

Appendix 9

Open Space Action Plan

Open Space Action Plan



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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Penrith City Council currently manages 1,206 hectares of open space. This includes –

- ~ 328 hectares of parks
- ~ 375 hectares of sporting fields
- ~ 199 hectares of community land for drainage and community uses
- ~ 153 hectares of natural areas, and
- ~ 151 hectares of land where Council has care, control and management

There are a total of 540 separate parks and reserves throughout the City and 141 of these parks contain playgrounds.

The PLANS (People's Lifestyle Aspirations and Needs Study) research identified the need to improve the quality of the City's open space and facilities. This requires a focus on –

- ~ quality (rather than just on the quantity) through larger open space areas that provide a range of experiences for different age groups and interests, and
- ~ incorporating the principles of social inclusion and universal (accessible and inclusive) design into the planning and design of open space areas, to better reflect and meet the needs and abilities of the City's communities.

While the City's population in general is ageing, there are also substantial numbers of younger families with children, particularly within the newer urban areas of the City. Quality passive recreation spaces are needed to meet the needs of the City's diverse communities, and also recognise the increasing accessibility needs of our ageing population.

The PLANS research indicated a current and future growth in the demand for quality passive recreational facilities and opportunities, including improvements to our natural areas, waterways, parks and playgrounds. Active open space is also needed, however, to encourage health through physical activity and to cater for the growth in identified sports.

Improving the quality of the City's open space areas and facilities will involve a review of smaller open space areas, particularly where there are a variety and choice of existing parks and open space to meet local community needs. Any subsequent savings will be directed to enhancing the quality of open space and facilities in the Parks Network. Improvements will also include the removal of older playground equipment that does not comply with current Australian standards.

The Open Space Action Plan has been developed in response to the research undertaken through the PLAN Study, and the adopted Recreation and Cultural Facilities Strategy. It specifies the works that are required to enhance the quality of the City's open space areas, sportsgrounds, and facilities.

With regards to infill development and the development contribution, the intention is to embellish existing local open space rather than acquiring additional local open space in order to cater for the increased demand. This represents a logical approach by Council by making the existing facilities work harder and a cost effective option for developers who do not incur costs to acquire local open space.

2. 'PLANS' RESEARCH AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The PLANS (People's Lifestyle Aspirations and Needs Study) aspirational research indicated clear community priorities regarding the relative importance of improvements to recreational facilities. The following table shows the top five priorities for improvement to the City's recreation facilities –

1.	Nature reserves and waterways	49%
2.	Playgrounds	43%
3.	Parks	43%
4.	Walking and cycle paths	41%
5.	Aquatic Centres / Pools	30%

The PLANS Recreation and Cultural Facilities Strategy recommends the development of high quality, multi-purpose recreational precincts that provide a range of active and passive recreational activities within popular, accessible and centralised areas of the City.

Demographic trends indicate an ageing population, both in Penrith and Australia wide. The PLANS Aspirational Research also indicated significant (and growing) community participation in informal passive recreation activities (such as walking, picnics, and socialising with friends). It is important to plan for the existing and predicted recreation and leisure needs of the community, by providing access to quality passive open space areas and facilities.

National physical activity guidelines for adult Australians¹ recommend thirty minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity on most or all days and some vigorous exercise for extra health and fitness. Sixty minutes or more of moderate to vigorous activity is recommended for children every day. For various reasons, the majority of adults and some children do not achieve these recommended levels of healthy exercise. There are social, physical and mental, environmental and economic benefits of participating in regular healthy exercise and maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Penrith City Council supports the development of a healthy and sustainable environment and a healthy and sustainable lifestyle for residents and visitors by planning for more inclusive environments and promoting access to a wide range of active and passive recreation pursuits for all people with diverse abilities.

The PLANS Report identified a shortage of quality active open space provision (sports fields), particularly in the more recently developed urban areas. Local access to outdoor sports facilities (specifically the growth sports, such as soccer and rugby) is an immediate need that must be addressed. Additional indoor recreation, cultural and sporting space is recommended with the co-location of sports and improvements to Council's existing swimming pools in order to make them more efficient and work harder to meet additional needs.

The adopted Recreation and Cultural Facilities Strategy, developed from the PLAN Study, makes recommendations regarding the provision, embellishment and management of the City's open space, sports grounds and facilities, and services and programs. The following Objectives and Strategies (drawn from the Recreation and Cultural Facilities Strategy) underpin the Open Space Action Plan.

