

ADOPTED		VERSION NO	2.3
COUNCIL MEETING MIN	145/24	REVIEW DATE	DECEMBER 2027
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Objective

Provide appropriate public access to parks and reserves for active and passive recreation and ensure the safety of persons using the parks and reserves.

Control activities including vehicle access to a park or sports field to minimise damage.

To ensure parks are appropriately booked and used to avoid unnecessary excessive and costly damage due to misuse.

Legislative requirements

- Nil

Related policies and plans

- Nil

Policy

This policy applies to all Council managed parks and sports fields within the Mid-Western region where a person or persons wish to:

- Organise a passive or active activity within a park or sports field;
- Erect any form of infrastructure (eg. Marquee, temporary lighting, sun shelters etc),
- Organise an activity for commercial or promotional purposes;
- Any other request that is deemed relevant.

Definitions

Active recreation – primarily activities of a sporting nature.

Bond – a security deposit and/or key deposit may be held in case of damage to council's asset.

Casual bookings – for nominated dates or limited periods of time for specific events or recreation/sporting activities.

Commercial or Promotional Activities – any activities undertaken by a corporate / business group with the intention to make money or profit from the activity directly or indirectly.

Community Groups – non-profit community based groups.

Council – Mid-Western Regional Council.

Corporate/Business Groups – companies and organisations that operate for profit.

Council Land – Any land owned by Council or managed by Council on behalf of another authority.

Damage – includes accidental or wilful damage of structures, fixtures, plants and surfaces excluding normal wear and tear as determined by Council Officers.

Fitness Booking – a booking made by a fitness instructor or group wanting access to Council parks or sports fields.

Occasional / Infrequent Access – access required only now and then or on rare occasions, up to four times per year.

Parks – any other area of open space land which is not a sports field.

Passive Recreation – primarily activities that are not active recreation.

Private or social – primarily family gatherings of a purely social nature (eg birthday parties, weddings, Christmas parties).

Seasonal Booking – a booking for a winter or summer sporting activity.

Sports fields – an area of open space land provided specifically for the purpose of conducting formal sport or encouraging informal recreation activity.

Usage Fee – A fee may apply for the use of the park or sports field.

Council's fees and charges can be found at <http://www.midwestern.nsw.gov.au>.

General Conditions

1. Council has absolute right and discretion to impose any condition to protect its assets and consider the safety of the broader community when granting approval or permitting use and access to Council's parks and sports fields.
2. All requests for the use of any park and/or sports field must be submitted through Councils venue booking system located on Councils website. This system provides details on the venue details of bookable spaces and relevant terms and conditions applicable to each booking and venue use.
3. All facility use and booking terms and conditions must be adhered to by users. This includes relevant booking cancellations and refunds conditions.
4. The applicant is responsible, at their cost, for reinstating the park or sports field to the satisfaction of Council for all damage (outside normal use) and rubbish generated on site and as a result of any activity.
5. If the park or sports field is not reinstated to Council satisfaction then Council may undertake necessary works and recoup the costs through the bond or directly from the applicant accordingly. A cleaning fee will be charged to any Club, School or other User Group if they fail to leave amenities in a clean and tidy condition. Cleaning must be undertaken immediately after use for single usage and within 48 hours for seasonal users or at the end of each season.
6. Council has absolute right and discretion to close any park or sport field due to wet weather, maintenance scheduled or unscheduled or other reason deemed necessary. If parks or sports

fields are accessed after they have been closed then the applicant will be responsible for any damage incurred. Councils wet weather guidelines details the role of Council and facility hirers in the event of wet weather.

7. Upon submitting any booking the appropriate form, copies of public liability and any relevant qualifications need to be uploaded or attached.
8. No vehicles or motorbikes are to drive upon parks and sports fields without the prior approval by Council. Sporting clubs must follow Councils buggy guidelines for use on sportsgrounds.
9. No stakes or pegs are to be used or excavations made without the prior approval by Council.
10. No glass is permitted on any park or sports field.
11. No signage (permanent or temporary) without prior consent from Council is permitted to be erected at any park or sporting facility.
12. The applicant/s may be required to prepare and forward a Risk Management Plan to Council for the intended use.
13. The applicant/s must report any hazards, issues or damage to Council within the next business day.
14. Council reserves the right to restrict or terminate approval at any time particularly if the applicant has failed to comply with reasonable direction of Council Officers or have breached Council's conditions.
15. Noise levels including the use of PA systems will be governed by the Environment Protection (Residential Noise) Regulations, <https://www.epa.nsw.gov.au/your-environment/noise>.
16. All parking shall be within the designated parking areas only.
17. Activities that are not permitted within Council parks are camping, fires, archery, golf, horse riding, shooting and any other activity that Council deems hazardous / detrimental to the public or the park / sports field.
18. The applicant/s is to ensure that Hazardous substances flammable, volatile and explosive substances are not taken to the Reserve or the Sporting Fields at any time.
19. The applicant/s must:
 - a) Ensure that fire and emergency exits are clear of all impediments thereby allowing the free passage of vehicles and persons at all times;
 - b) Ensure the operation of fire doors; fire exit signs and fire fighting equipment are not interfered with or removed from the designated location;
 - c) That emergency vehicles have access to the park or the Sporting Fields at all times;
 - d) Ensure that persons attending the event do not have explosive, flammable or volatile substances in their possession;
 - e) Ensure that there are no exposed flames; and
 - f) Ensures that it contacts the appropriate emergency services where required (For Fire Brigade, Police or Ambulance call Emergency Number 000).
20. It is the applicant/s responsibility to ensure that adequate medical and first aid equipment is available during the Hours of Use.

