.

This is reinforced by Council going to the big clubs who have money to contribute when grant programs are offered, rather than objectively seeking expressions of interest from clubs.

Clubs require assistance/education in the work required to attract funding generally (both Council and other grant programs)

Clubs say they need grant writing assistance and can't get help. Some don't know where to start.

Some clubs are affiliated with SA or NSW peak bodies and some serving Mildura are based in NSW (eg. 2 cycling clubs). This provides difficulties for clubs to access funds.

Clubs need access to affordable training and assistance to increase their organisational capacity and sustainability

Clubs and community organisations need access to affordable training and professional development opportunities. Trainers often need minimum numbers of participants to come to the regions. Therefore, many clubs have to send people to Melbourne for accreditation and training. This is difficult for volunteers and small organisations. Clubs may also need assistance with matters such as strategic planning, budgeting, governance, infrastructure design, development, and administration.

Peak bodies haven't been able to provide training cost-effectively to remote areas, although with the COVID-19 pandemic, some are now providing more online services.

Recommended Actions

- Capture the memory of local sporting club administrators who have successfully worked and delivered positive project outcomes in partnership with Council
- Leverage networks with professional sporting organisations and peak bodies to provide networking and development opportunities to local clubs and associations
- Work with peak bodies to assist local clubs to access professional development and accreditation processed locally or online
- Provide sports and recreation clubs with assistance to write grant applications

7.4. Adequate resourcing based on need and costs of use

Issue

Capital contributions by clubs

When grant opportunities arise, Council's position has been that projects that will be recommended are those where a resident club will provide a capital contribution. Projects are therefore not being assessed on merit or strategic priorities.

Clubs need financial assistance to develop facilities but some are based on non-Council owned land, have a small membership base and have limited options to raise funds. Some have questioned why clubs should contribute to funding a facility for public good, when they do not have equity in it.

Once a club makes a capital contribution to facilities, they often perceive the asset to be theirs.

Different clubs have different abilities to raise money, such as the quality of the facility they use and provision of kitchen and bars, and the ability to take a gate for example. However, only clubs who can charge a gate are charged for ground use.

Fees and charges

Council contributes significantly to maintaining sporting facilities, amenities and surfaces. The current fees and charges may not however reflect the quality of existing facilities, the Club's size or ability to pay, nor the role and costs of Council and the club.

Clubs that pass on these costs in annual membership fees may discourage participation. The community believes that the cost of sport is a huge issue.

In some locations, clubs believe there are inequities in what they pay. Some have a very limited ability to raise funds and their costs are higher (for example water costs) than for urban clubs, especially if they are on Crown land. Council however only charges for sports ground use where the ground is enclosed and an admission can be charged.

Key principles to consider in relation to fees and charges include:

- Sport and recreation facilities are a public good that should be provided from public funds. Those who take up the choice to use them should contribute to the marginal cost of that use. The cost of use will need to be subsidised, as these assets cannot make a profit and the clubs who use them generate significant benefits by delivering sports opportunities to residents
- Clubs should be responsible for utility charges
- A grading for grounds provides a basis for service provision and fees.
- Clubs with an opportunity to generate funds from a Council facility should continue to contribute to covering the costs of use.
- Ensure alignment with Councils strategic objectives through the implementation of internal grant programs.

Recommended Actions

- Develop a Funding and Capital Contributions Policy for sporting and recreation facilities for Council owned or managed land. This policy should focus on need, project merit and ability to meet strategic objectives as the way of prioritising capital works projects, rather than whether a resident club can make a capital contribution. Promote this policy to clubs.
- Utilise developer contributions to assist in upgrading recreation venues and facilities.
- Review Council's internal Recreation Grants Policy and ensure:
 - Alignment with Council's strategic objectives
 - Greater clarity to grant assessment criteria and conditions for clubs when applying for grants
- Collect impact data relating to internal grant program
- Review current fee rebates for clubs that provide capital contributions
- Review the existing Recreation Pricing Principles Policy and ensure:
 - All costs of providing and managing each facility are known so that decisions about fees and charges are well informed and transparent
 - Understand all club costs and consider potential barriers to participation as a result of increasing cost of hiring ground and accessing facilities
 - Identify incentives to respond and adapt to, climate change.