¹ National Physical Activity Guidelines (2005) Department of Health and Ageing

- ❖ ***Objective 1 - Maximise use of existing cultural and recreation facilities***
 - ~ Provide high quality recreational open space for all members of the Penrith community (general, active and passive)
 - ~ Improve access to existing recreation and cultural facilities
 - ~ Encourage water-based recreation activities within the Penrith LGA
 - ~ Establish equitable, affordable fees and charges for recreational, cultural and community facilities
 - ~ Promote available recreation and cultural facilities and activities to all segments of the community
- ❖ ***Objective 2 - Rationalise recreation and cultural resources in the Penrith Local Government Area***
 - ~ Develop an integrated community facility network
 - ~ Provide quality open space areas
- ❖ ***Objective 3 - Provide new recreation and cultural facilities that are undersupplied in the Penrith Local Government Area***
 - ~ Establish and consolidate an appropriate number of district recreation precincts in the Penrith Local Government Area
 - ~ Progressively build upon the existing network of local/regional walking/cycling paths
 - ~ Undertake a detailed feasibility study of options for the enhancement of Council's aquatic facilities
 - ~ Provide outdoor entertainment spaces for community events, festivals, performances
 - ~ Provide adequate indoor recreation, cultural and sporting facilities within Penrith LGA
 - ~ Encourage water-based sports to operate within the Penrith LGA
 - ~ Provide quality sporting fields for growing sports, based on demonstrated need and growing membership numbers
 - ~ Provide appropriate recreation and cultural facilities for children and families
 - ~ Provide appropriate recreation and cultural facilities for young people
- ❖ ***Objective 4 - Encourage Community Involvement in Facility and Service Provision***
 - ~ Establish clear guidelines for sporting and recreation groups regarding their responsibilities in relation to facility development and management
 - ~ Ensure all stakeholders have regular opportunities to assist Council to plan, manage and develop cultural and recreation facilities / services
 - ~ Ensure sports and recreation clubs remain viable and responsibly manage respective facilities
- ❖ ***Objective 5 - Facilitate Diverse Recreational & Cultural Program Development***
 - ~ Provide resources to co-ordinate and facilitate recreation and cultural activities to meet community needs
 - ~ Ensure that Council managed community, sport and recreation facilities offer a variety of relevant recreational and cultural activities and services
 - ~ Provide appropriate recreation and cultural facilities for the wide range of cultures within Penrith
 - ~ Facilitate participation in arts and cultural activities by community artists
 - ~ Encourage the programming of recreation and cultural activities that support and assist the tourism objectives of Council
 - ~ Encourage sports development activities
- ❖ ***Objective 6 - Provide Effective and Sustainable Management, Support and Resources***
 - ~ Strengthen the relationship between Council and sporting clubs in the area
 - ~ Maximise external funding opportunities to assist in the future provision of sport, recreation and cultural resources
 - ~ Investigate opportunities to equitably share access to Council and school sporting fields and recreation facilities
 - ~ Enhance the information gathered by Council regarding recreation and cultural usage, satisfaction and demand
 - ~ Encourage the development of recreation and cultural groups in the Penrith LGA
 - ~ Promote the wide range of recreation and cultural activities to the community, including community groups

3. SOCIAL INCLUSION AND UNIVERSAL DESIGN IN OPEN SPACE PLANNING

*"Universal Design is the design of products and environments to be useable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialised design. It is a design philosophy that recognises, respects, values and attempts to accommodate the broadest possible spectrum of human ability in the design of all products, environments and information systems."*¹ It requires sensitivity to, and awareness of, people of all ages and abilities.

Sometimes referred to as 'lifespan design' or 'trans-generational design' universal design encompasses - and goes beyond - the accessible, adaptable and barrier-free design concepts of the past. It helps eliminate the need for special features and spaces which, for some people, can be stigmatising and different looking, and are often more expensive. Universal design represents a more sustainable and cost effective approach to planning outdoor and urban environments for all people with diverse abilities and as our abilities change over time.

Social inclusion is a philosophy that emphasises the need to accommodate and value people regardless of race, religion, ability, culture or gender within social structures and community functions.

Analysis of the 1998 ABS Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers (SDAC) data indicated that 3.6 million people had a disability, or 19.3 per cent of the population. A disability is defined by the ABS as an impairment, restriction or limitation that has lasted for at least six months.

