



Report: “Allocation and Use of Sporting Facilities, Grounds and Pavilions Policy” - Review

Prepared by



For



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Introduction

Since 2009, Merri-bek Council (formerly Moreland) has used its “Allocation and Use of Sporting Facilities, Grounds and Pavilions Policy” to encourage sporting clubs within the municipality to develop good governance, community connections, and gender inclusivity. Merri-bek Council is undergoing a review of its allocations policy as requested by Council at the Ordinary Council Meeting (OCM) in March 2022. As part of this review an extensive community engagement strategy needed to be designed and executed.

The community engagement aimed to help Council not only review its policy but determine a value base that sits behind and informs the policy and Council’s ongoing work in club development, in line with the Victorian Government’s ‘Fair Access Policy Roadmap.’ An oft-used phrase throughout the engagement sums up the intent of the policy and the values to be determined.

To encourage clubs to continue to create an open, welcoming and inclusive culture, whilst enabling Council to be a good steward of its resources.

For this to be achieved there was a need for an extensive community engagement strategy. Key stakeholders including State Sporting Associations (SSAs), internal staff with responsibility for priority population groups, club leadership, club membership, and the general public were involved in various activities. These included being invited to comment online (via the Conversations Merri-bek page), surveys, and workshops exploring values and dissecting the policy. This report is a synthesis of the findings from these activities and recommendations for both the policy, the values sitting behind it, and the club development activities to be engaged in by the sport and recreation team at Merri-bek Council.

Report Summary

1. Create a clear role delineation between club liaison and club development work and where possible have different officers assigned to the different roles.
2. Create an internal facing document that helps Sport and Recreation team members understand and use the policy to help clubs flourish. This could include notes on attitude to clubs, remembering that clubs run on volunteers, as well as how to negotiate with clubs on particular aspects of the policy.
3. The Sport and Recreation team to provide an online hub of services and activities as well as other available resources. Services could be offered online, in-person, or a mix and include written templates and guides. Clubs are looking for support in
 - Culture change
 - Strategic planning
 - Inclusion
 - Templates that enable clubs to easily report on aspects of the policy
 - Providing an active welcome
 - Networking with the broader community
 - Creating development opportunities in collaboration with SSAs
 - Governance
 - Management
 - Promotion
 - Mentoring and general support
4. Creating a dialogue with clubs around infrastructure and facilities, helping clubs understand what they can do themselves to improve their grounds, what is Council's responsibility, and how funding allocation for capital works happens.
5. Creating a repository of good news stories of clubs that are working well with diverse communities. The stories could include written and recorded interviews with club members on what is working well and how they achieved these results.
6. Celebration of local clubs. There was a strong desire to see clubs' work in the community recognised. Council could hold some kind of celebration night that affirmed this contribution.

Overall, the amendments to the existing policy and associate path for the Sports and Recreation team have the opportunity to shape and encourage a positive relationship between Council and clubs, a clear understanding of rights and responsibilities for clubs, as well as help clubs set a positive path towards thriving and flourishing.

Community Engagement Strategy

The following table outlines the strategy used by both Merri-bek Council and CBBC to connect with the relevant stakeholders.

Stakeholder	Function	Interest	Influence	IAP2 Level	Method
State Sporting Associations	Competition authority / scheduler	High	Medium	Involve**	Distribute Council-prepared discussion paper Facilitated workshop
Sports clubs (exec)	Allocation holders / users	High	High	Involve	Distribute Council-prepared discussion paper Facilitated workshop One-on-ones as necessary
Sports clubs (members)	Ground users / competitors	High	High	Consult*	Value-based survey
General Public	Reserve users	Medium	Medium	Consult	Conversations Merri-bek Social media posts
Human Rights and Inclusion Advisory Committee	Council Committee	Medium	Medium	Consult	Invite Council convenor to a facilitated session to ascertain relevance to group
LGBTIQA+ Reference Group	Council Committee	Medium	Medium	Consult	Invite Council convenor to a facilitated session to ascertain relevance to group
First Nations Advisory Group	Council Committee	Medium	Medium	Consult	Invite Council convenor to a facilitated session to ascertain relevance to group
Disability Reference Group	Council Committee	Medium	Medium	Consult	Invite Council convenor to a facilitated session to ascertain relevance to group
Gender Equity reference Group	Council Committee	Medium	Medium	Consult	Invite Council convenor to a facilitated session to ascertain relevance to group

*Consult: To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives, and/or decisions.

**Involve: To work directly with the stakeholder throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.

The strategy involved four workshops (Merri-bek staff, SSAs, and 2 x club leadership), the Conversations Merri-bek page asking for community feedback, and one survey to club members.

Merri-bek staff who facilitate the Human Rights and Inclusion Advisory Committee, LGBTIQ+ Reference Group, First Nations Advisory Group, Disability Reference Group, and the Gender Equity Reference Group were invited to contribute on behalf of their cohorts. They were asked;

- Who do you represent?
- What is working well?
- What does a flourishing community look like?
- In what ways does your work interact with sport?
- Are there areas in the Sporting Grounds Allocation policy that if strengthened could help your cohort engage more with sport?

As a result of this conversation, it was determined that interaction with the specific groups was not timely or necessary.

The State Sporting Associations were invited to a separate workshop. Six out of 30 attended including Cricket Victoria, Essendon Districts Football League, Yarra Junior Football League, Softball Victoria, Victorian Turf Cricket and North West Metro Cricket. They were asked;

- What does a thriving and flourishing club look like to you? Your association?
- What does your association do to help clubs move in this direction?
- In your view, what is the role of Council's sport and rec team in helping clubs thrive and flourish?
- What needs to be in or removed from the allocations policy to help SSAs and Council support clubs? Enable Council to be a good steward of its resources?

The response from this workshop was very positive, with associations valuing the connection with each other and interaction around the policy.

The leadership of Merri-bek sporting clubs were invited to attend one of two workshops focusing on how the allocations policy can be used to help clubs flourish as well as enable Merri-bek Council to be a good steward of its resources. Across the two workshops, 58 people represented 36 clubs, out of 72 clubs in the City of Merri-bek.

- Brunswick Football Club
- Brunswick City Soccer Club
- Brunswick Hockey Club
- Brunswick Juventus FC
- Brunswick Mallet Sports Club
- Brunswick Ultimate Disc Society
- Brunswick West Tennis Club
- Coburg Cricket Club
- Coburg Cycling Club
- Coburg District Football Club
- Coburg Table Tennis Club
- East Coburg Cricket Club
- East Coburg Tennis Club
- Fawkner Netball Club
- Glencairn Tennis Club
- Haig Fawkner Cricket Club
- Pascoe Vale Hadfield Cricket Club
- Pascoe Vale United Cricket Club
- St Francis de Sales Cricket Club
- St. Francis Football Club
- Therry Penola AFC
- West Coburg Football Club
- West Coburg Cricket Club
- Brunswick Bowling Club
- Brunswick Junior Football Club
- Brunswick Lacrosse Club
- Coburg Tennis Club
- Fawkner Soccer Club
- Glenroy Football Club
- Glenroy Lions Football Club
- Hadfield Football Club
- Moomba Park Tennis Club
- Oak Park Football Club
- Pascoe Vale Football Club
- St Andrews Pascoe Vale Cricket Club
- West Coburg Netball Club

They were asked:

- What does a thriving and flourishing club look like to you? Your club?
- What values does your club need to live, in order to work successfully towards the picture of flourishing that we are creating?
- What role can the allocations policy have in helping your club live its values and move towards the picture of flourishing?
- (Referring to the existing allocations policy) What is it in this section of the allocations policy that helps you as a club live your values and move towards flourishing? What is it in this section of the policy that enables Council to be a good steward of the grounds?
- (Referring to the allocations policy) What should be in? What should be out?

The workshops run in conjunction with a light meal were generally well received and seen as a positive contribution to the life of sport in Merri-bek.

The engagement strategy recognised that club members don't readily have the opportunity to feed into these types of conversations. This issue was addressed through Conversations Merri-bek, an online forum used by Council for feedback on multiple community-focused initiatives. This forum also provided the broader community with an opportunity to input into the allocations policy. Council were responsible for the copy and publishing of this webpage. Contributors were asked to respond to a survey. In addition, an online survey specifically for club members was sent via email to club leaders for distribution to their membership.

The Conversations Merri-bek page included relevant PDF files 'Discussion Paper – Reviewing the Allocations and use of sporting facilities, grounds and pavilions'; 'Short Version of discussion paper'; and 'Merri-bek sport and active recreation strategy.'

The Conversations Merri-bek survey asked:

- What does it mean to be a thriving and flourishing club to you?

The policy was then separated into three categories: **Eligibility Criteria**; **Priority Criteria** (if two clubs want the same ground at the same time); **Incentive Criteria** (subsidies etc.). Each section had a five-star rating system for particular sub-criteria (1 = not valued, 5 = highly valued) and a free text prompt.

Eligibility or Mandatory Criteria

- Acknowledge, sign, and adhere to Guidelines for Preventing Violence Against Women: Taking action through community sport (in place 2025)
- Committee and/or board has diverse gender representation including up to or above 50% of members being women, girls, or gender diverse people (in place by 2025)
- Evidence of women, girls, or gender diverse persons elected to office bearer positions e.g. president, vice president, treasurer, or secretary (in place by 2025)
- Evidence of equal scheduling for all participants (in place by 2024)
- Participants in Good Sports program (in place by 2023)
- Acknowledge, sign, and adhere to Council's plastic wise policy (in place by 2023)
- Is a stepped approach to the proposed changes achievable for your club?
- Yes
- No
- Other (please specific
- (free text) tell us why or why not

- (free text) do you have any further comments or feedback regarding the proposed 'mandatory' Eligibility Criteria

Priority Criteria

Council policy that is considered to be of high importance and will be used to compare applications against each other if competing requests occur.

- Current and historical allocations and membership trends (i.e. increase/decrease in participation and demand)
- Percentage of membership that are Merri-bek residents
- Percentage of membership that are priority groups as defined by Council's Human Rights Policy (Aboriginal and Torres Straights Islander Communities, people with disability, LGBTIQ+ communities, migrant, refugee and faith communities, women, girls and gender diverse communities)
- History of cleanliness, maintenance, payment, and general adherence to Council terms and conditions
- Evidence of equitable and financially appropriate membership fees and charges
- Delivery of community partnerships and other initiatives (e.g. Pride Round, Pink Ribbon, charity etc.)
- Suitability of facility to support requested allocation
- Historical usage and length of tenure
- Evidence of capital investment (including in-kind) and completion of past capital works projects to the satisfaction of Council
- (free text) Do you have any further comments or feedback regarding the proposed Priority Changes?