7.5. Recreation facility investment priorities

Issue

Clubs and the community identified many improvements required of sporting and recreation infrastructure.

Guidance is required on how to fairly prioritise capital works programs for sport and recreation projects in urban and rural areas, and for high participation and low participation sports.

Many clubs do not share their facilities. Sometimes more than one club is based on the same ground as others - and their facilities may all need renewal.

Council doesn't have a measure on when a facility reaches the end of its life, they currently rely on what clubs say. Functional life for sport and leisure is much shorter than the buildings life. This is a good opportunity to move toward a shared infrastructure model.

Joint school facility developments have been problematic, however in smaller, more remote communities, schools are sometimes the most important community hub, yet may be under-utilised. Relationships with schools are essential for a club's survival.

Principles identified that underpin the plan can be used to prioritise capital works. (See existing principles to review on the following pages.)

Climate change

Council declared a Climate Emergency in February 2020.

Consciously designing and managing sporting and recreation infrastructure and open space to respond to this emergency can significantly contribute to reduced waste, energy use and dependence on fossil fuels, and lower emissions.

More tracks and trails and cooler and greener places and spaces may also increase physical activity and active transport.

Recommended Actions

- Develop a hierarchy of facilities - Local, Subregional and Regional (see following page) and a grading of playing surfaces (e.g A, B,C) that guide the nature and quality of service offered and the suitable scale and quality of services to be provided at each level in the hierarchy
- Introduce relatively standard core components to buildings and fields of play based on the facilities hierarchy
- Create a clear process and framework for assessing investment prioritisation based on the Recreation Investment Principles
- Communicate the investment prioritisation process and funding and capital contributions policy to clubs and stakeholders
- Agree on recreation principles to be used for decision making and capital works prioritisation
- Consolidate buildings on reserves wherever possible as part of development works and introduce incentives for clubs to share facilities for sport or community uses
- Devise guidelines on colocating or sharing facilities with schools and other community organisations
- Continue to monitor energy and water consumption and replace inefficient plant, equipment and fittings
- Continue to apply the Water and Energy Use Guidelines for Buildings and Facilities to recreation infrastructure
- Prepare a Public Lighting Strategy to facilitate the reduction of energy consumption and carbon emissions from sport and recreation lighting
- Ensure future aquatic projects and strategies address the use and recycling of water, and move to renewable energy sources.

Proposed hierarchy of facilities

A hierarchy of facilities can assist in creating equity and consistency in service provision.

The hierarchy should have three levels and account for:

- The catchment the facility serves, local residents, visitors and residents across the MRCC and its borders
- The core components required for each level
- The standard of facility required to serve each - ie local-school, training, development programs etc., and for subregional-domestic competition, and regional-representative/regional events
- The number of this type of facility
- How they are distributed, and
- The degree of sharing possible.

See the following table for definitions of each hierarchy of sporting facilities.

Note a similar hierarchy can be applied to recreation facilities, other than sports, such as parks, tracks and trails, and play facilities

Examples of facilities in each hierarchy are provided in the Issues Paper.



HIERARCHY	DEFINITIONS BY HIERARCHY OF SPORTS FACILITY
LOCAL	<p>Intended to serve the immediate local area. These may also be overflow, training or school facilities where another township or regional facility exists in the one area.</p> <p>There may be more than one local facility of the same type in the same local area, due to historical development or settlement pattern.</p> <p>Typically a local facility will not provide for visitors, or spectator facilities and the standard of playing surface and infrastructure will be reflective of the short duration of stay. It may provide for multiple codes or activities, ie football and cricket.</p>
TOWNSHIP	<p>A township facility is typically a facility designed for competition and some spectators, capable of hosting the highest level of competition and training for local associations based within the municipality.</p> <p>A township facility should also cater for more than one code or activity.</p>
REGIONAL	<p>Regional level facilities are the highest order facilities in the hierarchy serving a catchment extending beyond the borders of the MRCC. Regional facilities will be constructed to a standard capable of hosting an elite level of competitive sport, such as AFL/VFL football, Premier League football, or Premier cricket and finals for regional sporting associations. These will meet sporting code requirements for a regional standard facility and provide higher levels of spectator comfort and social facilities to service longer durations of stay.</p> <p>Regional facilities, due to their specific field of play requirements, may not be able to cater for more than one activity.</p>

Recreation investment principles

During consultation with the community and internal Council departments in the development of the Recreation Strategy, it became evident that many improvements to sporting and recreation infrastructure were required.