21. The applicant/s may have use of canteens facilities where applicable as part of the Common Areas of the Reserve during the Hire Period and during such other times as may be approved by the Council subject to such reasonable terms and conditions as imposed by the Council from time to time including but not limited to:
 - a) The applicant/s being responsible for the maintenance and cleaning of the canteen.
 - b) Canteen staff must be certified and follow appropriate food handling guidelines in alignment with current food safety laws in NSW.
 - c) any additional equipment brought into the canteen for use must meet Australian standards and be tagged and tested.
 - d) The applicant/s must ensure that the facility is appropriately equipped for correct use of any additional equipment brought in and is used in alignment with Australian building standards i.e. deep fryers may only be used where exhaust fans have been fitted.
22. The applicant/s will be responsible for the cleaning the BBQ area and replacing gas bottles if they become empty.
23. Hours of use are as follows unless otherwise approved by Council prior:
 - a) The applicant/s may only use the reserve or sporting field during the allocated Hours of Use.
 - b) No activity is to commence prior to 7.00am on any day.
 - c) No competitive sport is to commence prior to 8.00am on any day.
 - d) No activity is to occur after 10.00pm on any day.
 - e) Field lights are to be turned off by 10.00pm.
24. Council is responsible for the overall security of all Council facilities. However, in using the Sporting fields or Reserves, including the Common areas (where applicable) the applicant/s is required to ensure that:
 - a) Buildings are secured when not being used;
 - b) Gates and doors are to be locked when facilities located on the Reserve are not in use;
 - c) The applicant/s must notify the Council of the applicant/s authorised representative who is to be responsible for locking gates and must provide the Council with a contact number in case of emergencies;
 - d) The applicant/s must advise the Council immediately if there is any breach of security.
25. The use of drones and other unmanned aircraft on or over Council-owned or managed land is also subject to Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) rules and regulations.
26. Council delegates to the General Manager the authority to consider the provision of an exemption to this policy upon request.

Wet Weather Guidelines

Introduction

This document seeks to provide clear guidelines and procedures for the closure of Council maintained sportsgrounds due to wet weather. The responsibility for ground closures will remain the discretion of Mid-Western Regional Council and the decision to close sporting fields will be based on the following:

- The potential for injury to players.
- The sport played and potential for damage to the playing surface.
- The weather forecast from the Bureau of Meteorology.
- The condition of the ground when inspected.

These guidelines allow council to pro-actively manage sportsgrounds in order to prevent over-use and/or inappropriate uses, ensuring the long-term sustainability of playing fields and provide accurate and timely information concerning sporting ground closures across the shire.

The General Manager or authorised delegate will have the authority to close sporting grounds should they be adversely affected by wet weather or for operational or public safety needs. Sporting Clubs do not have the authority to approve the use of sporting grounds when Council has closed the grounds.

Timing of decisions

Council grounds staff will assess sportsgrounds with a decision communicated to sporting clubs and associations by 2.00pm where possible via email, social media and Council's website (Sports grounds closures Mid-Western Regional Council (nsw.gov.au)).

Council reserves the right to open and close Sportsgrounds as it sees fit. All users of Council sporting fields are required to comply with all conditions as set out in individual user agreements, booking terms and conditions, licences, leases and the like as relevant to the facility and activity.

If grounds are assessed on Friday afternoon as 'pending – users to undertake own risk assessment', Council grounds staff will conduct a further inspection at 7.00am on Saturday or Sunday morning. Sporting clubs should contact Council's parks on-call officer if further advice is required. In this case, only competition games will be considered and no training will be permitted. If competition proceeds, sports MUST complete a risk assessment specific for their sport. Following this assessment clubs may choose to close grounds to prevent injury to players and damage to the grounds. Re-assessment for Sunday competition is the responsibility of the club. The responsibility for communicating these decisions is the clubs responsibility.

Assessment Measures

The following measures are to be used as a guide to assist Council and clubs in making a decision regarding ground closures. A wet weather inspection form will be completed by Council staff as required which will inform a decision about ground closures.