Incentive Criteria

Actions and/or outcomes that are beyond core principles but still desirable and rewarded via fee subsidies or other incentives.

- History of club participation in external club development initiatives (e.g. Sport Integrity Australia's e-learning hub, VicSport education seminars, SSA Forums, Proud 2 Play and Pride in Sport training etc.)
- Evidence of completion of Sport Australia Director Education courses in the past 24 months (including The Start Line and The Defence). All courses are free and designed to support volunteer office bearers from local clubs
- Participation offerings provided for Masters/older adults
- Participation offerings provided for priority groups as defined by Council's Human Rights Policy

- Implementation of sustainability and waste management initiatives
- Implement and promote State Government Healthy Choices program and initiatives
- Which incentive criteria would you prefer to be a stepped approach (select all that apply)?
 - History of club participation in external club development initiatives
 - Evidence of completion of Sport Australia Director Education courses in the past 24 months
 - Participation offerings provided for Masters/older adults
 - Participation offerings provided for priority groups as defined by Council's Human Rights Policy
 - Implementation of sustainability and waste management initiatives
 - Implement and promote state government Healthy Choices program and initiatives
- (free text) If you were able to achieve the above items, what kind of incentives would your club appreciate?
- Do you have any further comments or feedback regarding the proposed Incentive Criteria changes?

The aim of the survey that went direct to club members was to explore what is important to them in the life of their club and how Council can support their club to further develop these traits. Whilst not directly referencing the allocations policy, it will be possible to correlate responses to the policy. The survey included the following questions:

- Describe what a thriving and flourishing club looks like to you.
- What values does your club hold that help create this picture of thriving and flourishing?
- In your club, what blockers are there to thriving and flourishing?
- In your view, how can Council help in the creation of a flourishing club?

Analysis

Each element of the community engagement strategy will be looked at separately providing a summary of the responses to the questions asked throughout that engagement activity, emerging themes and possible implications for the allocations policy, values and ongoing club development by the Sport and Recreation team.

Internal Staff Managing Priority Groups

As outlined above the relevant internal staff were invited into a workshop to gain a represented response to the allocations policy and determine whether the groups themselves needed to be engaged with. A summary of the workshop follows.

Who does your group represent?

Merri-bek has seven committees or groups as part of its Human Rights Strategy.

- Human Rights Advisory Committee: Comprised of residents who volunteer their time from diverse groups within the municipality as well as two service providers. This acts as an umbrella for all the groups.
- Gender Equality Reference Group: Represents residents from across the municipality of diverse ages, gender, and geography.
- Disability Reference Group: Consists of people with disabilities, plus a couple of carers. The group meets regularly to discuss all things related to disability access and inclusion. They also discuss issues that have been raised with Council for advocacy, projects, and review.
- Sport 4 All (external to Council): works closely with people with a disability, linking schools, clubs, and associations with training and resources.
- LGBTIQ+ Reference Group: Focus is to increase the resources allocated to inclusion, e.g. review of public toilets with an LGBTIQ+ lens.
- Environmental Health: A focus for this group is working with clubs to implement the Plastic Wise Policy.
- First Nations Advisory Committee: The focus of this group is to advise Council on issues relating to reconciliation. From this perspective, one of the committee members asked in terms of reparations, if there are schemes to redress dispossession. For example, waive/discount rates for Indigenous homeowners, free gym memberships, discounted facility hires, and special Blak-only swimming days (Kooriaqua aerobics).

What's working well?

The committees or groups are seen as an opportunity for capacity building, skills development, collaboration, advocacy, and for community members to show leadership. Successful initiatives have included: the Coburg Tennis Club linking with the NDIS after completing the Sports 4 All Training; the We're Game project with Merri-Health which has focused on culture-shaping through targeting gender violence in the community; the First Nations Advisory Committee attending the Human Rights group to explore collaboration as well as identify needs and resources; Council working with clubs to implement plastic wise strategies; and the development of the LGBTIQ+ reference group which has been a first for Merri-bek Council.

What does a flourishing community look like?

This question aims to set a benchmark or vision that communities including sporting clubs can aspire to. It is particularly relevant for the groups that Merri-bek Council has identified as a priority, enabling their voices to be heard as part of creating a shared community aspiration for the future.

Participants saw a flourishing community containing:

- More inclusion, acceptance, connection
- Equal access to sports and spaces
- No discrimination
- Increased safety for women and children
- Visible diversity
- Acceptance of all levels of skill
- The sharing of resources and the utilising of existing strengths
- Broken silos (more holistic)
- Active welcome, which is not based on clubs just meeting compliance
- Universal Design, inclusion of everyone in the decision-making process
- Person-centred approaches

This picture can be translated into sporting clubs as a microcosm of the broader community.

In what ways does your work interact with sport?

Each participant saw that the work with their priority group interacted with sport as the communities sought to be more integrated with the broader community and enjoy an active lifestyle.

One of the interesting trends that emerged from responses to this question was the desire for physical, social, emotional, and mental safety and that sporting clubs have not always provided this for members of Council's priority groups.

Group representatives had a wide response to this question:

- Recognition of good connection with schools and sporting clubs, whilst others see that clubs are quite disconnected from schools, especially in the wake of COVID19.
- For both disabled people and for parents, the perception of a club's welcome, inclusion, and safety is important.
- This concern for welcome is echoed by the LGBTIQ+ community who have not found clubs to be safe or welcoming.
- There was a perception that clubs stepping out of the traditional structures are more attractive as there aren't historic social constructs to break down.
- Facilities need to be inclusive of gender diversity, e.g. toilets. Clubs can tend to use a lack of accessible facilities as an excuse not to be diverse.
- Ablism is entrenched leading to people with a disability feeling disillusioned about accessing sporting facilities as aids, equipment, and support workers are often needed with clubs not having the resources to be more welcoming or inclusive. Tackling disability in this context is complex.
- Sport 4 All wants to help clubs move in a direction that is inclusive of people with a disability. They encourage clubs to make a start, build their knowledge on disability and that mistakes are ok, the need is to keep trying. They encourage clubs to become more aware of their unconscious bias and break down barriers and stereotypes and build an inclusive culture.
- The Human Rights Committee sees that money can act as a barrier to active involvement. Asylum seekers who want to swim may not be able to afford pool entry or lessons. There was a suggestion for free swimming lessons for asylum seekers and other dependent families.
- The spaces that staff create are also important - whether they leave a good impression, such as people engaging in respectful communication.
- A suggestion was made that the Human Rights groups could train staff and clubs to understand the resources around them to help with inclusion. This could help them commit to values that enabled equity in the lives of customers.
- It was seen there was a need for clubs to understand the modern culture of acceptance of people with CALD backgrounds and LGBTIQ+ communities.
- Public toilets need to reflect diversity and inclusivity as does the use of space, creating room for things like prayer rooms.

Are there areas in the policy that if strengthened could help your cohort engage more with sport?

Rather than dissecting the policy the group discussed it in broad terms, helping to build a values action base to support it.

- Clubs and locals connecting to promote inclusive values.
- Physical spaces for sporting facilities that are basic level accommodating for wheelchairs and then expand into other areas. It is Council's responsibility to ensure that buildings are compliant with the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA).
- Checklists for organisations provided by Sports 4 All.
- Feedback from club members about what they value and the culture they want for their club
- Surveys can help discover these things but are hard to get people to engage with. What are the incentives to help clubs encourage this participation?
- There is a history of some clubs being excluded in the past.
- Helping people engage with anti-racism training. This was offered in Fawkner, but people did not attend as they thought it was not an issue. Need to move past zero tolerance for racism to proactive approaches.
- Clubs need to have female coaches and representatives on governance committees. Could the section in the policy that talks about this representation for governance committees include coaches?
- Is there a way to incentivise clubs to sign up to capacity-building programs? E.g. Rainbow Ready Roadmap.
- Capacity building to help club cultures shift.
- Could the policy emulate the success of increased female participation in sporting clubs with other human rights priority groups? Could this go in the eligibility criteria?
- Could there be consultation with clubs that are engaging priority groups well? This would enable the development of case studies and help learn what is working well. These clubs could be linked with others to mentor them in engagement.
- It may be helpful to create milestones towards inclusion, e.g. inclusive toilets, come-and-try days, mum-and-daughter activities, waiving fees in the face of hardship, and partnerships with other local community groups (e.g. First Nations, disability).
- It is also important to hold clubs accountable when they aren't meeting the targets.

Summary

The representatives of the seven committees provided helpful context on their varied work. All the committees have a focus on building the skills and capacities of their represented communities. Key themes of inclusion, equal access, increased safety, being more holistic, and employing person-centred approaches can be applied to the community generally and sporting clubs more particularly to create a greater picture of flourishing. There was a common theme in wanting to reduce the barriers for priority communities to engage with sport and recreation with the recognition that this can involve sporting clubs needing to move out of the traditional structures. This can involve working with the community more effectively, creating more inclusive spaces, capacity building in clubs, and helping clubs reach inclusivity milestones.

State Sporting Associations (SSAs)

The State Sporting Associations were invited to a workshop, including a light lunch. The workshop aimed to hear from them about:

- What creates a good club and shapes a positive culture in clubs
- What the association does to encourage this
- How Merri-bek's allocations policy can be used to grow clubs in the same direction, whilst enabling Council to be a good steward of its resources

A summary of the workshop appears below.

What does a thriving and flourishing club look like to you? Your association?

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------|
| • Welcoming | • Child safe |
| • People can bring their best self to the club | • Respect |
| • Welcoming / inclusive | • Inclusive |
| • Safe | • Safe, supporting, sustainable |
| • All family members playing | • Supportive |
| • Good long-term coaches | • Passion |
| • Life members | • Community engaging |
| • Celebrates its members | • Pathway |
| • Gender balance - boys/girls/families | • Retention |
| • Diversity | • Progression |
| | • Connected to the community |
| | • Open to change |

- Has a strategic plan
- Proactively asking questions
- Stability
- Cater for all stakeholders
- Well-run committee and sub-committee
- Good administration
- Strong participation numbers and clear pathways
- Commitment
- Strong values and community engagement
- Community activities
- Flexible
- People
- Sustainable
- Reflect community they represent

What does your association do to help clubs move in this direction?

Across the SSAs there was a wide range of responses to this question. From specific staff roles targeting participation, recruitment and community engagement, as well as member protection, to training for captains, coaches, umpires/referees and on topics such as child safety. Services such as policy portals, marketing and promotion, as well as specific interventions as needed are supplied by some SSAs. Others offer the Positive Start program, Change Makers program, and provide access to external revenue. This is in addition to general club and administration support for teams and the creation of fixtures.