Feedback suggested that greater clarity and transparency was also required when selecting projects for capital investment.

In an attempt to provide transparency to the community and guidance to Council on how to fairly prioritise capital works and external grant applications for sport and recreation projects across the municipality, the following Recreation Investment Principles have been developed.

These principles will form a framework and transparent structure and process for Council to analyse each project objectively in alignment with desired principles.

The proposed framework will assist:

- Council in maximising investment and optimising assets that will provide the greatest benefit to the community, and
- The Recreation Planning and Development unit, when making decisions regarding capital works programs and external funding submissions.
- Community groups and clubs to review project aspirations and align with their outcomes with the principles.

Irrespective of the project prioritisation, the relevant process will still need to be followed in order for the projects to progress.

The principles align with the identified goals of the Recreation Strategy 2020 – 2030.



Recreation investment principles and criteria for prioritising capital works

PRINCIPLES	CRITERIA FOR PRIORITISING CAPITAL WORKS
1. Increasing participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Will attract additional proportion of participants - Addresses an established gap in demand - Is in a growth area or growth phase - Contributes to a better pathway for the sport
2. Inclusion in the Community/Accessibility and Diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Supports a social connection need, initiative, or non-player involvement in addition to physical activity (e.g. other community use) - SEIFA Index and remoteness – as an indication of additional need (i.e. lack of access to other facilities). - Will encourage at least one target group to participate - Will target or encourage a wider range of participants e.g. age group, ability or cultural group
3. Shared Use/Multi-Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Development increases community use through the provision of multi-use or shared use facility
3. Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Is consistent with the hierarchy of the facility (if applicable) - Nature of development is consistent with the state bodies strategic plan, and hierarchy of the facility - Meets 'Access to Premises' standards - Can be used all year, and for social sports/casual use - Adds to range of activities on the site
4. Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Project required due to condition of existing facilities, with suitable alternatives available and is a fundamental to the operation of the facility

PRINCIPLES	CRITERIA FOR PRIORITISING CAPITAL WORKS
5 Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Supports environmentally friendly outcomes (e.g. energy consumption reduction) - Supports climate change mitigation and adaptation - Meets water and energy use guidelines for infrastructure - Enhances long term sustainability of a club or asset
6. Strategic Justification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Alignment with Recreation Strategy - Alignment with other Mildura Rural City Council strategic documents and plans - Alignment with adopted Master Plans - Project endorsement by Regional Associations, State/ National Sporting Associations, through strategic planning
7. Financially Responsible/ Affordability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Financial viability and value for money from investment - Financial and In-kind contributions from community requirements being met
8. Economic Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ability to attract economic benefit to the region (e.g. Sporting Tourism) - Employment creation and growth

7.6. Maintaining a current suite of strategies

Issue

There is a need for strategies for the key participation sports. These need to be developed in conjunction with the sports peak bodies.

The Recreation Planning and Development Unit need a suite of current strategic documents to guide specific types of infrastructure, locational specific actions and to prioritise works. There are a number of strategies, policies and other documents which are out of date and require review.

Water-based recreation and non-organised recreation opportunities are not covered by any strategic plan.

Strategic guidance on the design and distribution of play spaces is also not addressed in any current plan.

A proposed document hierarchy is provided below identifying existing plans and proposed plans that should be considered.



Recommended Actions

- Develop strategies for key types of infrastructure (i.e., track and trails, indoor sports, aquatics, water-based recreation, play spaces etc.). These strategies will address priorities for that type of infrastructure, and specific locations. By having a range of specific infrastructure strategies, Council can significantly influence participation in sport and recreation and create a diversity of recreation opportunities that are accessible to the widest range of the population
- Support clubs and associations to develop specific strategies (e.g. to address facility planning and participation)
- Review and update Council's tracks and trails plan to increase opportunities to cycle, walk, wheel and skate off road, by creating an extended network of off-road trails, trail circuits, accessible routes and park perimeter exercise circuits
- Include the following issues in a play strategy: opportunities to enhance play value, inclusive design, a focus on parks for play rather than equipment, and not replacing equipment with "like for like"
- Identify opportunities to consolidate or rationalise community buildings on open space and encourage sharing of sporting infrastructure by community organisations
- Ensure the Recreation Planning and Development Unit is responsible for the implementation and updating of the recreation components of the Community and Council Plan
- Allocate funding for the implementation of, and a review of actions in this plan (within 5 years). Ensure key outcomes of this plan become key result areas for the department.

