



DISCUSSION PAPER - INVESTMENT INTO SPORT AND RECREATION IN THE MID WEST

PURPOSE

Sport and recreation is fundamental to Australia's way of life and underpins many aspects of community and economic wellbeing, especially in regional areas. However, in real terms, government financial support into sport and recreation organisations in regional WA has declined.

In the Mid West, sport and recreation faces enormous urgent challenges and demands, as well as offering considerable opportunities for regional growth. Without sufficient resources these needs cannot be met and the potential will go unrealised. With many thousands of Mid West residents participating in sport weekly, the Mid West Sports Federation (MWSF) argues that this situation cannot be accepted and seeks to drive key interventions on behalf of the sector.

This discussion paper is to guide dialogue with key stakeholders to secure increased financial commitment for priority initiatives to drive Mid West sport and recreation.

MWSF PRINCIPLES

1. MWSF is the peak member based organisation representing sport and recreation organisations in the Mid-West.
2. Sport and recreation provides essential economic and social benefits to all Mid West communities.
3. Especially in regional areas, strong sport and recreation requires strong local leadership and governance with consistent and proper investment and support from government. This in turn leverages further investment.
4. MWSF encourages active community and stakeholder engagement by State and Local government in the development of policy to investment decisions.
5. MWSF supports sport and recreation activities that demonstrate whole of community benefits.
6. MWSF advocates for an equitable and transparent distribution of resources for sport and recreation infrastructure and services.
7. Strategic future planning and maximising the beneficiaries of infrastructure and government investment is sound practice that should be supported.
8. MWSF is in alignment with the Strategic Directions for the WA Sport and Recreation Industry 2016-2020 (SD6), references are made to this discussion document via the initialism "SD"



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KEY ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

1. Sustainability of the peak sporting organisations, including MWSF

- Very limited funding (current pool \$110,000) is available to Regional Sport Associations (RSA's) in the Mid West through the Department of Sport and Recreation's Regional Organisation Sustainability Program (R-OSP). In real terms, the R-OSP funding pool has been stagnant for around 20yrs. Only ten Mid-West RSAs receive R-OSP (max \$20,000), which is very Geraldton focussed and delivers limited regional impact. MWSF is ineligible for R-OSP. Ref(SD6-07)
- The State's Community Sporting and Recreation Facilities Fund (CSRFF) have only ~\$12 million available across the State, which is inadequate to underpin key infrastructure projects costed in the tens of millions. Ref(SD6-08)

2. Subregional infrastructure plans are needed to prioritise and deliver investment

- Commitment is needed to deliver the highest agreed priorities from completed strategic infrastructure planning.
- Once the envy of other regions, sporting facilities in the Mid West are now in a serious state of decline, with substantial planning, upgrades and new developments required. Ref(SD6-08)
- Population growth has left many sporting facilities 'bursting at the seams' with some sports turning hundreds of children away. Those able to play are often unable to train due to facility constraints. Ref(SD6-08)
- Traffic congestion around Geraldton's peak sporting precinct in Eighth Street presents serious safety risks to hundreds of children and families each week. Ref(SD6-08)
- Extensive strategic facility planning has been undertaken in Geraldton but there are insufficient resources available to realise the key infrastructure priorities. Local government funding leverage is also a significant barrier. Ref(SD6-08)

3. Human resources - capacity building program

- Apart from R-OSP there is only very limited and occasional support for Mid West sporting organisers, Board members, leaders and volunteers. Volunteer ageing and burnout are common. Ref(SD6-13)
- Sports tourism is an area of focus for MWSF to realise economic gains for sports and the regional economy generally, but there is limited government support available to drive this or target key regional events. Ref(SD6-07)



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FUTURE STATE → HOW DO WE GET THERE?