In your view, what is the role of Council's sport and rec team in helping clubs thrive and flourish?

Again the response from SSAs was varied with some common themes emerging. A core role identified for Council was the improvement of facilities, whether this was the development of specific spaces for umpires and females, improvement of ground facilities, an upgrade to facilities for all groups, lighting, or the creation of more fit-for-purpose spaces and open spaces. There was also a call for grounds to be available all year. Another theme emerged around costs, with the encouragement for Council to keep costs to clubs low, reward clubs with decreased fees, and that barriers for facility development be broken down. In addition, Council to provide clarity on their process of investment in facilities. Support and connection to clubs and training were other areas where SSAs saw a role for Council. To encourage collaboration between clubs, quarterly workshops with clubs and SSAs, provide development opportunities for clubs, inclusion and diversity training, and general triaging of clubs. Community engagement was also seen as important with Council helping the connection between clubs and school teams and even catalyse combined sports. According to SSAs, Council has a role in helping create special events for juniors, females, and people with special needs. SSAs would also like to see cross-council collaboration.

What needs to be in or removed from the allocations policy to help SSA's and Council support clubs? Enable Council to be a good steward of its resources?

The following themes emerged. Clubs need to show they have junior and girls' teams and that there are clear pathways. Clarity was also called for from Council so clubs know what evidence to provide for facilities' allocation. The SSAs would also like to see activation programs as part of the policy as well as the recognition of informal programs to qualify clubs for allocation. Incentives could also be offered for clubs that provide opportunities for community groups to use their facilities. SSAs called for some flexibility in allocations depending on the elite ranking of the games/teams e.g. FA cup matches. Facilities could also be shared by various clubs according to demand. There should also be no blocking to ground allocation.

Summary

The six SSAs represented saw a thriving and flourishing club broadly as one that is welcoming, open to change, inclusive, proactively asking questions, engaging of the broader community, safe, well run, and sustainable. The services available from SSAs vary depending on their emphasis with some having specific staff roles dedicated to development, and others providing training for coaches, umpires and captains. Some SSAs provide support through marketing and online resource portals as well as encouraging clubs to engage in various development programs. There was a call from the SSAs to Council to help clubs by improving facilities including the creation of spaces for umpires. There is also an expressed desire for greater access to grounds and more transparency around Council investment in upgrades. SSAs would like to see fees to clubs kept as low as possible. Council could also provide opportunities for clubs and SSAs to connect, general development of clubs, special events for juniors, females and people with special needs, and cross-council collaborations. In terms of the policy itself, SSAs would like to see clarity on the evidence that needs to be provided for allocation, informal programs to qualify to meet allocation requirements, incentives for clubs to offer their facilities for community use, and the possibilities of grounds being shared by various clubs.

Club Executives

58 club leaders, representing 36 clubs in total, gathered over two identical workshops to explore the allocations policy from a values perspective starting with what a thriving and flourishing club looked like to them. The workshops aimed to explore how the allocations policy can help clubs flourish whilst enabling Council to be a good steward of its resources.

A summary of the workshop appears below.

What does a thriving and flourishing club look like to you? Your club?

Participants were asked to write, draw or sculpt from playdough their answer to this question. Table facilitators then engaged their group in a conversation about what had been created.

The following themes emerged.

Positive Club Culture

In order to flourish, clubs need to have a culture that encourages positive behaviour through honesty, vision, belief, teamwork, respect, transparency, and care. Values that are clear and include people willing to give back through time, skills, and financial support, with this not being seen as an obligation, but something that is acknowledged and valued by clubs. One club was able to develop its values through a crisis and now can draw on them for future use. There needs to be an openness and willingness to learn and change. Leadership (including coaches) that is stable and more harmonious (less or at least helpful politics), with a board that achieves what it plans and can gain support from the association.

The culture will also enable social events to be well attended and create community and extra finances for the club. Club members will be social and competitive, as well as show good sportsmanship, provide support to other members in times of crisis, problem-solve, and be flexible. The culture will allow for a club that displays loyalty and cohesion, and itself be an example of good teamwork.

A positive club culture includes a sense of understanding, safety and security, good systems, a positive hustle and bustle, leadership succession plans, and professional development for players, coaches and umpires. Together creating a cohesive club with similar values and goals.

A local netball club emulates this understanding of culture:

Fun And Winning Keep Netball Efforts Rewarding

Welcome

As clubs work to have a positive culture they become approachable, valuing and welcoming all people no matter what gender, ability or culture. They are accessible and grow in representation. The club becomes attractive with people choosing to come.

Social at Heart

With values such as honesty, fairness, equity, support, community, and belonging, the club becomes a hub for people, for play, and for a sense of place. It allows a sense of 'gang' to grow and encourages family involvement, beyond seeing it as daycare for their children.

Part of the Wider Community

A flourishing club will have a good engagement with its broader community including Council, recognising that both can provide good support for the club as well as respect and recognition for the work it is doing in the community. In this way, it will grow through word of mouth.

Learning

A flourishing club is a learning club looking to upskill and continue developing across all areas of club activity including data retention.

Excellence

Core to a club is the desire to play well. Within the club and externally there is a healthy sense of competition. Successful results are achieved and there is access to progression to the higher leagues, as well as talent identification.

Members

In order to flourish a club needs members that pay their dues, are a reflection of the diversity in the community, and number enough to field teams and continue to progress through the ages, i.e. player retention.

Facilities

External to club culture, but to some extent an outworking of it, clubs want facilities that are attractive, inviting, high quality (club rooms and fields), fit for purpose, provide for social and sport, enable the community to be included, safe, clean, and with functional canteens.

However, not all of these things are in a club's control, with Council determining maintenance and upgrades. Issues also continue to arise between clubs and the broader community around the use of space, particularly with dog owners who want to use ovals to let their dogs run. One participant felt that dog owners are misusing the grounds. Other community members also cause issues for clubs, e.g. riding motorbikes on or near the pitch and scaring young players.

What values does your club need to live, in order to work successfully towards the picture of flourishing that we are creating? (sub sub heading)

Values will now be in focus as a pathway to flourishing. There is some repetition to the work done in the previous question, however, the focus on values moves the conversation from the abstract to more concrete outcomes for clubs.

Core values identified included:

Belonging

Clubs wanted to be approachable, accessible, welcoming, inclusive, and female-friendly, places of friendship, camaraderie, respect, tolerance, safety, and health. It was important to clubs that they be a family environment, embrace diversity, encourage participation, and be a trusted environment. There was also a desire to recognise the traditional owners of the land and encourage their participation.

Contribution

There was recognition that everyone in a club has something to bring and, in fact, clubs work best when there are lots of volunteers using their skills. Through contribution, clubs can be places of excellence, fun, teamwork, positivity, passion, and commitment. Not only is contribution encouraged, but recognition and respect for those who do give their time and expertise are required. As people contribute they are leading by example and become good role models. There is also the opportunity to give back with professionalism. Clubs also felt it was important that people's circumstances and limitations were recognised. People can also contribute by having a winning attitude, working towards good governance, and providing a listening ear.

Development

As a value, development speaks to openness and willingness to change and embrace new ideas. It stems from clubs being visionary, creative, adaptive, innovative in the face of risk, and planning well. Whilst development can involve providing what members want it can also be about directness, calling out bad behaviour and not being afraid to raise issues.

Development also means working to support the mental and physical health and wellbeing of members of the club throughout all the generations of coaches and players. This involves creating a nurturing environment through mentoring and allowing room for growth. Through this, leaders will be developed and allowed to learn on the job.

The physical environment also needs to be developed through responses to climate change and the creation of facilities that are safe and accommodating.

Playing the Game

Participants identified a list of values that relate to how clubs play sport. These include being good sports, playing with clear values, teamwork, passion, and commitment. Clubs wanted sport to be a place of fun, fair play, and love of the game. There was a desire to call out bad behaviour and an expectation of good behaviour regardless of the outcome of a game, and that winning at all costs was not ok. Clubs want their players to be role models and abide by their code of conduct, playing with energy, resilience and focus, honesty, and in the spirit of the game. And to enjoy the game.

Part of the Wider Community

Clubs were able to identify that they are part of the wider community and expressed a desire to engage well. They wanted to act with integrity, equality, and respect, and be welcoming to all, particularly the traditional owners. In talking with the community they wanted to be adaptable, honest and engaging. They would also like to see support from (other) clubs and associations.

Interpersonal Relationships Within the Club

Relationships amongst the club were to be guided by acceptance, support, respect, positivity, care, kindness, loyalty, trust, transparency, and empathy. Clubs are social at their heart even in the face of friendly competition and can be places where this is balanced with friendship and companionship. A desire was expressed to create safe environments of togetherness and support through listening, and open and honest communication.

Club Mechanics

Clubs want to operate professionally and with integrity, providing the things that members want. They want to be sustainable financially, for the environment, and as a social unit. Living in line with their code of conduct and all the checks and compliances, running with good systems and leadership. They want to be a safe place for children and balance their multiple stakeholders including members, Council, their association, and other outside influences. They want to be responsible, including offering affordable membership, and where possible focus on providing healthy spaces, including food, and limiting smoking and alcohol consumption.

What role can the allocations policy have in helping your club live its values and move towards the picture of flourishing? (sub sub heading)

In reflecting on the themes raised from this table discussion it needs to be clearly stated that no correlation has been drawn between what participants fed back and what Council is currently doing or not doing regarding the allocations policy. In short, some of the responses will be a reflection of what is already happening, some are aspirational, whilst others are feedback on the difficulties of the policy and what is needed from Council.

Grouping the responses into themes participants saw that the allocations policy and documents that are created to support it could provide:

- clarity
- completeness in the running of a club
- equity and fairness
- stepped approach
- communication and stakeholder relationships
- support from Council
- implementation
- guidance for gender diverse and LGBTIQ+ inclusion

Clarity

The policy itself needs to be easy to follow, and simple enough in its processes and language that anyone can understand it. It can provide a list of values that can be helpful as a guide. The policy can also provide strategic direction. However, clubs feel it needs to be more specific with clear guidelines, expectations, and documentation, not a reinvention of the wheel or an administrative burden.

Completeness in the Running of a Club

The policy and the documents that sit around it have the potential to provide clubs with a guide to inform their values, strategy, administration, and support to members. There was a sense that it can help shape clubs. Included could be elements like performance indicators to track how clubs are developing in line with the policy, templates that make the management of the club easier, processes for data collection, and other compliance mechanisms. In helping clubs run well, documentation could support youth membership and gender diversity, take into account the casualisation of sport (members not as committed to full 'club life' as they once may have been), help inform strategy development, and provide the right tools for success. Some additional support could be provided to help clubs care for members in their development and training as well as supporting their environmental aspirations. Whatever is developed, clubs want it to be accessible and provide transparency to Council processes.