8. ACTION PLAN

COUNCIL ROLE		FACILITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT										
Goal	Action	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24	24/25	25/26	26/27	27/28	28/29	29/30	Action Lead
Equitable sport and recreation opportunities	1. Undertake an audit of recreation facilities managed by Council to determine areas for improved and equitable access.	X	X	X								FS
	2. Increase the play value and accessibility of play spaces across the municipality.		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	P&G
	3. Ensure facilities are socially inclusive if they cannot be made fully physically accessible (i.e. play facilities).	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	RPD
A diversity of recreation opportunities	4. Acknowledge the importance of providing for cycling, running, walking, skating and using wheeled mobility device away from traffic.	X	X	X								RPD
	5. Develop a cross functional working group to review, update and deliver a new tracks and trails plan to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage more people to walk and cycle and connect with nature Create an extended network of off-road trails, trail circuits, accessible routes and park perimeter exercise circuits Construct at least one off-road circuit in every township/suburb. 		X	X								RPD
	6. Provide a good distribution of off-leash areas throughout the urban area for dog exercise and socialisation.				X	X						RPD

COUNCIL ROLE		FACILITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT										
Goal	Action	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24	24/25	25/26	26/27	27/28	28/29	29/30	Action Lead
	7. Add opportunities for non-organised and social physical activity to sporting reserves where possible, as well as environmental components and perimeter trails.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	RPD
	8. Prepare a recreation inventory that classifies facilities and open spaces by function and landscape setting type and hierarchy, so a diversity of recreation experiences including nature based opportunities, can be preserved for future generations.	X	X									RPD
	9. Support and advocate for the inclusion and enhancement of recreation opportunities along the Mildura riverfront.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	LCS
	10. Investigate the provision of further water based recreation opportunities.					X	X					RPD
Adequate resourcing based on need and costs of use	11. Develop a Funding and Capital Contributions Policy for sporting and recreation facilities.	X	X									RPD
	12. Utilise developer contributions to assist in upgrading recreation venues and facilities.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	AS
Recreation facility investment priorities	13. Adopt the enclosed Recreation Investment Principles as a basis for prioritising recreation capital works projects.	X										RPD
	14. Develop a hierarchy of facilities that guide the nature and quality of development offered and in specific circumstances guide the quality of services provided at each reserve. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional Township Local 	X										RPD

COUNCIL ROLE		FACILITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT										
Goal	Action	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24	24/25	25/26	26/27	27/28	28/29	29/30	Action Lead
	15. Introduce relatively standard core components to buildings and fields of play based on the facilities hierarchy, that clubs should not have to contribute to (refer 'Core Facility Standards' below).		X	X								RPD
	16. Devise guidelines on co-locating or sharing facilities with schools and other community organisations.				X	X						RPD
	17. Develop Water and Energy Use Guidelines for Recreation Infrastructure.				X							ES
	18. Develop a Lighting Strategy that investigates the opportunities that lighting can have on adapting to the impact of climate change on recreation activities.					X						ES
Strategy Development	19. Create a clear process and frame work for assessing investment prioritisation based on the Recreation Investment Principles.		X									
	20. Develop 'Core Facility Standards' for Mildura Rural City Council.		X	X								RPD
	21. Develop strategies for key types of infrastructure that will influence greater participation in sport and recreation and create a diversity of recreation opportunities accessible to the widest range of the population, including:											
	a) Tracks and Trails Strategy (review)	X	X	X								RPD
	b) Indoor Sports Stadium Strategy (new)		X	X								MSRSP
	c) Aquatics Redevelopment Strategy (review)	X	X									RPD

