



INTERNATIONAL
SPORTS CARE

Final Report to

Mt Barker District Council

Summit Sports and Recreation Park

Two Year Review of Board, Governance
and Operating Model

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1 Executive Summary and Recommendations

1.1 Executive Summary

In 2022, Mount Barker District Council engaged International Sports Care Pty. Ltd. to review the overall governance, Board performance, management agreements and operational aspects of the Summit Sports and Recreation Park (SSRP). The SSRP is overseen by a dedicated Board, appointed by Council in 2019 as an independent skills-based committee under section 41 of the Local Government Act. The Board has responsibility for the strategic, financial and governance aspects of the SSRP site and to be accountable to Council. The SSRP Board has now been in place for two years. The present review was recommended as part of the SSRP Governance and Operating Model, developed by International Sports Care and endorsed by Council in 2019.

This report is the culmination of an in-depth review process (detailed in Section 2.4), with the view to produce recommendations regarding the Governance and Operating Model of the SSRP and which are based on a clear understanding of the current situation, previous successes, and lessons-learned during the first two years of operation.

The program of activities that has been undertaken to review the SSRP Board included a review of Key Result Areas and Performance Indicators for the Board that are measurable and relate directly to the Board's role and sphere of influence. The review included a self-assessment by the SSRP Board and examined the work undertaken by the Board over the past two years referenced against the Council's Annual Business Plan and the Council endorsed Business Strategy for the Summit Sports and Recreation Park. Consultation was performed with key SSRP stakeholders including Council Corporate Governance Group, SSRP Board Members, SSRP Executive Officer, SSRP sub-committee members, and Council itself.

The review has uncovered several relevant issues and constraints on the Board which require consideration by Council in any assessment of the Board's performance. By its own admission, the Board is still in a growth phase and 'finding its feet' regarding what information is required, how often and in what format, the limitation of resources and what its decision-making powers are under current governance mechanisms.

Moreover, the advent of the Covid pandemic over the past two years has significantly impacted on the administration of and planning for the Board. Covid forced Council into service continuity and meant the Board was 'parked' for a while and delayed start, which has handicapped their functioning. Subsequently, various user group licence agreements were delayed.

Furthermore, it appears that there has been some value management undertaken during the build of the SSRP and design faults, disputes, and expectations of "user friendliness" of the facilities have necessitated the Board's efforts being concentrated to some extent on fixing problems raised by User Groups rather than the activities which would fulfill the ambitions and vision of the SSRP for the Council and community.

This report highlights several successes that should be acknowledged and celebrated by the Board and Council and despite the above challenges, the Board now has a very clear forward view of its priorities are how it can drive the SSRP to be the successful sports and leisure venue everyone wants.

The Board members possess a broad range of perspectives to add to discussions and a strong matrix of skills and backgrounds leading to robust discussion which augurs well for its recommendations to Council. The Board has high level of experience and members appear to fulfill their fiduciary duties and responsibilities well. In addition, despite the Board being challenged by several extraneous factors (briefly indicated below and described in Section 2.2), the Board (and Chair) have performed adequately or above expectations in the many of the Key Result Indicators and Performance Indicators which were assessed.

The identification of these successes, challenges and constraints and subsequent discussion with the SSRP Board, sub-committee, Corporate Governance Group and Council itself as the review process proceeded, produced a line of thinking in relation to future governance of the SSRP which should be considered by Council in relation to the 5 groups of key recommendations detailed in the following section.

Firstly, it has become clear during the preparation of this Report that the overall linkages with the proposed future leisure and aquatic centre plus other Tier 1 leisure/recreation/sport assets are now very much in strategic focus for Council in respect to future governance and operations. Synergies of the SSRP with the proposed indoor aquatic and recreation centre are obvious. The potential (subject to further planning and future funding) of integrating the surrounding/connecting sites into some form of fully integrated precinct which includes recreation, leisure, sporting, or entertainment type facilities all working together and being governed and managed in an integrated way is visionary and strategic.