Equity and Fairness

The policy needs to reflect equity and fairness for all stakeholders. In this way, it can provide benchmarks or minimum standards for safety, respect, inclusion, legal compliance, human rights, and facilities. Clubs felt there needed to be a range of factors taken into account when allocating facilities. These include: tradition, funds contributed to capital works, the different needs of clubs (size, demographics, context), and flexibility (i.e. not a one size fits all approach). A core value behind equity and fairness is that all stakeholders feel listened to. In this way, clubs also want to feel secure in their tenure. This includes considering longer allocation periods so clubs don't have to reapply annually, helping create continuity, and stability, and allowing for strategic development. Perhaps Council could consider five-year leases. In one instance, a club felt it important to have fundraisers etc. at their regular ground. This concept of continuity continues to Council. There needs to be recognition that policy administrators might not have continuity of knowledge about clubs or the sports they play and the related needs.

The policy also needs to recognise the co-existence of different sports as part of the ecosystem. As well, the size of clubs can affect their ability to fulfil the policy. One participant wondered if a pro-rata approach could be introduced, to help support smaller clubs. This could help small clubs gain recognition for trying to tick all the boxes even if they haven't achieved them all.

Access was also raised as an equity and fairness concern. The policy and Council could help clubs to be more affordable and accessible for people who otherwise could not afford to play. Clubs could receive an incentive for supporting disadvantaged people.

Stepped Approach

A small number of participants raised the possibility of a stepped approach to any changes in the allocations policy. This would enable clubs to affect change management processes. It also takes into account the evolution in the dynamics of growing sports where clubs feel they are performing a bit of a juggling act trying to keep up with the growth and meet all requirements.

Communication and Stakeholder Relationships

The policy can help Council and clubs communicate better with each other, adding clarity to what Council needs from clubs and providing better access. The community can also be involved in the conversation. Clubs are keen for the community to play their part in looking after the grounds as well as share with them the effects that the club is having in the community and broader society. There is also the opportunity for collaboration between clubs and other community groups, and shared use of facilities, helping the community feel welcomed.

Good communication helps in the resolution of grievances and provides clear channels for all stakeholders to connect. Lastly, good communication can help volunteers feel respected for the effort they are putting in. One suggestion was that Council could survey the volunteer hours extended in sport in Merri-bek.

Support from Council

Participants were keen to explore what support could be expected from Council. It may be helpful to include anything that Council is offering or at least reference it in the preamble to the policy. Clubs would like to see: a list of resources, links to community groups and volunteers, physical documents or a course that teaches and upskills, as well as help with promotion, and a directory.

In general, the policy can help raise awareness of the way that Council can support, including extra documentation making it easier for volunteers. The policy also needs to be a two-way document outlining what expectations are on clubs and what Council will do to support them. The tone of the policy needs to be about incentives and not punishments. Including a focus on how the policy can limit red tape and promote the autonomy of clubs.

The policy can also be a driver to help clubs think laterally, with extra resources to guide the thinking. A number of clubs would like to see a link between the policy and how Council will support the club with capital works, maintenance, and generally better facilities.

One suggestion was for Council to employ people who live in the area and insist they join at least one sporting club in the area.

Policy Implementation

Clubs felt that how the policy is implemented is key. Two factors to consider are the speed of implementation and the workload on clubs that the implementation will cause.

Gender and LGBTIQ+

Clubs expressed a range of concerns around gender and diversity. Some felt that asking people to identify their gender and sexuality is discriminatory. One participant said that they will support a transgender child in the club, but that overt promotion would be too divisive for some demographics of their club. Others felt that privacy is increasingly important and this is a burden that clubs do not want. Others saw that sport should be where you can go to be equal and free of identifiers. Whether it was in a response to another comment or on its own, one participant felt that you cannot say that everyone is welcome.

What needs to be in or removed from the allocations policy to

- Help clubs flourish?
- Enable Council to be a good steward of its resources?

The suggested policy has been divided into 3 sections: **eligibility**, **priority**, and **incentive**. Two A3 copies of each section were given to table groups. Each group had a facilitator who built on the framing provided to the whole group. Participants were then able to comment directly on the A3 pages. Responses include yes/no and various comments relating to that line of the policy. The number of 'Yes/No' refers only to the number of people who responded to that column and is not indicative of a group response. Responses have been grouped from both workshops.

Eligibility

Policy	Comments
<i>Maintain public liability insurance (minimum \$20m)</i>	
<i>Have no outstanding debt to Council and or SSA . If in arrears, have a debtor repayment plan in place</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being financially viable, can't be a liability to Council. • Rebates if facilities not available.
<i>Be a member of a recognized State Sporting Association or other relevant governing body</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusivity and accountability.
<i>Provide latest annual report, financial statement, a GM minutes and current strategic plan</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes, but value of strategic plan is unknown, unless a strategic plan is linked to Council's capital works.
<i>Participation offerings provide for junior teams/sides, female teams/sides, and registered Sports Association development programs (e.g., AusKick)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not compulsory, but don't be exclusionary. Offer, but may not have enough demand. Needs to recognize attempts to achieve this and need to take account of anomaly adversity (e.g. COVID) . • Female teams, how many teams? Not mandatory.
<i>Acknowledge, sign and adhere to child safe standards, fair play code, and guidelines for preventing violence against women; Taking action through community sport</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes, but each sport has different policies.

Eligibility	
Policy	Comments
<i>Evidence of women, girls or gender diverse persons elected to office bearer position (president, vice president, treasurer, secretary)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existence of intention? Problematic for small clubs without lots to draw from. Re-word to read Evidence of diverse persons elected.... (age, gender, etc.). 50% of executive not desirable. Demonstrate the opportunity given to all to take on every role - opportunity is required- not needed. Should be a reflection of the club membership • Clarify in light of putting a limit or fixed number is limiting. Need recognition of and allowance for progress. What evidence of gender diversity? - seems un-resourceable- How many? - Encouraged but not mandatory.
<i>Evidence of equitable scheduling for all participants</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree, however driven by associations mainly • Training and game schedule to be equal to all genders pending registration Sports Association guidelines.- How do you demonstrate this evidence, within our club?
<i>Attendance at all Council-run club development initiatives</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As long as relevant to each club. Too time poor to run a club development on our own. - calendar of dates and times to be made available significantly ahead of time to allow planning to attend. Clubs are run by volunteers who have other commitments, not always possible on dates nominated, may conflict with pennant nights. • All? What are the development initiatives? Available but not mandatory. • Gender excellence

Eligibility

Policy	Comments
<i>Committee and/or board has diverse gender representation including [up to] or above 50% representation of members being women, girls or gender diverse people</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SSA/State Govt is 40% - Show you have a plan to achieve it. Remove gender from wording so that ...has diverse representation... Need to scale this over time. Needs to be tailored for club size and type- 50% of executive - Needs flexibility, what happens if your two female members quit? If it's not achievable things will go underground- phantom members. Should not be mandated to meet a minimum requirement - where possible and encourage -- ours is women dominated - • 50%, bad look. Incentive, not eligibility . - 50% not good, how - Change wording. Being open to anyone who wants to come if they're good for the job . - How do we achieve this? Need help to achieve. What is the consequence if we don't? Cancel plan to assist in achieving if not met? • Difficulties in establishing a committee that meets a council's requirements. Volunteer organizations need to utilize whoever is available and willing to commit their time to club activities. Question whether this point needs to be included at all. Surely evidence that committees and representative groups are open to all should suffice
<i>Be a registered legal entity, e.g. incorporated association</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This doesn't respect the history of individual clubs. E.g. Suvertus
<i>Club name is representative of Merri-bek and does not reference towns, suburbs, municipalities, cities, countries or other landmarks outside of the council area, and does not reference any ethnicity, religion, brand, sponsor or business</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs to be consistent. Brunswick Juventus exists, Juventus is an Italian brand. - heritage e.g. Saint Andrews. Relevant to new clubs only

Eligibility	
Policy	Comments
<i>Conformance with relevant government legislation, including provision of liquor license, food registration certificate, and VCGLR certification (as required)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is VCGLR?
<i>Acknowledge, sign and adhere to Council gambling policy, including no advertising or promoting gambling related activity at Council's venues or online</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow a licensed venue.
<i>Does not directly operate, own or benefit from the proceeds of electronic gaming machines (EGMS)</i>	
<i>Acknowledge, sign and adhere to Tobacco Act 1987 and canceled designated smoke free zones</i>	
<i>Participation in Good Sports program</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need a training on good sports program
<i>Acknowledge, sign and adhere to Council's plastic wise policy</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only if we can get bins (especially FOGO)- practical application to some path, e.g. water bottles.

Priority

Policy	Comments
<i>Current and historical membership trends (i.e. increase/ decrease in participation and demand)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How is historical judged? What metric? In context? More members doesn't necessarily mean it's more important. Flexibility of sharing facility. • Current membership is much higher than in previous years. We found increased participation of women and girls. Evidence of how you will or are tracking trends?
<i>Percentage of membership that are Merri-bek residents</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What percentage is required? Need details. The targets shouldn't be hard and fast. CIFL are recruited and paid. • Define suburbs in Merri-bek. • Significant data and privacy concerns - Not necessary. Contradictory; has the potential to undermine the juniors and women's inclusion opportunity. • Please consider amending language. Allow flexibility for individual clubs location, demographics of community, etc. What is the focus of the allocation? - Participant versus member? Surely participation is more important? E.g. 'pay for play.' Majority, although members of the committee are not locals. A lot of difference in the Merri-bek area.

Priority	
Policy	Comments
<i>Percentage of membership that are priority groups as identified by Council's human rights policy (aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, people with disability, LGBTIQ+ communities, migrant, refugee and faith communities, women, girls and gender diverse communities)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data breach. No right to ask. Focus should be on openness to accept. Some people may not destroy this information. Clubs may not have this data (LGBTIQ+). not free to give people. • Support inclusion via other methods. Club policy should offer an open inclusive membership. should not be categorized, that makes it non inclusive but rather ostracizing. • DELETE!! intrusive.-too subject to demographics of areas.- what if the community of the club doesn't agree with Council policy? • Information may be difficult to establish. Individuals may be reluctant to disclose. • We need help to do this, half of members are new migrants, refugees and faith communities. • What percentage? How would we record this? • Re-word this to say open to anyone.
<i>History of cleanliness, maintenance, payment, and general adherence to Council terms and conditions</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council role in maintenance? What if Council have not provided funds to keep facilities functional? • There needs to be an asset right plan, Council and club generated. • We have 100% - With changing committees keeping track of tasks and maintenance may be best / easier with checks in place. • Complete annual cleaning report.