The SDAC also indicated that 296,000 children were listed as having a disability, which represents 1 in 12 children less than 14 years of age. It is clearly important to promote socially inclusive play experiences for all children in designing and developing the City's play areas.

Currently about 12% of the Australian population are over 65 years, and demographic analysis indicates that by 2031, 22% of the population will be over 65.² Over the last 5 years, the City's population increased by 36.3% in the 50 - 59 age group, by 26.3% in the 60-64 age group, and by 39.4% in the 75+ age group.

As the City's population grows older, there will be more people with mobility difficulties and disabling conditions, and the need for accessible services and facilities will increase. 'Inclusive' planning and design is more sustainable, and reduces the need for potential retrofitting costs.

Earlier approaches to open space and facilities planning involved designing 'for the majority' and adding adaptations and modifications to include a few more people. Universal design advocates argue that the entire spectrum of human ability should be considered in developing any design, to reach a more inclusive solution. This approach aims to avoid design responses that separate one user group from another.

¹ The Centre for Universal Design, NC State University, USA 1997

² Our Ageing Population, Australian Social Trends 1999, Australian Bureau of Statistics

4. PENRITH CITY OPEN SPACE NETWORK

The Open Space Network is based on criteria relating to size, catchment area, and primary function / use. The definitions for the City's Open Space Network were developed using the AUS-SPEC #6A Guidelines, and are outlined below.³

4.1 District Park

A District Park is greater than 5 hectares. It provides a wide range of recreational experiences for individuals, groups, families and communities. It will also provide experiences and facilities for the City's visitors.

A District Park is accessible by public transport, and typically includes car parking, and toilet and change room facilities that may be associated with formal active sports facilities. District Parks will provide visitor facilities, such as BBQs and picnic furniture, lighting, attractive landscaped areas, shade structures where natural shade is not available, and universally designed playground systems (in prioritised locations in the City). Recreation areas and facilities that cater for a range of age groups will also be available, such as pedestrian and cycleway systems, and informal areas for sports and recreation.

4.2 Neighbourhood Park

A Neighbourhood Park will be up to 5 hectares in area, and typically serves a 'cluster' of suburbs. The Neighbourhood Park will generally be accessible to bus routes, include some (limited) parking areas, and have lighting, attractive landscaped areas, pedestrian and cycleways, playground structures, standard toilet facilities, natural shade, and picnic and visitor facilities. A Neighbourhood Park could include a sports field suitable for childrens' training and competition activities, and other formal or informal (non-competitive) recreation areas.

4.3 Local Park

A Local Park will be from 0.5 to 3 hectares in area, and primarily serves a suburb, or an area up to 2km in radius. The Local Park will typically have on street parking, landscaping, natural shade, park benches and seating, and a playground area (no toilet facilities).

4.4 Pocket Park

A Pocket Park will be between 0.25 and 1 hectare in area, and caters for the local area. It will be within a 5 minute walk from most households (500m – 600m radius). The Pocket Park will typically include natural surface and shade areas, sometimes seating, informal play and passive recreation areas, and may have some play equipment.

4.5 Linear Park / Drainage Reserves

The City's linear open space primarily serves a drainage function, but also provides for pathway and cycleway access. These reserves generally have grassed surface areas that form detention basins. They may have basic exercise equipment but do not generally have formal recreation structures.

Linear Parks and Drainage Reserves provide residents from the local area with opportunities for informal and passive play / recreation. They may be used by

³ Note - Other open space areas, that are not Council's direct responsibility (including National Parks, Regional Parks, Nature Reserves) have not been included in this network.

people from beyond the immediate area where a pathway and cycleway access is part of a broader network.

4.6 Natural Areas (Council owned)

Natural Areas are significant for their biodiversity, and sometimes also their landscape values. The Natural Areas may include, in certain areas, passive recreation infrastructure and facilities including pathways, basic picnic facilities (seating and shelters) and playgrounds.

The Natural Areas have been identified on their biodiversity values, and have no size criteria. The focus for these sites is on enhancing their biodiversity significance, protecting the environment, and encouraging community appreciation and awareness.

5. OPEN SPACE REQUIREMENTS IN NEW RELEASE AREAS

Community aspirations regarding access to quality open space areas is documented in the PLANS Report as an identified priority for the community, in order to maintain the healthy outdoor lifestyle and quality of life experiences within the Penrith City. Historically, the standard of 2.83 hectares / 1,000 people has been used in NSW as a planning guide (Department of Planning) and comprises of both 'active' and 'passive' open space areas.