Furthermore, it was quickly apparent that the Board unanimously feels that, under the current governance model, it does not “control its destiny” as decision making ability rests with Council (as per Section 41 Committee governance). They believe that their skills and expertise could be better leveraged for the benefit of the SSRP, and they do not want just to be a rubber stamp for Council but want to add value.

Relatedly, under the current arrangements, the Board does not have operational budget (or access to capital plan funding) to be able to achieve things and must go back through Council and executive for funding. While the Terms of Reference for the Board indicate that they may “*Expend Council’s approved budgeted funds.*” (TOR Section 7.5: Delegated Authority - Financial), in practice the SSRP Board has an operating budget with full cost attribution which includes SSRP (Board) derived income (user charges, license fees etc) with expense lines (being Executive Officer employment costs, attributable materials, contracts & other expenses plus depreciation etc.) This allows Council to define its contribution to the SSRP. Resource and budget availability constraints has impacted the extent to which the Board has been able to progress what it sees as being priority needs and a desire from the Board to have greater autonomy in this respect

The above and other factors described in this report mean the Board has grappled with its purpose early, particularly regarding decision making, and many members feel that Board that its own decision making is stifled by the current governance mechanism (s41 Committee). Enthusiasm of Board remains strong but is at risk of declining over time due to these factors. There is a view across several stakeholders and supported by the writers of this report, that a different governance mechanism, such as the Board governance mechanism being a dedicated subsidiary of Council under Section 42 of the Local Government Act, would alleviate many of these constraints and should be considered by Council in future.

Finally, there was a common view held by members of the Board, Council, and the Executive Officer alike that there has been insufficient liaison between Council and the Board, and the Board have often felt they were acting in isolation, particularly in relation to future Summit Precinct works and plans. A similar sense was reflected in feedback with Council members who expressed a desire to improve the relationship and communication channels between the Board and Council.

1.2 Recommendations

The below recommendations are derived from the extensive review undertaken over a period of several months

1.2.1 Overall assessment of the SSRP Board performance

In terms of overall Board performance (given significant constraints and other extraneous factors)

1. That Council note this Report of the SSRP Board Review (covering overall governance, Board performance, management agreements and operational aspects of SSRP precinct operations) and the satisfactory performance of the SSRP Board over the past two years.

1.2.2 Expansion of activities for the SSRP Board into the future

The following recommendations support the need for Council to plan a pathway to ensure that there continues to be a strong focus maintained on the SSRP and other significant sporting, recreational and leisure assets in Mount Barker as it grows as a regional centre into the future. Importantly, the process of planning, financing, and building new sporting, recreational and leisure developments in the Mt Barker precinct, and the implementation of appropriate governance arrangements going forward is one of many priorities for Council.

2. That Council continue in the short term (for up to one year) with the current S41 Committee governance arrangements for the SSRP Board, but with additional scope in an Interim Advisory role to Council on selected current Tier 1 sporting, recreational and leisure assets plus future planning for sports, recreation, and leisure facilities at the "Summit" precinct (scope and priority of assets to be agreed with the Chair, Board and Council). This will necessitate:
 - a. The addition of a further Board member to the SSRP Board with skills in Marketing and Event Attraction and Management to develop the commercial approach for the SSRP to maximise returns.
 - b. The Board focus to include working with Council on strategies for unlocking the next wave of Government funding for future development of the overall Summit precinct.
 - c. A review of the resources and supports Council will provide (beyond the SSRP Executive Officer Responsibility Matrix) under the leadership of the Executive Manager to the CEO (and possibly a dedicated business development resource providing a return on investment)

