



9 October 2023

**Media Release**

## **SSRP Board and Council address HFL withdrawal**

In light of recent public statements and commentary, the Summit Sport and Recreation Park (SSRP) Board and the Mount Barker District Council feel it would help public understanding to clarify critical points to ensure transparency.

We acknowledge the Mount Barker Football Club (the Roos) decision to abstain from training and playing at SSRP. This decision, while respected, prompts us to emphasise that our doors remain open. We warmly encourage the Roos to engage in dialogue with the SSRP Board and Council to navigate through any existing issues collaboratively. Council and the Board retain a keen interest in seeing the Roos and other Hills Football League clubs use the SSRP for their games and training

### **Key Facts and Historical Context:**

1. With significant funding from the State and Australian governments and peak sporting bodies, the SSRP was designed to facilitate various sports and community recreation at a regional level, not to serve as a dedicated home base for any single club.
2. This is why Licences were provided to sporting associations, including the Hills Football League (HFL), and not individual clubs, under a transparent operating model and clear cost structures, enabling them to manage match programming effectively for their respective member clubs.
3. The Board allowed licensees to seek sponsorship (other than naming rights of the oval and clubhouse - which is reserved for the Board - to support them in raising revenue and managing costs in relation to their licence.
4. Sponsorship income has always been available for the HFL to secure under the license agreement subject to any sponsorship proposal being tabled with the SSRP Board for approval.
5. HFL did not present the Board with any sponsorship proposals or opportunities.
6. The HFL did not take out a liquor license for the SSRP facility for the winter AFL season when it was a license holder, therefore requiring the individual users to organise and manage their own liquor licensing requirements.

7. HFL advised that it was voluntarily withdrawing from its Australian Rules football license agreement with the SSRP Board in May this year, despite being fully aware of all costs, responsibilities and opportunities involved upon entering the agreement.

### **Impact and Ongoing Developments:**

1. HFL's withdrawal occurred in May, after the winter AFL football season had commenced, thus not providing the Board with an opportunity to plan and program the facility or engage with clubs widely in response based on a full season.
2. The HFL decision has unfortunately burdened member clubs with the necessity to move over to a casual hire system administered through Council.
3. Casual hire of the SSRP is intended to be for short term or ad-hoc community and commercial use rather than regular use, which would normally be covered under a licence agreement.
4. Council heavily subsidises the cost of operating and maintaining all sections of the Summit Sport and Recreation Park. The Board only recovers around 1 per cent of the total operating costs of the venue from licensees.
5. The SSRP Board, in response to HFL's request to withdraw from the licence agreement, had discussions with the Mount Barker Football Club and asked them to provide a proposal on how they would operate the facility as the licence holder and to set out how a regional use shared model would work under their model which is different to the lease model that they currently hold at Hanson oval. Despite ongoing dialogue a solution was not formalised

### **Quotes attributable to SSRP Board chairperson Iain Evans**

*While the Summit Sport and Recreation Park is still undergoing enhancements, it has always been anticipated that additional improvements would be progressively implemented. This approach allows for adaptations in alignment with evolving funding opportunities, programming requirements, and user needs, ensuring that the development of the facility remains responsive and strategically guided.*

*The Board remains focussed on providing a multi-purpose venue that provides the infrastructure required for multiple uses and user groups. Matters such as the finalisation of the permanent perimeter fence, more permanent seating, better scoreboard functionality as well as fixtures and fittings resident within the Australian Rules football clubhouse to allow for better bump in/bump out use remains our priority. Capital projects have been highlighted in our Board reports and Annual Business Plan requirements.*

*While community sporting clubs typically contribute fees to local councils for the use of facilities, we reiterate our steadfast commitment to providing a premier, affordable sporting facility to all clubs within our district. The SSRP Board will continue to navigate through these challenges with a focus on transparent, collaborative solutions that best serve our community and stakeholders.*

*We are continuing to listen and work productively with soccer, Australian Rules football, cricket, and community recreation groups to ensure the \$23 million precinct is further developed as a regional facility that captures national, state, regional, district and local activities and events. We're focussed on finding solutions that helps locals to play footy at the Summit, on the best ground outside of Adelaide.*

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