Priority	
Policy	Comments
<i>Evidence of equitable and financially appropriate membership fees and charges</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Definition of appropriate very important. • We are well organized - Having to provide figures and offerings in comparison to other clubs is time consuming and data is not always able to be found. Council should provide collated data of other clubs with their facilities and prices so clubs can then re-evaluate their position, prices etc. Why make all the clubs and volunteers research? • Who would assess this and how? not necessary/Council would not really look at this info.
<i>Delivery of community partnerships and other initiatives (e.g., pride round, pink ribbon, charity etc.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How is this communicated to clubs? Dependent on League allowances? • Can be divisive. Benchmarks? How many? Clubs are trying to raise funds to support members and pay costs, e.g. ground fees = imposition on volunteers to run more events • Should be incentive
<i>Sustainability of facility to support requested allocation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please explain • How is this measured
<i>Historical usage and length of tenure</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Granting tenure of a reasonable length of time. Acknowledging history of tenure for established clubs. 3-5 years. Different criteria for year round clubs such as tennis, netball, and seasonal clubs such as football and cricket.

Priority	
Policy	Comments
<i>Evidence of capital investment including in kind and completion of past capital works projects to the satisfaction of Council</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LOL- Must be scalable for small clubs growing from a small base. • If there is a threat that club won't be allocated any fealty, why would clubs then raise money by volunteers to invest in costly infrastructure with no guarantees of future re use. • Restorations done by us approved satisfactory with Council, however we can't renovate much because we don't have any guarantee of future leases. • Also, Council should maintain grounds more regularly. Evidence of planned capital timesheet? What if clubs can't afford to even with grants?
<i>General Comments</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are these benchmarks? How will clubs be assessed/ranked ?

Incentive

Policy

Comments

History of club participation in external club development initiatives (e.g. Sport Integrity Australia's e-learning hub. VicSport education seminars, SSA forums, Proud 2 Play and Pride in Sport training etc.)

- Optional if it applies. Courses do not necessarily reflect the need.
- Burden on volunteers.
- Too much red tape - more imposition on volunteers to do more. Should be evidence of good governance not necessarily more training.
- How much time do volunteers have? It is unreasonable to make all of these mandatory.
- Too arduous for volunteer-led organizations? Lack of understanding of benefits to participation.

Evidence of completion of Sport Australia Director Education courses in past 24 months (including 'The Start Line' and 'The Defence')

- Optional if it applies. Courses do not necessarily reflect the needs. Irrelevant.
- All I quizzed back what does this achieve?
 - more imposition on volunteers to do more, should be evidence of good governance, not necessarily more training.
- How much time do volunteers have? It is unreasonable To make all of these mandatory.
- Not sure if director education is too high a qualification for volunteer committees
- Financial issue and time constraints.
- Certificate isn't the same as actual experience (i.e. years of involvement of volunteering in clubs)
- Provide specific courses and grants if required if costs are involved.
- If not able clubs provide reasons for course deduct (from fees??).
- How long is the director education course?

Incentive

Policy	Comments
<i>Participation offerings provided for Masters/older adults</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demographics? • But not if it's being included in determines of allocation, when already meet other criteria. • Very sport dependent. • Not one size fits all, e.g. some clubs are all seniors • How to achieve this if not supported by the SSA?
<i>Participation offering provided for priority groups as defined by Council's human rights policy</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It's given to clubs to achieve this. • Be specific? What offerings? This may segregate more depending on what it is. What does this mean? Too many corporate buzzwords.
<i>Implementation of sustainability and waste management initiatives</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If Council helps. We want to, but Council wants to charge commercial waste fees.
<i>Implement and promote state government healthy choices program and initiatives</i>	

Incentive

Policy

Comments

General Comments

- Most sporting clubs are run by volunteers. No time available to do above involvement in activities relevant (outside of) to the sport played.
- Community sport clubs are run by volunteers who assist because they believe in the underlying values these criteria raise, but to have all these to become mandatory it creates additional stress and pressure.
- Different sports attracted different people, this should be considered in any allocation policy.
- Should be a recognition of attempts and efforts made, even if full success not achieved.
- What is the reward for doing these extra things?
- Add incentive for development of community outreach or schools programs
- Add simplified processes - training meeting as example would allow people to learn from each other and not feel so overwhelmed by the requirements

Summary

The club executives provided rich feedback on both the values needed by clubs and Council as well as practical suggestions about the policy. They saw a thriving and flourishing club as one that: has a positive culture; is welcoming; is social at its heart; has a connection to the wider community; has a commitment to learning and excellence; has engaged members and good facilities. Key values that sit behind these attributes include a sense of belonging; active contribution; a commitment to development; playing well on the field; good internal relationships and positive club mechanics. When it comes to the allocations policy, club executives broadly saw that it could provide: clarity on Council expectations; completeness in the running of a club, helping them create values, strategies and action plans; equity and fairness; a stepped approach to club development; improved communication and stakeholder relationships; clarity on the support expected from Council; details on how the policy will be implemented; and guidance for Gender Diverse and LGBTIQ+ inclusion.

The suggested policy is broken into three sections: eligibility or mandatory requirements; priority, referring to which team would get priority in the case of two teams wanting the same ground at the same time; and thirdly where clubs may be offered an incentive if compliant. The elements making up the eligibility criteria were largely agreed with, but participants encouraged Council flexibility around junior and female teams and gender diverse people on governance committees and as office bearers. Participants also hoped for understanding from Council around the ongoing effects of COVID and the general pressures on volunteers. Other comments related to services Council can supply to help teams.

The policy proposes that a club gets priority when there is a clash for a ground when it meets the corresponding criteria. Participants had numerous questions about the criterion and how the assessment would work. They were concerned about the history and trends relating to membership, the percentage of members living in Merri-bek, the privacy of members and issues asking for disclosure of gender and whether someone is Torres Strait Islander or Indigenous. Further concerns were raised over Council's role in maintenance and how smaller clubs could equitably contribute to capital works. Other concerns raised included how Council would communicate requirements and how things like the sustainability of facilities would be measured.

The incentive criteria were largely seen as a burden on volunteers and creating too much red tape. Club executives wanted training to be seen as optional and relevant and for experience to be taken into account. Some respondents felt Council needs to offer grants to help with training and not charge commercial waste fees to clubs to help them go plastic-free.

Club Members

CBBC felt it important that engagement was not only attempted with club leaders but with club members who are involved in clubs to varying degrees and both experience and live out the values and culture of their club.

46 club members responded to the google survey consisting of four open-answer questions.

Describe what a thriving and flourishing club looks like to you.

Member responses were grouped into six themes: participation, diversity/inclusion, relationship with stakeholders, club culture, sense of community/belonging, and facilities/safety.

A thriving and flourishing club has participation including people cheering on the sidelines and volunteers helping out in their spare time. It is a place of smiling faces, laughter and community spirit. It is accessible and family-friendly with growing numbers across all age groups and lots of activity. Relationships are strong with past and present players. There are clear pathways between junior and senior programs, with junior programs focusing on skills development and enjoyment. After the game people stay around to socialise. The club is well-managed and seamlessly involves children with a disability. There are opportunities to be competitive and it is a place where community is built.

A thriving and flourishing club celebrates diversity and is inclusive of all people regardless of race, colour, religion, sexual orientation, or ability. Everyone feels safe and heard and the club welcomes new and past members. A sense of belonging is built amongst people of all backgrounds. There is a balance between those that are striving for success and those that want to have fun.

The club will have good relationships with the community and Council, engaging positively with its local community through which there will be mutual support. A club working like this will receive incentives from Council.

The culture of the club will be such that it provides support and engagement, and will develop people in the skills associated with their sport as well as things that will benefit their wider life and career. This helps people to bring their best selves to the club. It will be a place of growing numbers, fiscal responsibility and good governance, building transparency and inclusivity. The culture will be enabled through a solid base provided through clubrooms that all members can call home. Members' wellbeing will be cared for and mentoring at all levels will be available. The infrastructure will cater for growth and enable good communication. Of course, a club wants to be successful on the field, but flourishing also involves

having good people, supporters and sponsors around. The culture needs to include fun and fairness, and be a place where everyone feels supported, and accepted, and can make new friends.

This together creates a sense of community and belonging which sets the club up well to play with good sportsmanship, camaraderie, and a respectful sporting environment. This in turn creates more involvement and pride in the club.

A flourishing club also has good facilities and is a safe place. This includes a good field, lights, a facility that is vibrant and well used, the right facilities for training and car parking, as well as a canteen. These need to be clean and modern and encourage parents and children to engage as a community.

What values does your club hold that helps create this picture of thriving and flourishing?

The values that emerged fit into four broad themes: welcoming and inclusive; supportive; immersed in club life; and compliant.

Clubs believe that to flourish they need to be welcoming and inclusive. Being family driven and providing a family atmosphere, open to the whole community and with people experiencing equality. Welcoming of all skill levels, genders, cultures and ethnicities, including being sensitive to needs around food and events and uniforms. The club needs to provide coaching for new members and positively involve children, allowing spaces for families to even train together. A club's welcome needs to include fun, respect and generosity, and be responsible in the service of alcohol.

In order for a club to be supportive it needs to help players strive to do better and reach their goals no matter what level they are playing at. Being supportive also means cultivating a sense of mateship and that there is a place for everyone with progress, not perfection being the goal. This includes helping financially and providing uniforms for disadvantaged players. There needs to be space for all to develop including coaches. As players and members develop, they increase their enjoyment and love of sport. This also allows room for competition, ties to past players and the space to create access for all. Undergirding all this is the need for good communication.

Members respond to healthy clubs by wanting to become immersed in club life, with a volunteering spirit. As members become supportive of the central purpose of the club, community can be built through communication and working together with transparency and enthusiasm. As members of clubs, respondents to the survey want others to be mindful of the code of conduct, portray good sportsmanship, love of sport, and a high standard of behaviour around language, alcohol and their actions. The club is bigger than any individual, with one club

relating to their motto of family, fight and legacy. This includes fighting for everything they have and for each other, celebrating each other's successes and creating a better place for future custodians of the club, being competitive now and into the future.

A further value raised by respondents was for clubs to be compliant. Some respondents saw this working out through obeying laws, creating a business footing for the club, and being respectful on the field. Being accredited in child safety, Good Sports level 3 and having coaches also being accredited. Clubs also need to have good governance and strategic plans and be fiscally responsible.

In your club, what blockers are there to its thriving and flourishing?

Responses can be categorised into six broad themes: COVID; facilities; funding; Council compliance; recruitment; and the club itself.