- d. Provision to the SSRP (perhaps through the Executive Manager to the CEO) of an agreed operational budget for each financial year which is at the Board's discretion (subject to the Executive Manager to the CEO's approval) to advance their work (budget scope to be agreed with the Chair, Board, Executive Manager to the CEO and Council)
 - e. Discuss with Council Executive any solutions to the blocks to the Board's meeting efficiencies due to the formal Local Government meeting procedures under which it operates
 - f. The Board conduct a review of the SSRP sub-committee (structure, purpose, performance, membership, and opportunities) given the possibility of a broader precinct role for the Board and sub-committee into the future.
 - g. Review of fees paid to Board members in the interim period (for up to one year) which reflects the additional responsibilities and time (quantum to be agreed with the Chair, Board and Council)
3. That in the new calendar year (2023), Council considers the establishment of a single Council subsidiary (Section 42 under the Act), engages legal support to draft a charter for such an entity and, in principle, the appointment of members of the SSRP Board to govern.

1.2.3 *Changes to the Terms of Reference (TOR) for the SSRP Board*

The following recommendations relate specifically to changes to the TOR to support other recommendations

4. An additional Purpose statement *"The Board are proactively involved in working with Council executive to unlock the next wave of funding for future developments of the overall Summit precinct identified by Council and the Board"* to cement the Board's leadership role.
5. Section 2 (Role and Objectives), 2.1.2 Currently: *"Promote the services and facilities of the SSRP"* be changed to *"Proactively drive the ongoing relationship with Council and by this and other methods promote the services and facilities of the SSRP."* to drive SSRP Board and Council relationship.
6. Section 9 (Membership and Appointment) currently: *"The Board shall comprise 4 independent members and 1 Council Member (ensuring a different Council Member to that on the sub-committee)"* be changed to expand the Board by 1 member to fill the skills gaps (identified in the Board Skills Assessment) in Marketing and Event Attraction and Management.

1.2.4 *Other improvements which the Council and SSRP Board should consider*

7. The Board consider how they will respond collectively and individually to the findings of the Self-Assessment Review and take appropriate action.

8. The Board prioritise the development of the 3-year rolling Business Plan for the SSRP to reflect the high-level strategic pillars in the Council approved Business Strategy and would include revised key objectives, KPI's and targets plus yearly actions, timelines, and responsibilities. This could be finalised in conjunction with Council in a planning day Workshop session.
9. The Board note the current disparities between the Council Annual Business Plan, the Council approved Business Strategy and the SSRP Annual Business Strategy and align these in the future
10. SSRP Board, Council and Council Executive consider the feedback on relationships between the stakeholders and develop meaningful strategies to improve connection, interaction, and ultimately performance.
11. The Board Chairperson should present annually to Council on achievements of the SSRP Board and to outline forthcoming objectives and budget needs. Consideration should be given to the timing of the Chair presentation, with a view for this to be early in the calendar year to present achievements from the previous calendar year and to outline objectives and proposed budget needs for the forthcoming financial year. It is envisioned that this timing may be optimal for the preparation of the Council budget (both capital and operating).
12. The Board consider the value in better defining what a "Regional Facility" is and provide clarity to all stakeholders.

1.2.5 Potential timings and frequency of the next reviews

13. There should be a review of the Board performance (with the additional responsibilities referred to above) undertaken during calendar year 2023 prior to Council considering the governance model going forward (Section 41 Committee or Section 42 Subsidiary) and depending on that decision, future reviews to be planned accordingly.

In terms of timings for the above recommendations (if accepted by Council, and given the hiatus over the Council election and settling in period into early 2023), the following timings could be appropriate:

- Expand the Board by 1 member immediately
- Amend various elements of the Board's Terms of Reference immediately
- Review the remuneration of the Board immediately (if Council decides to add additional scope to the Board's work)
- Review the sub-committee (structure, purpose, performance, membership, and opportunities) immediately as per Recommendation 2f) above
- Review the Board's performance again in 2023 (say, at latest Spring)
- Establish the new Subsidiary (by mid-2024 at latest) taking lessons learned from the new Wastewater subsidiary)

2 Background

2.1 Context

Mount Barker District Council engaged International Sports Care Pty. Ltd. in 2018/19 to prepare a Governance and Operating Model together with a Business Strategy for a new regional sports hub development to be constructed on a greenfield site in Mount Barker. Subsequently the sports hub was constructed and was named the Summit Sports and Recreation Park (SSRP).