- **Surface Water:** Competition and training must be cancelled if there is any surface water visible on the field. The only exception to this would be if the area affected was small (less than 2m²), in a low usage/wear area and the rest of the ground is firm, and no other issues such as ground softness and poor grass cover are evident. Surface water means that the ground has reached saturation point and will be damaged very quickly if played on.
- **Ground Softness:** Competition and training must be cancelled if there is any sinking into the field when walking on it and this does not bounce back or if when standing still/walking water rises up to the surface. The only exception to this would be if the only area affected was small (less than 2m²), in a low usage/wear area and the rest of the field was firm and

poor grass cover is not an additional issue. Water rising to the surface when walking on it means that the ground has reached saturation point and will be damaged very quickly if played on.

- **Amount of Rainfall:** Rainfall leading into competition and training should be used to guide decisions. If it has rained heavily or consistently leading up to training and/or competition this should aid the decision to be made.
- **Soil profile and Drainage:** Some fields naturally drain better than others; this has to do with the soil profile below the surface. Sand based fields drain quicker and more effectively than those on natural ground.
- **Grass cover:** During the winter season grass cover can often get below 60% or 70% and be fine for play during dry weather. However, during wet weather if overall grass cover is below 70% then this ground is likely to wear more substantially under wet weather training and competition than grounds with more grass cover. If a decision is made to play or train on wet ground with low grass cover, then this may cause irreparable damage to your field.
- **Amount and type of activity:** If a club is about to have a full day of competition, this is going to have a considerable effect on the ground during wet weather. Grounds can be damaged very quickly over 1 or 2 weekends with heavy use and wet weather. Also, juniors and seniors impact the ground differently and clubs need to understand the impact that different groups have on the grounds.
- Junior games should be given priority over senior games for the long-term benefit of the sport when it comes to making decisions about cancelling certain games. The dual benefit of this priority is that junior games can take place with less damage to the grounds (comparing 1 junior game to 1 senior game) and these members are the long-term future of your club.

However, if the ground is just playable and there is a significant amount of games to be played which will cause the ground to deteriorate as the day goes on, then consideration should be given to cancelling some minor games (such as over age competition or lower division games) so that premier games can be played if this is the clubs priority.

Forecast as per Bureau of Meteorology: Consideration will be given to the forecast of rain for the next day via the Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) website, i.e. the percentage of rainfall predicted.

Considerations

The main issues need to be considered for ground closures due to wet weather:

- **Player Safety** - while it is often considered that hard ground is the main concern in relation to player safety, slippery and heavy turf is also the cause of player injury. If grass dislodges easily players can find it hard to maintain footing and more unusual injuries can occur due to irregular movement and responses to the conditions. Another safety issue is dirty water in puddles. Stagnant water sitting in muddy puddles can carry bacteria that can cause illness. Council, Associations and Clubs have a duty of care and WH&S obligations to their players and must ensure the safety of players as their first priority.
- **Substantial damage to field** - clubs need to ensure their grounds are not damaged for one day's play which could see their ground taken out of action for maintenance for a number of weeks. Clubs should attempt to assess what competition games will have on the field. Erring on the side of caution is advisable.
- **Recovery/Repair** – particularly in the winter season when temperatures are cold and high impact sports are utilising the sportsgrounds, it is difficult for grass to recover/repair. Therefore,

if sports damage the grass it may not repair. Grass enjoys summer conditions (warm temperatures), water to revitalise, repair and grow which the winter season cannot provide.

Other users – it must not be forgotten that winter sports clubs and associations are not the only users of Council sports fields. Schools also use sporting grounds generally mid-week, as do local residents and various events. If grounds are substantially damaged by winter sporting groups other potential users could miss out on using the fields due to closures for repairs.

Emergency Evacuation Procedure

Before an emergency

All occupants should make themselves familiar with the Emergency Evacuation Procedures for their section of the building, location of Fire exits, location and operation of Firefighting equipment and all designated Assembly areas.

In case of a Fire and Emergency

If you discover a Fire or Emergency you should:-

- Sound the Fire alarm or Raise the alarm verbally;
- Notify the Emergency services from the nearest phone and advise Council on 63782850;
- Relay details of location, type and scale of the emergency and name and location of caller;
- Alert other personnel in the vicinity;
- If it is safe to do so, use appropriate fire extinguisher to put out any fire (DO NOT attempt if the fire is too large or if you are not familiar with use of the equipment).

If you hear an alarm raised in relation to Fire or are requested by the Ground Manager or Ground Announcer to Evacuate the building you should:-

- Walk quietly but quickly to the nearest safe exit and proceed to the assembly point outside the building as designated by the Ground Manager and await further instructions;
- Listen and follow instructions from the Ground Manager;
- In order to prevent injury and possible panic during evacuation;
- Do not run, push or overtake;
- Use any stairs if applicable with caution;
- Do not re-enter the building until the “All clear” is given by the Ground Manager or Emergency Services Personnel.