

Friday 24 July 2015

## UNUSUALLY HIGH WINTER RAINFALL DISRUPTS FOOTBALL SEASON

Over 11,000 men, women and children take to 57 playing fields across the City Ryde for the weekend Winter Sports Season running from April to August.

However, the 2015 Season has experienced unusual weather patterns, with heavy rainfall occurring in the lead up to several weekends causing ground closures across Ryde and most of the metropolitan area.

City of Ryde Mayor, Bill Pickering, said the decision to close grounds is not solely taken by the Council. "Only after inspection by Council staff and with the agreement of the various sporting associations is the decision made. Because this decision impacts on so many players, Council notifies the community of the grounds status on the Friday afternoon, which gives the clubs time to advise their members of the changes.

"We have a very robust relationship with the associations and this process has been fine-tuned over time. We continue to improve the process by introducing a trial whereby the clubs can make the call to play on Sundays should the conditions improve and the grounds become safe for players and the grounds will not be badly damaged.

Factors such as ground softness, rainfall and forecast, type of soil, grass cover, and the amount and type of activity are all taken into account before a final decision is made.

The Mayor added: "The Council has a duty of care towards player safety and also a responsibility towards ratepayers that we don't waste money on extensive repairs to football fields because we allowed play to occur on grounds that were waterlogged and not suitable for play.

"Ryde is not the only Council affected by this season's weather. Most other Sydney metropolitan Councils are in the same position and have responded in a similar manner."

Following a meeting between City of Ryde Council and local sporting associations this week regarding the remainder of the winter football season, the associations were given the option to extend their season as a result of the ground closures through the winter. Only the North Western Sydney Womens' Football Association elected to extend for one week.

### Rainfall 2015 Winter Football Season

25 & 26 April	200mm+ in the week prior. Hornsby and surrounding Council grounds closed
2 & 3 May	35mm in the 48 hrs prior to Saturday 9am. 50+mm rain on the Saturday Ryde grounds closed. Hornsby grounds closed. Surrounding Councils grounds closed.
23 & 24* May	38mm in the 48hrs prior to Saturday 9am. Ryde partial ground closure. Hornsby Shire and surrounding Councils partial ground closure
20 & 21* June	45mm in the 48hrs prior to Saturday 9am. Ryde partial ground closure. All surrounding Councils ground closed other than Hornsby Shire
18 & 19* July	25mm in the 24hrs prior to Saturday 9am. All surrounding Council grounds closed other than Hornsby Shire.

*\*Highlighted Sunday dates left to the discretion of clubs and associations on the suitability of ground conditions for competition games.*

The Mayor continued: “More than \$800,000 has been allocated in the 2015/16 budget for renewal and upgrade works at Bremner Park, Eastwood Upper Oval, Peel Park, Meadowbank Park and Marsfield Park. These works include irrigation, returfing, releveling and drainage works.

“Last financial year over \$650,000 was spent on similar upgrades across Ryde Parks including Meadowbank and Morrison Bay Park.”

This rolling program of surface upgrades ensures the ongoing provision of effective and sustainable playing surfaces within the City of Ryde.

### **Synthetic Turf**

Council has recognised the benefits of synthetic turf as part of the mix of providing sustainable facilities for community sport at various levels.

City of Ryde has resolved to install a synthetic turf field at ELS Hall Park in 2015/16 (one of the three major sporting precincts in City of Ryde – others are Meadowbank and Morrison Bay). Council is also currently in discussion with key stakeholders for the potential installation of synthetic turf at Christie Park.

With 57 local sports fields, Council has to consider the high cost of installing synthetic turf on an average football field of more than \$1.5 million, plus ongoing maintenance. A Synthetic Turf Action Plan is currently being developed which will have input from a range of stakeholders.

The sustainable management of both turf fields and synthetic turf will always be necessary to cater for the increasing demand for community sport facilities created by greater participation numbers in organised sports. .

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