In 2019, Council approved both a Governance and Operating Model together with a Business Strategy developed by International Sports Care for the SSRP. Recommendations were made and endorsed by Council for a governance structure which included Terms of Reference and the appointment of an independent skills-based board under section 41 of the Local Government Act. This Board has responsibility for the strategic, financial and governance aspects of the site and to be accountable to Council.

The SSRP Board has now been in place for two years. In the discussion on the preferred Governance and Operating Model in 2018/19, it was suggested that a settling in period for the Board would be wise and the Report recommended that a review should be established after a period of 2 years. The Council accepted the Governance and Operating Model Report and recommendations in 2019.

The review of the SSRP Board was also included in the SSRP Board Terms of Reference and Council decided that the review of overall governance, Board performance, management agreements and operational aspects of precinct operations would be undertaken by an independent consultant in mid-2022.

International Sports Care were appointed to conduct the review which began in June 2022.

2.2 Relevant issues impacting on this SSRP Board Review

There have been several relevant issues raised during the program of activities to review the SSRP Board which require consideration as to their impact on the key objectives of the review and consideration in forming recommendations for Council. The below is a summary of those issues, some of which will be discussed at greater depth later in this Report.

2.2.1 Impact of Covid pandemic

The advent of the Covid pandemic over the past two years (as with many organisations), has significantly impacted on the administration of and planning for the Board. Covid forced Council into service continuity and meant the Board was 'parked' for a while and delayed start, which has handicapped their functioning. The Board appointments were made later than expected and subsequently, the various licence agreements with the relevant licence holder associations including the Hills Football League, Football SA (soccer) and the Alexandra and Eastern Hills Cricket Association were delayed. These licences were, in the main, completed in early May 2021 and had been expected to be in place somewhat earlier. Work on sub-licences is understood to still be completed. In summary, the progress which was initially expected has been slowed due to the pandemic and was outside of the control of Council and the Board.

2.2.2 Ongoing operational issues from build of SSRP

It was noted in the Governance and Operating Model Report in 2019 that the design of the precinct needed careful consideration as it was felt at that time that the planned layout promoted a more isolated approach from user groups in that there are four standalone and relatively small facilities that could easily become seen as individual club rooms.

It was strongly suggested at that time that careful consideration needed to be given to the design of facilities to ensure they meet the overarching 'rationale for the site' and if it is Council's intent to have centralised services and facilities that can meet broader community outcomes, then facilities need to be designed as such. The planned placement and size of facilities within the SSRP favoured less centralised services and as such it guided the recommended governance structure at that point in time.

A learning from other regional sports facilities models at that time was to ensure design and management go hand in hand. For the sake of initial, and potentially relatively small savings in the overall scheme of development, the long-term vision for a site or service can be lost if costs are cut in the early planning, design, and development.

It appears that there has been some value management undertaken during the build of the SSRP and design faults, disputes and expectations of users have necessitated the Board's efforts being concentrated to some extent on fixing problems raised by User Groups i.e., it focussed on the community aspects of build faults etc. as opposed to the more commercial aspects such as generating revenue. Some significant build and dispute issues are ongoing at the time of preparation of this Report.

2.2.3 Initial assumptions under which Board was formed

The Key Assumptions underpinning the development of the SSRP were initially detailed in the Council approved document; *"Mount Barker Regional Sports Hub, Business Case, as at 5 December, 2017"*. Further assumptions surfaced during the various activities undertaken in 2018 as the Governance and Operating model was prepared.