COVID19 has impacted all volunteer organisations including sporting clubs, making it hard to recruit and maintain volunteer numbers, and putting extra stress on those members who are volunteering. A respondent felt that COVID and the cost of living have meant young people are having to work longer hours and as such are sacrificing their sporting pursuits.

Facilities were raised as a core issue blocking clubs from thriving and flourishing. These included concerns over ground conditions including grounds holding water, uneven surface and being affected by community use. There was a lot of concern about clubs' relationship with dog owners. Owners continue to have dogs off leash during training and games, with sport being interrupted by dogs on the field, jumping and stealing balls. Dog owners can also become aggressive when asked to restrain their dogs. There was also embarrassment caused when teams have to pick up dog poop as opposing teams arrive. Concern was also raised about general overuse of the ground by the public.

Other concerns over amenities revolve around club rooms, seating and accessibility, which can affect a club's ability to engage with the community. There was also concern around the need for more training venues and spaces for growing clubs. Adequate lighting was also raised as an issue.

A number of clubs raised funding as an issue. Including difficulty in raising funds for facility development. A couple of clubs saw that financially they are not as strong as their competitors which impacts their ability to train, their performance, and community engagement. Another club is a standalone club that relies heavily on attracting sponsorship, community engagement, crowd attendance, and money from the bar and canteen to survive. One respondent felt that ideas are great but they require a financial investment.

Some respondents saw that another blocker to club flourishing is needing to be compliant with various policies and regulatory obligations, including those from Council. This was seen as putting more demands on volunteers at a time when volunteer participation is low. Added to this, one respondent felt Council was being a bit unresponsive and not adapting well to current club contexts. Another saw that Council was moving away from formal sport to support more informal approaches to activity.

Compliance also plays into financial concerns due to what one respondent perceived as the high cost of leasing club rooms and grounds, making it difficult to keep fees low.

Another participant saw the density of clubs in a geographic area as an issue.

Two clubs that focus on more niche sports flagged recruitment as a blocker to flourishing and are looking for ways to introduce more people to the sport.

Some of the respondents identified that the club itself is a blocker to flourishing, stating that sometimes clubs are antagonistic towards the community relating with an us against them mentality. Lack of volunteers and resources continues to be a key issue, including people with particular skills and qualified coaches. This is also an issue for clubs needing to fill committees and explore succession planning. Other respondents raised a lack of participation and the need for a change in club demographics with existing members needing to accept change.

Some clubs also lack recruiting skills and are not always competitive. One respondent raised the issue of some parents having a bad attitude and another acknowledged that it can be difficult to break into the social circles of a club unless you already know someone.

In your view how can Council help in the creation of a flourishing club?

Responses can be grouped into four themes: support; facilities; funding; and stakeholder engagement.

Respondents would like to see Council better support clubs by raising their understanding and empathy around the fact that clubs are run by volunteers. This would include conducting a survey to determine the hours worked by volunteers and how this is affected by the allocations policy. Providing assistance to manage clubs as well as promoting clubs and their events. Other respondents felt that Council could help by not opening the club's venues to the public for general use. One respondent felt that Council needs to drop their approach of one size fits all, recognising good governance, transparency, long-term tenure and financial sustainability, ethical responsibility, and diverse membership are important. And also acknowledging the innovative responses that clubs make to problems and seeking to adhere to and support policies.

A high number of respondents felt Council could support clubs to flourish by improving facilities. From assistance to improve grounds to allowing upgrades, and providing extra infrastructure including poop bags for dog owners, more grounds for juniors, and more basketball facilities. Lights, changing facilities, public toilets, outdoor shades, catering for the needs of people with mobility issues, BBQ facilities, and generally keeping ovals and surrounds neat and tidy were listed as items for Council to work with.

Lastly, Council can help clubs to flourish by supporting stakeholder engagement. Providing clear signage about the expectations of dog owners during training and games, providing more connections with local businesses and schools. Even advertising for new players. One respondent invited Council to come and play.

Summary

For the 46 club members who responded to the survey, a flourishing club broadly fit within 6 themes: participation; diversity/inclusion; relationship with stakeholders; club culture; a sense of community/belonging; and facilities/safety. Values that support club flourishing included: welcoming and inclusive; supportive; members immersed in club life; and compliant. Members saw blockers to flourishing including COVID; facilities; funding; compliance with Council requirements; recruitment; and the behaviour of the club itself. Council can support clubs by providing: support (understanding and empathy); facilities; funding; and stakeholder engagement.

Conversations Merri-bek

24 local residents responded to the Allocations' Policy Review page on Conversations Merri-bek. Of those, eight identified as being affiliated with local sport, one as connected with Regis Aged Care, one as an informal park user and it is assumed the rest are local community members and perhaps also informal park users. The survey was a mix of short answer and rating scales (1 not valued – 5 highly valued). In this analysis, a summary of short answer responses and statistical representation will be used to explore the data. These will be divided into questions.

What does it mean to be a thriving and flourishing club to you?

There was a mixed response to this question, with some respondents taking the opportunity to feedback strongly regarding Council's focus on sport and clubs, even in this review, as well as 'complain' about the excessive use of grounds by some sporting clubs.

Responses included feedback from one baseball player who lives locally to the club. He was impressed by the club's welcome, the family atmosphere, the fact that his children want to go and play as well as watch games, and the way the club supported each other throughout COVID as well as providing a safe space once games were allowed.

Others saw that a flourishing club is a community hub, financially sustainable, inclusive, and shows respect for all park users. One respondent noted the increased use of the reserve as a response to Council's requirement for junior and female teams. This was seen as a positive with a note about the ground turning into a mud pit earlier in the season. They saw the numerous teams training and games played as a sign of flourishing.

Clubs flourish when they are open to all, bearing in mind being appropriate for the age group. Children have fun and want to come back and parents are engaged and enjoy being involved. Other attributes of flourishing include: showing respect to all, valuing the contribution of volunteers, being authentic, having an atmosphere that is enjoyable and welcoming, healthy family environment, professional, committed and collaborative approach to achieving goals, showing pride in facilities that are safe and encourage enjoyable participation, tradition and reputation of the club, diversity and inclusion, and upholding the spirit of their sport. One respondent felt there should be zero tolerance for inappropriate behaviour.

One respondent added that a flourishing club is a place to learn, grow, and contribute. Another felt flourishing is seeing participants moving towards flourishing themselves, and that there is a sense of belonging and shared values. Another respondent pointed to significant community involvement and an ethos

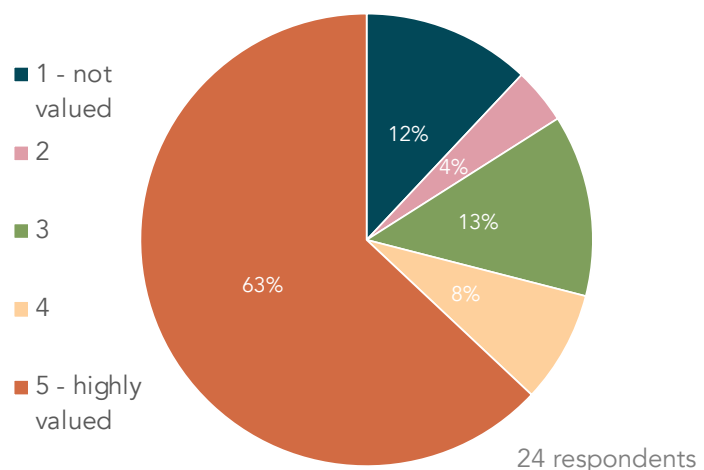
that recognises the needs of local residents in addition to the needs of the club. Other respondents go further wanting a club that is accessible and approachable to all members of the community, fits in well with the neighbourhood and has a genuine rapport with that community based on good communication, and gives back.

Some respondents were negative about club behaviour and contrasted flourishing with this behaviour. 'Not being surrounded by bullies.' The same respondent wanted to see clubs respectful of residents and sticking to their allocated hours and 'not being selfish and ignorant to the needs of other users formal and informal.' One respondent felt that clubs needed to connect across age ranges and single demographic clubs are problematic. Others expressed a desire for clubs to share facilities well and not exclude the community from using them.

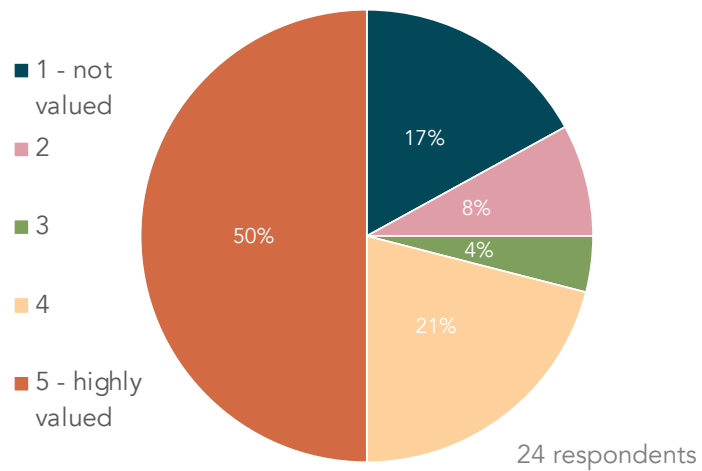
The survey continued by asking participants to rate and comment on the three suggested criteria and corresponding elements.