Council currently manages 1,206 hectares of open space. Based on June 2004 Census population data of 177,554, this equates to 6.8 hectares / 1,000 people. This overall calculation includes land that is classified as parks, sporting fields, community use, drainage, natural areas and open space where Council has care, control and management. To adequately serve the specific active and passive open space needs of the City's future populations, however, it is important to apply qualitative or needs based standards in conjunction with quantitative standards.

Active Areas

The City's 'classified' sportsgrounds currently covers 374.46 hectares, which equates to 2.11 hectares / 1,000 people for active open space. The PLANS Report identified a standard for active open space (sporting fields) provision within the range of 1.21 – 1.8 ha / 1,000 people, and highlighted that the provision of active open space in the City's more recently developed urban areas was considered inadequate.

The total of local active open space within the Penrith City (ie once the district active open space land is subtracted) equates to an estimated 248.415 hectares or 1.4 hectares / 1,000 population (based on 2004 Census data). Considering the recommendations in the PLANS Report for less constrained and a higher quality active open space, it is recommended that a minimum of 1.4 hectares of quality (less constrained) local active open space per 1,000 additional population should be provided within all new developments in order to sustain the existing local open space provision levels. This is within the recommended standard range and requires high quality embellishment of less constrained land as detailed in this Action Plan.

Given that the highest users of local active open space are children and youth for local sports training, if the projected population for a release area indicates a higher than average proportion of young families with children compared to the LGA average, then the area planned for active open space should be increased proportionally, in order to meet the projected higher demands for that active open space. This broad calculation, however, needs to be considered in the context of the specific interests and needs of the City's communities.

Passive Areas

The City's Council-owned parks currently cover 328.83 hectares, which equates to 1.85 hectares / 1,000 people for passive open space. This does not include other Council managed areas that are classified as natural areas or for community uses, nor does it include land required for drainage or designated biodiversity corridors.

The total of local passive open space (once the district passive open space is subtracted) equates to an estimated 291.53 hectares or 1.64 hectares / 1,000 population (based on 2004 Census data).

If there are passive recreation facilities (ie path or shared path) incorporated into the design of these drainage or biodiversity corridors, it is reasonable that the area used by the pathway be included in the passive open space contribution. It is recommended that passive open space areas ('parks') for new developments should be provided at a minimum of 1.64 hectares / 1,000 additional population.

Total Current Provision

The total current provision of local level sportsgrounds and parks is estimated at 3.04 hectares per 1,000 population. The total estimated current local active and passive open space within the Penrith City is 539.945 hectares.

Advice from Council's Property Development Department regarding the current value of local open space across the City (assuming a range of constrained to unconstrained land), is approximately \$2,000,000 per hectare. Therefore, the value of current local open space is estimated at \$1,079,890,000. For the 2004 Penrith City population, this equates to an estimated existing contribution of \$6,082,037 per 1,000 population or \$6,082 per person for local open space (*land value only and does not include facilities and improvements).

The existing population have provided approximately 218.23 hectares of land that has been classified as district open space and district facilities. For a population of 177,554 (June 2004 ABS) this equates to 1.23 hectares of district open space per 1,000 people. Council's approach is to predominantly embellish existing district open space to make these facilities work harder, in order to cope with the additional demands created by the estimated additional population. This approach will allow for a more efficient use of existing land and is also a more cost effective option for developers, compared with requiring the existing district open space land ratio to be maintained, calculated at current land values.

The PLANS Study identified the need to develop quality open space areas that meets the needs of the City's growing population. Council's requirements for new areas is based on its strategic research and planning, focussing on the anticipated needs of the new communities, and the type, proximity and capacity of existing sporting and active recreation facilities.

Requirements for New Release Areas

Quality and less constrained local active open space in new release areas shall be provided at a minimum of 1.4 hectares per 1,000 additional population. If there is an estimated higher than average demands for active open space (ie number of young families with children in a new release area with a corresponding higher than average needs for active open space), then the requirement for active open space will also increase proportionally.

To ensure that future generations enjoy access to quality open space, rather than focussing only on quantity, new urban developments are to be provided with a minimum of 3.04 hectares of local open space / 1,000 people (1.4 ha active open space + 1.64 ha of passive parkland / 1,000 population). This standard will maintain existing local open space provision levels and is consistent with the recommended standard in the adopted PLANS Report and the NSW Department of Planning guidelines for local open space provision. This does not include the requirements for open space that serves a drainage function, biodiversity