The Key Assumptions were defined as those elements of the project that were assumed to be true at the time of preparation of the Governance and Operating model. It was also understood these assumptions could be subject to change at a future date based on the achievement of project milestones and the continued support by council and other stakeholders to the project.

As a result of discussions with the Board, there has been a review of these Key Assumptions in this Report and any impacts on SSRP Board performance. Whilst there have been some changes to the original assumptions since 2018/19 (which is to be expected over time), most assumptions remained as they were and there was little apparent effect of those changed assumptions on Board performance.

2.2.4 Future planning by Council

It has become clear during the preparation of this Report that the overall linkages with the proposed future leisure and aquatic centre, the adjacent potential for a recreational leisure and tourist precinct and golf club (potential), Laratinga Wetlands access and trails plus other Tier 1 leisure/recreation/sport assets (which were outside the scope of the original Governance and Operating Model Report) are now very much in strategic focus for Council in respect to future governance and operations.

Synergies with the proposed indoor aquatic and recreation centre are obvious. The potential (subject to further planning and future funding) of integrating the surrounding/connecting sites into some form of fully integrated precinct which includes recreation, leisure, sporting, or entertainment type facilities all working together and being governed and managed in an integrated way is visionary and strategic.

2.3 Scope and Objectives of Review

The program of activities that has been undertaken to review the SSRP Board included review of Key Result Areas and Performance Indicators for the Board that are measurable and relate directly to the Board's role and sphere of influence.

The review included a self-assessment by the SSRP Board and examined the work undertaken by the Board over the past two years referenced against the Council's Annual Business Plan and the Council endorsed Business Strategy for the Summit Sports and Recreation Park.

2.3.1 Objectives of review

The four key objectives in the review of the SSRP Board performance were:

1. How the Board rated its own operational performance against agreed Key Result Areas and Performance Indicators (including a self-assessment of skill sets).
2. How the Board performed against the annual key performance indicators related to the Summit Sports and Recreation Park in Council's Annual Business Plan.
3. How the Board utilised the Council endorsed Business Strategy for the Summit Sports and Recreation Park.
4. The fit and skills set for a future role for the current Board in relation to Council proposed development of adjacent land parcels including the regional aquatic and leisure facility.

2.3.2 Questions to be considered in the review

In this review the following questions were considered in the consultation process:

- How has the SSRP Board operated over the two years, and does it believe it is achieving its best practice in its role?
- Has the SSRP Board made the progress expected from the Council Annual Business Plan and reasons why or why not?
- What have been the challenges and constraints for the SSRP Board in achieving the goals of the SSRP Business Strategy
- What has worked well for the SSRP Board?
- What have been lessons learnt by the SSRP Board over the past two years, how could the SSRP Board be more effective and what are the opportunities for improvement?

2.3.3 Consultation undertaken

The review included consultation with:

- Council Corporate Governance Group
- SSRP Board Members
- SSRP Executive Officer

- SSRP sub-committee members
- Council itself

2.4 *ISC Project Methodology*

The following are the steps undertaken in this review:

1. Establishing the Review

- Initial Workshop with the Council Corporate Governance Group to outline and discuss the objectives and methodology of the Review, the breadth of consultation and establishing the need for future meetings during the Review if required
- Extent of involvement required of Board Chair and Members in the Review including gain direction on issues arising and to discuss findings
- Role of and availability of key contact points for project to discuss findings, source information, gain direction on issues arising and obtain contact details of stakeholders.

2. ISC Consulting preparation of detailed work plan including expected timelines and activity

3. Review of materials provided by Council including but not limited to:

- SSRP Board Meeting schedules
- SSRP Board Meeting minutes
- Council Annual Business Plan KPI's relating to the SSRP and endorsed Business Strategy
- Reports provided to Council on SSRP activities and actions
- Any other information deemed useful by Council for ISC to inform the Review process

4. Conduct Key Stakeholder Interviews with the following:

- SSRP Board Members
- SSRP sub-committee Members
- Executive Officer to SSRP
- Other key persons as required based on discussions in 2.4.1.