Eligibility Criteria

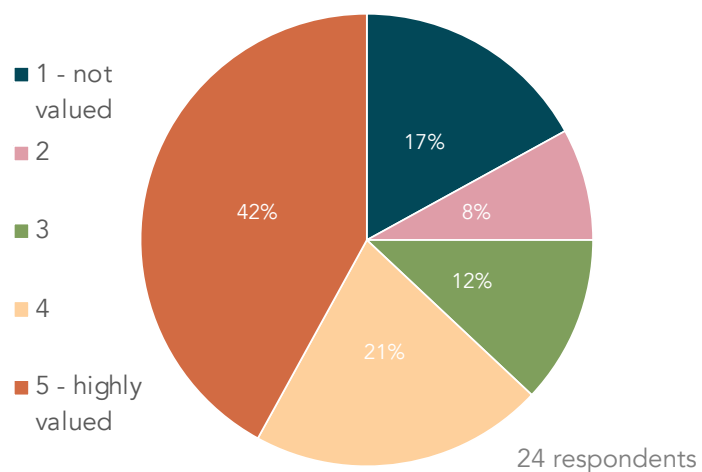
Acknowledge, sign and adhere to Guidelines for Preventing Violence Against Women: Taking Action Through Community Sport (in place by 2025)



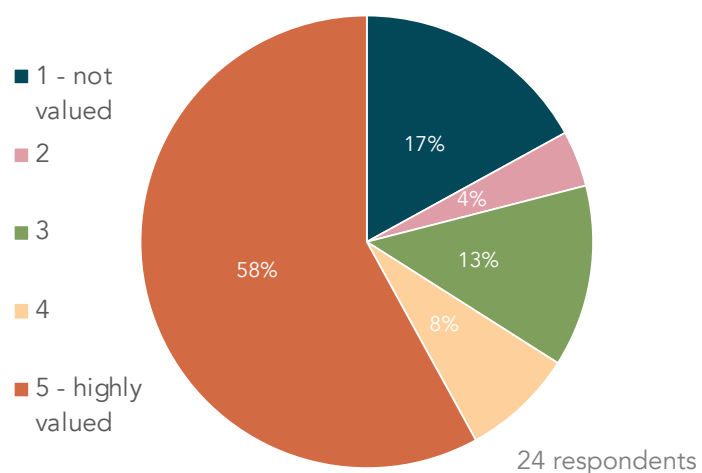
Committee and/or Board has diverse gender representation including up to or above 50% representation of members being women, girls or gender diverse people (in place by 2025)



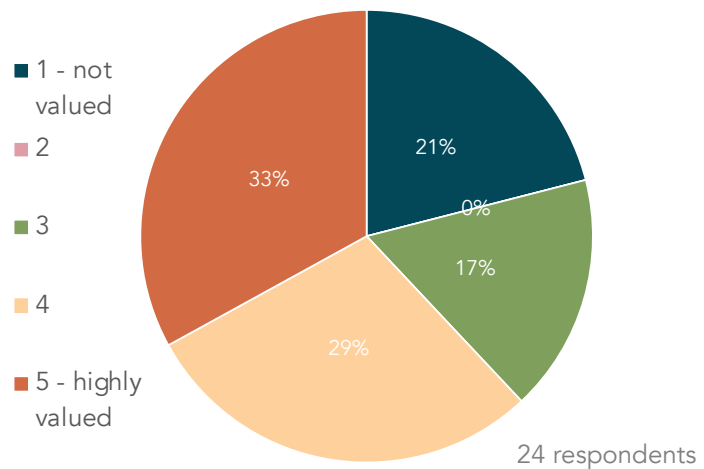
Evidence of women, girls or gender diverse persons elected to office-bearer positions, e.g. President, Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary (in place by 2025)



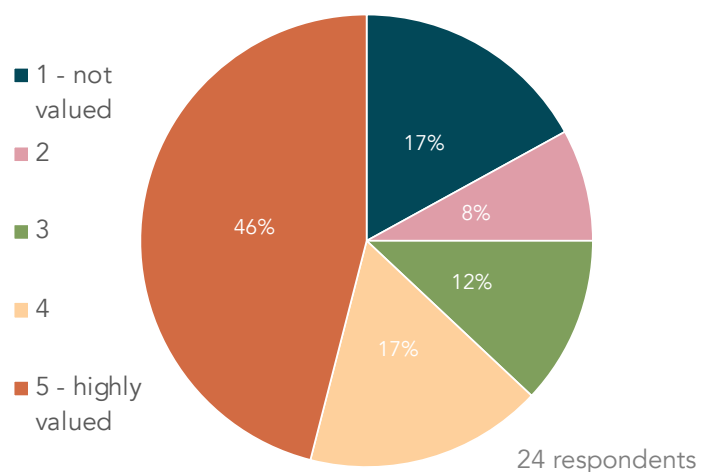
Evidence of equitable scheduling for all participants (in place by 2024)



Participation in Good Sports program (in place by 2023)



Acknowledge, sign and adhere to Council's Plastic Wise Policy (in place by 2023)



Is the stepped approach to the proposed changes achievable for your club? Y/N/other

Yes 11

No 1

No response 6

Other 6 responses, with one respondent feeling the survey is invalid as it is focused on formal sport. Other respondents wrote they are informal users or not in a position to know. One respondent is a ratepayer who accesses a park impacted by formal sport.

Tell us why or why not

Again there was a range of responses. One respondent felt this was the least that needs to be expected from clubs, with another saying if these things are not already in place clubs need to be planning towards them. A further respondent cited local soccer clubs that exceed their allocated times as being disrespectful to the broader community. Another wondered how to get access to and plan for their own usage of a ground. Some saw that their club has already met these requirements. One respondent contrasted their experience of a junior AFL and cricket club with a club that uses their local reserve. They saw the AFL and cricket club are good at administration and have junior teams in place, whereas the other club they feel is unlikely to be compliant due to the historical culture. Another respondent was concerned about the lack of volunteers making these requirements difficult. And gender representation was seen as not guaranteeing effective club administration.

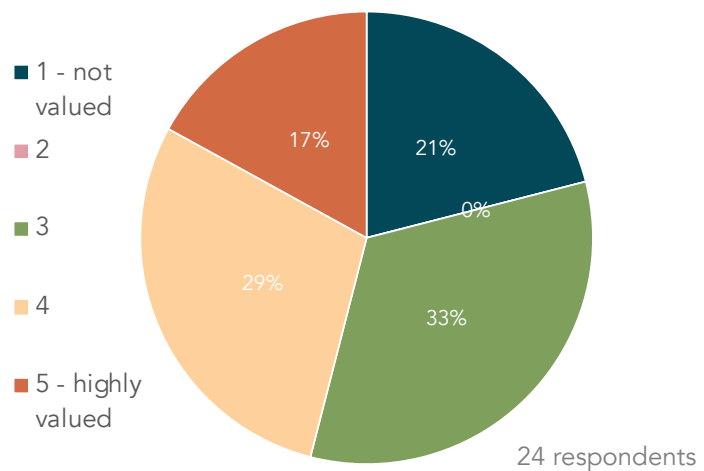
Do you have any further comments or feedback regarding the proposed 'mandatory' Eligibility Criteria changes?

10 respondents added comments.

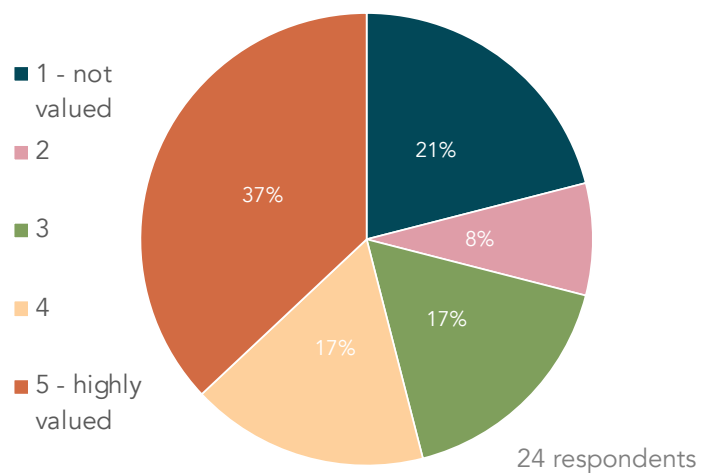
- Should the mandatory eligibility criteria include a dispute resolution policy?
- Whilst supportive of the criteria, what support is there for clubs to meet them as they are voluntary organisations?
- There should be allocation for informal community activity.
- A really important step forward for community sports in Merri-bek.
- Concerns over Council needing to keep clubs to the allocated time so other users can use the reserves.
- Clubs be made responsible for the litter post events.
- Clubs causing safety issues in local communities, e.g. supporters and players not obeying scheduled times, lights on beyond allocated times, and illegally parked cars. Also needs to be very clear criteria that any chants or behaviour that is racist, sexist, or fascist will result in immediate removal of funding or support for the club.
- If a club is unable to meet the criteria Council needs to understand why, e.g. plastic waste policy, can educate but can't control the habits of members and visitors.
- Must be not for profit and not a club that can afford to sponsor other things and charge high rates for child membership.
- Quotas for gender representation do not guarantee effective club administration.

Priority Criteria

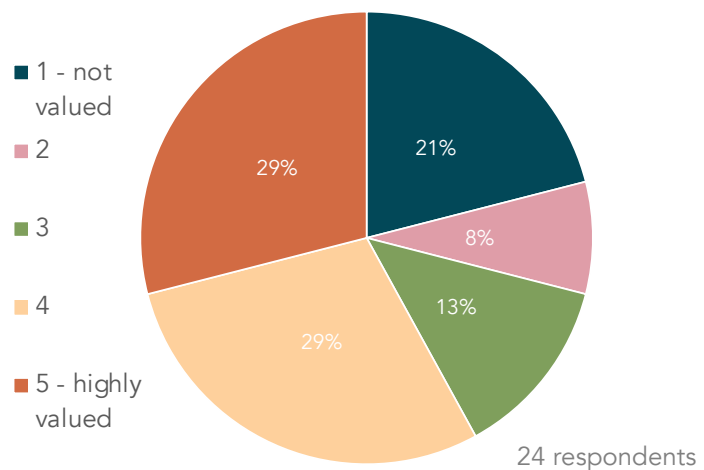
Current and historical allocations and membership trends (i.e. increase/decrease in participation and demand)



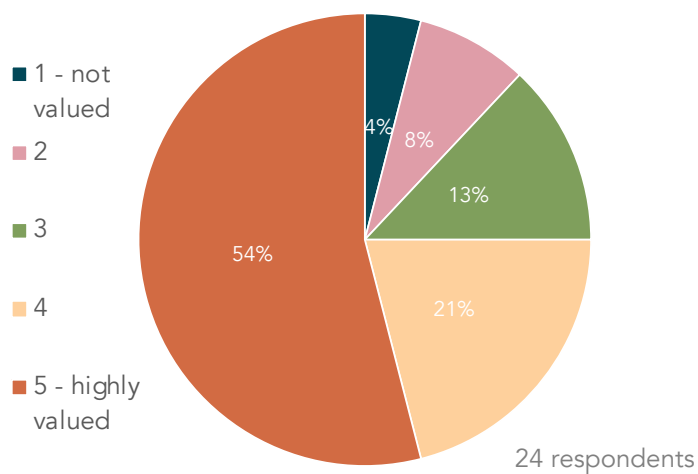
Percentage of membership that are Merri-bek residents