COUNCIL ROLE		FACILITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT										
Goal	Action	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24	24/25	25/26	26/27	27/28	28/29	29/30	Action Lead
	d) Water Based Recreation Strategy (new)					X	X					RPD
	e) Playground Strategy (review)	X										P&G
	f) A strategy to guide the provision for Off-Leash Dog Parks.			X	X							RPD
	22. Review and develop a new Playground (play space) Strategy to ensure the following issues are addressed: i. Opportunities to enhance “play value” ii. Inclusive design iii. A focus on parks for play rather than equipment iv. Not replacing equipment with like for like	X	X									P&G
	23. Ensure an up to date portfolio of Recreation Reserve Master Plans are maintained.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	RPD

COUNCIL ROLE		SUPPORTING LOCAL SPORTING AND RECREATION ASSOCIATIONS										
Goal	Action	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24	24/25	25/26	26/27	27/28	28/29	29/30	Action Lead
Equitable sport and recreation opportunities	24. Work with key disability groups and NDIS to increase physical access to facilities and provide information about physical accessibility to help people plan their activities.	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	RPD
	25. Consider developing a grant program in conjunction with a partner(s) to improve physical access to existing infrastructure.			X								RPD
	26. Ensure internal grant programs encourage clubs/ organisations to welcome and encourage target groups.		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	RPD

COUNCIL ROLE SUPPORTING LOCAL SPORTING AND RECREATION ASSOCIATIONS												
Goal	Action	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24	24/25	25/26	26/27	27/28	28/29	29/30	Action Lead
	27. Ensure alignment with Council's strategic objectives through the implementation of internal grant programs.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	RPD
Effective and sustainable clubs and user organisations	28. Capture the memory of local sporting club administrators who have successfully worked and delivered positive project outcomes in partnership with Council.		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	RPD
	29. Leverage professional sporting organisations and peak bodies to provide networking and development opportunities to local clubs and associations.		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	RPD
	30. Work with peak bodies to assist local clubs/ groups to access professional development and accreditation processed locally or online.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	RPD
	31. Provide sports and recreation clubs with assistance to support on-going development and to secure grant funding.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	RPD
Recreation facility investment priorities	32. Communicate the Recreation Investment Principles and funding and capital contributions policy to clubs and stakeholders.		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	RPD
Strategy Development	33. Support clubs and associations to develop specific strategies (e.g. for facility planning, and growing participation etc.).	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	RPD
	34. Review Recreation Grants Policy and Guidelines.	X	X				X					RPD

COUNCIL ROLE		FACILITY MANAGEMENT										
Goal	Action	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24	24/25	25/26	26/27	27/28	28/29	29/30	Action Lead
Equitable sport and recreation opportunities	35. Collect participation data by target group, from clubs and users of Council facilities.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	RPD
	36. Collect impact data relating to the internal grant program.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	RPD
	37. Encourage the organisation of social sports opportunities through the operations of the Mildura South Regional Sporting Precinct and at non-traditional times.			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	MSRSP
Adequate resourcing based on need and costs of use	38. Review current fee rebate for clubs that provide capital contributions.	X	X									RPD
Adequate resourcing based on need and costs of use Recreation facility investment priorities	39. Review the existing Pricing Policy.	X	X									RPD
	40. Consolidate buildings on reserves, wherever possible, as part of development works and introduce incentives for clubs to share facilities for sport or community uses.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	RPD

COUNCIL ROLE		PROGRAMMING AND PROMOTION										
Goal	Action	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24	24/25	25/26	26/27	27/28	28/29	29/30	Action Lead
Equitable sport and recreation opportunities	41. Partner with external organisations to develop/ deliver programs that address equity issues.			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	RPD
	42. Work with partners that deliver suitable facilities and programs for high participation activities (e.g. Group fitness for all).	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	RPD
	43. Communicate with peak bodies to facilitate the delivery of accessible programs.						X	X	X	X	X	RPD
	44. Consult further with the broad indigenous community, through local Registered Aboriginal Parties, to encourage local indigenous residents to participate in sport and recreational activities.			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	RPD
Maintaining a current suite of strategies	45. Ensure the Recreation Planning and Development Unit is responsible for the implementation and updating of the recreation components of the Community and Council Plan.		X					X				RPD
	46. Allocate funding for the implementation of, and a review of actions in this plan. Ensure key outcomes of this plan become key result areas for the department.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	RPD