5. Conduct an online survey for SSRP Board and Executive Officer:

- Preparation of draft questionnaire for survey
- Review and agree question sets (KRA's and KPI's) with Board and Executive Officer to validate and undertake survey on-line
- Assess data from survey and prepare report for Workshop with SSRP Board (Appendix 1)

6. Conduct an SSRP Workshop with Board and Executive Officer to feed back on the Board Self-Assessment

7. Conduct a Council Workshop with Board and Executive Officer to feed back on the Board Self-Assessment, update progress of review and seek advice on Council's view of Board Performance

8. Preparation of Draft Report and recommendations

9. Conduct a joint workshop/briefing with Council, SSRP Board Members and Executive Officer to consider draft report and finalise recommendations

10. Final Report and recommendations prepared utilising consolidated feedback being provided by Council and SSRP Board and Executive Officer on the draft report.

3 Key findings including wins, challenges, constraints, and areas of improvement for the Board

In this section, some of the areas which the Board has performed well, the challenges and constraints faced by the Board and where it could improve are discussed in more detail.

This section does not consider the impacts of the Covid pandemic and the significant ongoing operational issues because of the build faults which are considered force majeure, accepted as significant constraints for the Board in its early life, and have been discussed previously in Sections 2.2.1 and 2.2.2.

It discusses issues under which the Board may or may not have some control as well as opportunities for improvements which the Council and SSRP Board should consider ensuring the SSRP Business Strategy is achieved into the future.

3.1 Successes for the Board

The Board has achieved several successes since its inception, as identified in interviews with Board members, and which deserve to be acknowledged and celebrated.

Firstly, there is general agreement amongst Board members that they possess differing perspectives to add to discussions and a strong matrix of skills and backgrounds leading to robust discussions. The Board has high level of experience and members appear to fulfill their fiduciary duties and responsibilities well. There is a general view that the skills of Board members are well-suited to the needs of the SSRP, and they look forward to fully utilising their skills as they begin to move focus away from operational matters onto more strategic concerns.

Many members indicate that the Board is developing well as a team, and despite the previous need to focus on operational matters, they agree that their focus will pivot to long-term planning as the Board matures. The Board has become more confident as it has clarified its role and wants to do add greater value going forward. The Board have achieved a range of milestone achievements including the development of the Summit Sports and Recreation Sales and Marketing Plan, applying agreed service standards and principles for sports surfaces with user groups, together with development of sponsorship and hiring policies amongst other things.

The Board were unanimous in their support of the Executive Officer in facilitating the Licence Agreements using external expertise, which were seen to be effectively put in place and worked through well. They believe that they have provided good support and guidance for in this capacity. Furthermore, they are pleased that they have had some success in modifying recommendations to Council through Council Executive.

3.2 Relationship of the SSRP Board, Council Executive and Council

It is clear that the relationship between the SSRP Board, Council, and Council Executive is largely friendly and receptive, but over time, there has been an emerging frustration from the Board that its advisory function under the governance mechanism under which it operates (S41 Committee of Council) is sub-optimal and this may be a contributing factor to the lack of communication between the parties.

Notwithstanding, each of these stakeholders have identified an opportunity to improve the relationship regarding communication and leadership of the SSRP. There is currently limited interconnectivity between the Council and the Board, specifically with little Chair involvement in Council matters (such as attendance at Council meetings of relevance to the SSRP or raising agenda items for Council attention).

3.3 Leadership of the SSRP

A prevalent theme to come from our review was a lack of clarity regarding who should be “driving” (in a leadership sense), the SSRP now and in the future. The Board is capable and experienced, and while its early performance has been hampered by various factors in its short life so far, there is little evidence in this review of its performance that suggests it cannot and will not deliver on realising the SSRP’s success. Our view is that aspects of the current governance structure may be adding to the point of “leadership” confusion and must be further clarified by Council together with the Board into the future.