- **Revitalising our human capacity and the sustainability** of the peak sporting organisations, including MWSF, is essential to ensure delivery of quality sport and recreation outcomes and deliver regional priorities.
- Subregional infrastructure plans are needed to **prioritise investment** in the Batavia Coast, Murchison and North Midlands subregions, with a focus on strategic infrastructure that benefits multiple user groups.
- **Commitment** is needed to deliver the highest agreed priorities from completed strategic infrastructure planning. The Southern Districts Sporting Complex (Wandina) is the highest undelivered priority in the Greater Geraldton Sporting Futures Plan, has land committed and notional planning undertaken. This would alleviate pressures on several major sports in Geraldton and support urban growth in Geraldton key growth suburbs, but there are minimal financial resources available to realise it. Notwithstanding other sporting facility demands, this should be delivered as a key priority.
- MWSF has initiated a successful Board governance program but needed to seek external funding for delivery. An **annual capacity building** program of varied strategies to assist Boards, leaders and volunteers needs to be assured.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. MWSF is recurrently funded as the peak industry body for sport and recreation in the Mid West to drive regional priorities on behalf of the State government. **\$50,000 (annually)**
2. A regional sport and recreation plan is funded to confirm strategic priorities across the Mid West. **\$25,000**
3. MWSF is allocated **\$50,000** to complete its regional sports tourism research and pursue three iconic events.
4. MWSF is recurrently funded to deliver governance (\$25,000), leadership (\$25,000) and volunteer support and training (\$50,000) programs across the region. **\$100,000 (annually)**
5. Subregional sport and recreation facility plans are developed for the three Mid West subregions to confirm strategic infrastructure priorities with a focus on shared use and avoiding duplication. **\$250,000**



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6. Detailed planning is undertaken for the Southern Districts Sporting Complex / or Multifunctional Indoor Sports facility (Basketball) to alleviate urgent capacity constraints in a number of key sports and support urban growth in Geraldton.
\$250,000
7. Commitment is made to deliver the Southern Districts Sporting Complex before 2020. **Notional \$20 million**
8. A Mid West sporting infrastructure funding package is developed to deliver other key strategic priorities of the three subregional sporting facilities plans.

Total recommended investment into Mid West Sport and Recreation 2016-2020
\$21,175 million, including a notional \$20 million towards the Southern Districts Sporting Complex.



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KEY TALKING POINTS

- If we rely on traditional processes and funding streams the Mid West will not be able to deliver its agreed sport and recreation infrastructure and social capital priorities in the short, medium or long term.
 - The best way to drive sustainable regional change is to invest in community and not just fund outcomes through existing government mechanisms.
 - The Mid West boasts an excellent model for sport and recreation management which includes the Mid West Sports Federation, Mid West Academy of Sport and ATLAS. This system should be properly invested in and embraced.
 - Mid West infrastructure is ageing and out of date. Once the envy of regional WA our facilities are in a state of decline and are unsuitable for premier events. A recent upgrade to lighting at Wonthella Oval to national standard has seen premium events like JJJ and AFL become attractive. We need to have this focus for basketball, netball and aquatic facilities.
 - Hundreds of kids are missing out on regular training for sports as facilities are at maximum capacity.
 - Eighth Street precinct is congested and presents considerable safety risks.
 - Karratha (population 26,000) and Onslow (pop 600) have far better facilities than Geraldton (48,000) and the Mid West (pop 58,000).
 - Mid West natural environments are underutilised. Ocean, rivers, bushland, cliff and gorges which lend themselves to a range of outdoor activities are not being utilised.
 - Volunteers across all sports are aging and suffering burnout. We need to revitalise our Clubs, Associations and volunteers through building capacity in governance.
 - The Mid West Regional Blueprint has a highly desirable community focus. If we are to create an active region with community sport and recreation facilities comparable to Perth, we must invest in PEOPLE and empower them to manage change, drive leadership, collaboration, engagement and action.
- \$1,175 million over four years and a \$20 million commitment to facilities will revitalise the Mid West sport and recreation community and ensure sustainable community change and benefit.