While the strategic direction of the SSRP ultimately rests with the Board, there is a communal sense amongst the Board members that their inability to make decisions under the S41 Committee governance structure is resulting in a lack of motivation and ownership. At present, the SSRP Board can only make recommendations to Council who have ultimate decision-making authority. The Board has limited resources, (relying on Council staff who are pressed with other work and sometimes conflicted) and no operational budget to apply to its work. For a Board which has significant skills sets this is becoming demotivating.

Furthermore, it is likely that with the growth of the Mt Barker district and the Council’s plethora of significant future projects, it could mean that the specific needs, wants and focus of the SSRP may continue to lose priority over time. Indeed, this would be a poor outcome considering the expectations for the SSRP and the level of investment already undertaken by Council.

We believe that adjustments to the governance structure, changes to resourcing Board work, working more closely with Council Executive and Council itself (as discussed above), together with changes to supporting documents, such as the Terms of Reference, will assist in reinforcing the Board as the primary body for driving the SSRP growth to fulfill the strategic intent of the SSRP for Council.

One of the key opportunities for the Board is to take a more proactive role in engaging with Council Executive and user groups in identifying new opportunities for community involvement and sourcing new waves of funding for future developments of the overall Summit precinct. Such opportunities can be better leveraged by affording the Board greater decision-making authority as it continues to mature and utilise available skills sets.

3.4 Terms of Reference for the SSRP Board

To facilitate a possible future expansion of the Board’s remit and to leverage the current Board members’ broad skill sets more fully, a review of the Terms of Reference for the SSRP Board is warranted. Several themes were identified from feedback interviews with Board members and workshops with Council Executive and Council itself, that relate to current Terms of Reference.

Our view is that several modifications to the Terms of Reference are necessary to enable the Board to achieve new goals and expectations, as may be endorsed by Council in future.

Specifically, a lack of clarity regarding who should be driving the Business Plan, decisions which will progress the SSRP facility and a further need to clarify the mechanisms through which the SSRP could source new and future waves of government funding to achieve the strategic targets and increase membership of the facility are areas for review.

These considerations should be addressed in modifications or additions to Terms of Reference items and potential changes to the SSRP governance structure.

3.5 Definition of a “Regional Facility”

From its inception, Council envisioned the SSRP (originally titled the *Regional Sports Hub*) as a *regional facility* that both serves relevant user groups and community needs. This definition necessitates that sporting clubs are largely discouraged from defining the facility as their home ground or implementing their own branding/history within and about the facility. (Notwithstanding, it is understood that there may well be technological solutions within the main AFL football ground facility which are in process of consideration and implementation which might help on “match days” to create a “club like feel” for participating clubs).

Interviews with these various user groups indicate that “ownership” (or not) affects the level of volunteer motivation necessary for the successful operations of SSRP events. Specifically, user feedback indicates that the current volunteer hours for the operation of events is stretched thin and unsustainable into the future for individuals in some sports.

Moreover, it was quickly identified from interviews with user groups that the volunteers follow their preferred sporting clubs (understandably so) and have little specific interest in volunteering for the facility itself or in fact the overarching body such as the League or governing body. So, as a result, the definition of a “Regional Facility” and what this means in practice came up regularly in discussions with the Board and sub-committee members.

This becomes a concern if local sporting clubs are hesitant to utilise facilities in lieu of losing traditional income sources which their home grounds would give, and it is realised that the large volunteer effort required for successful operation of any facility often pivots on the disposition of the user groups.

It is not within the remit of this Report to conduct a full discussion (which would require extensive stakeholder’s views) to resolve this issue, but it is an issue which needs further exploration and should be led by the SSRP Board so that there is clarity for community and stakeholders on this. This is one of the recommendations of this report.