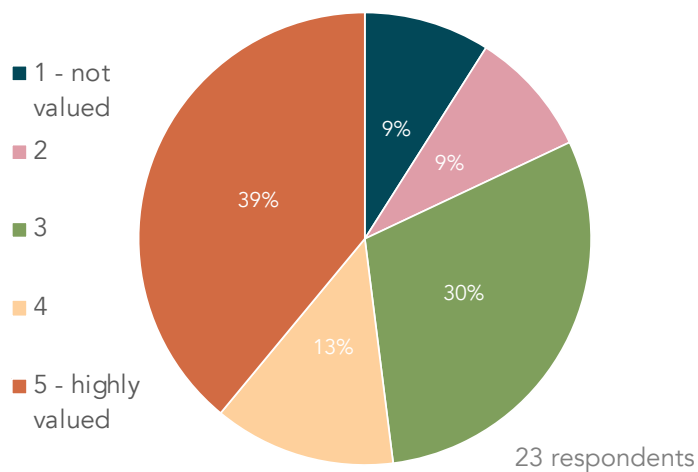
Percentage of membership that are priority groups as defined by Council's Human Rights Policy (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities, People with Disability, LGBTIQ+ Communities, Migrant, Refugee and Faith Communities, Women, Girls and Gender Diverse Communities)



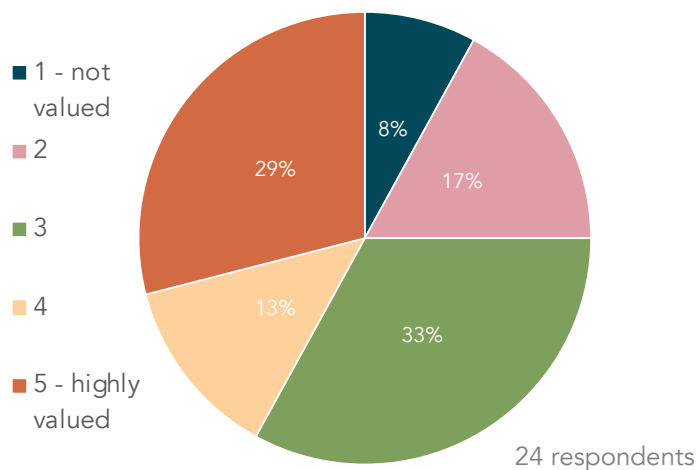
History of cleanliness, maintenance, payment, and general adherence to Council terms and conditions



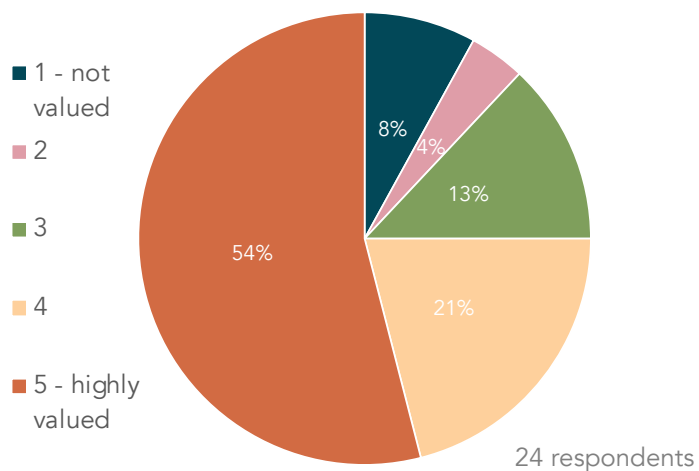
Evidence of equitable and financially appropriate membership fees and charges



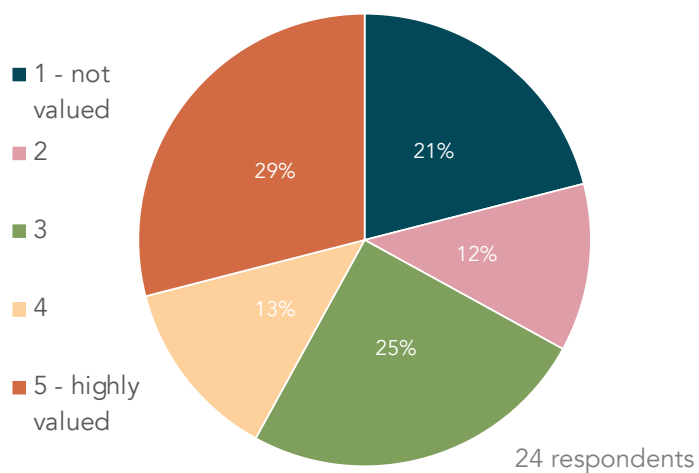
Delivery of community partnership and other initiatives (e.g. Pride Round, Pink Ribbon, charity etc.)



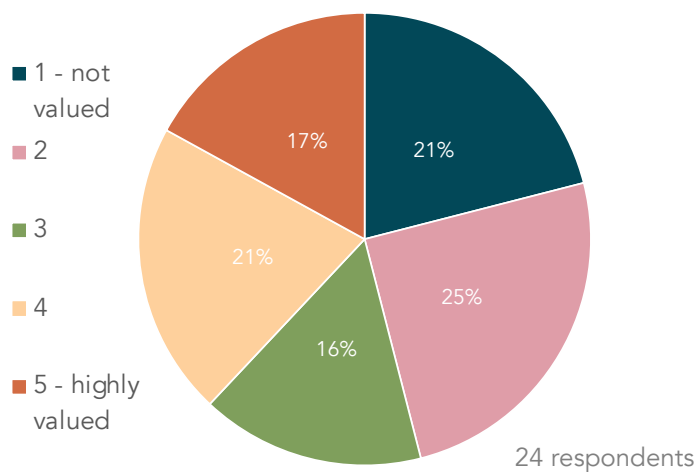
Suitability of facility to support requested allocation



Historical usage and length of tenure



Evidence of capital investment (including in-kind) and completion of past capital works projects to the satisfaction of Council



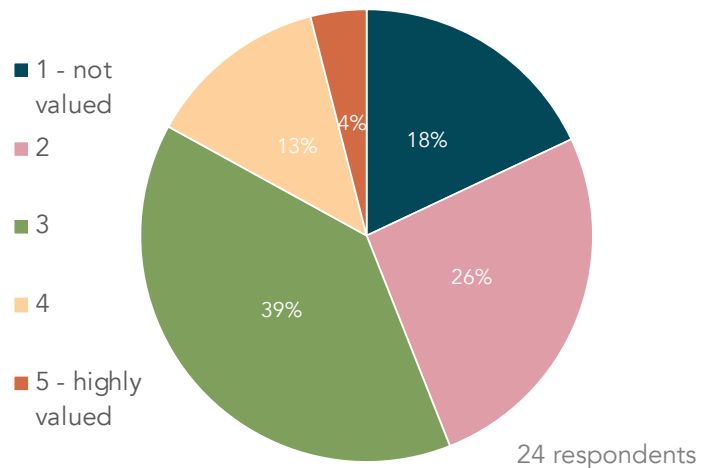
Do you have any further comments or feedback regarding the proposed Priority Criteria changes?

There were 10 extra comments.

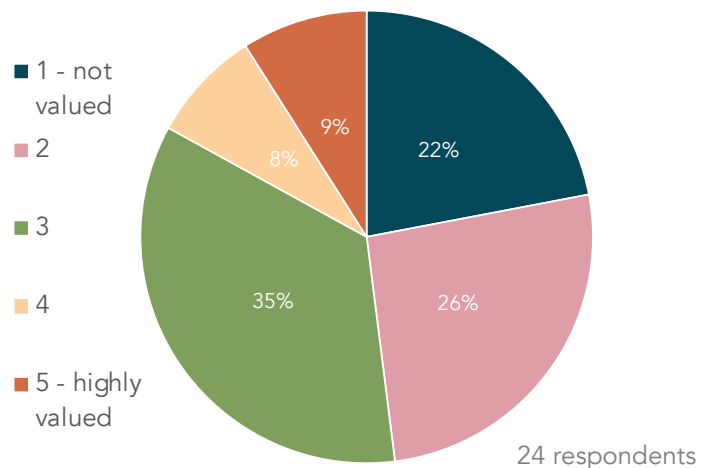
- Negative feedback on NPL soccer, with the respondent finding the club rude, arrogant, threatening and ignorant towards anyone outside the club.
- 'Appropriate fee structure' sounds vague with a potential for Council to dictate fees to clubs.
- Supportive in principle but it is not as simple as Council believes to be compliant. Club battling some serious community issues, particularly post-COVID. Feel Council is failing to recognise this.
- These changes would be a great improvement. The inclusion of evidence is crucial to ensure clubs are truly inclusive and not only doing a PR exercise. Crucial that clubs funded by Merri-bek ratepayers are accessible and enjoyed by Merri-bek ratepayers.
- Should not be about money, or encouraging the sale of alcohol and junk food.
- Some local clubs have allocations beyond what they actually need. Call for an independent audit to establish the hours needed by each club.
- I have marked one star for priority groups. The reason for this is that it is important for clubs to be as inclusive and welcoming as possible so that anyone from a priority group can be part of that club, however, the concentration of some priority groups in various areas will dictate % of membership from those groups. Clubs should not be disadvantaged provided they are doing all that is reasonably possible to remove barriers to people of priority groups.
- One club or group should not have a monopoly on one site particularly when multiple sites could be used.
- Non club member use of green space must be equally prioritised. A history of overuse doesn't mean this should continue. New residential developments include people without a car or garden who need a park close to home.
- Merri-bek Council facilities are run down, poorly maintained, and rely on clubs to do the heavy lifting to bring them up to an acceptable standard. Compare to Ford Park in Ivanhoe (Banyule), nothing in Merribek comes close, even the recently upgraded Coburg Football ground has terrible access and seating options for people in wheelchairs or with mobility issues. The canteen and perimeter seating must be rectified.

Incentive Criteria

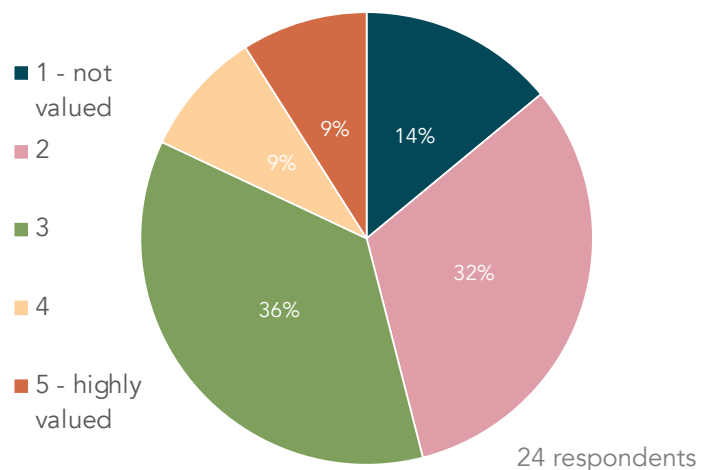
History of club participation in external club development initiatives (e.g. Sport Integrity Australia's e-learning hub, VicSport education seminars, SSA forums, Proud 2 Play and Pride in Sport training etc.)



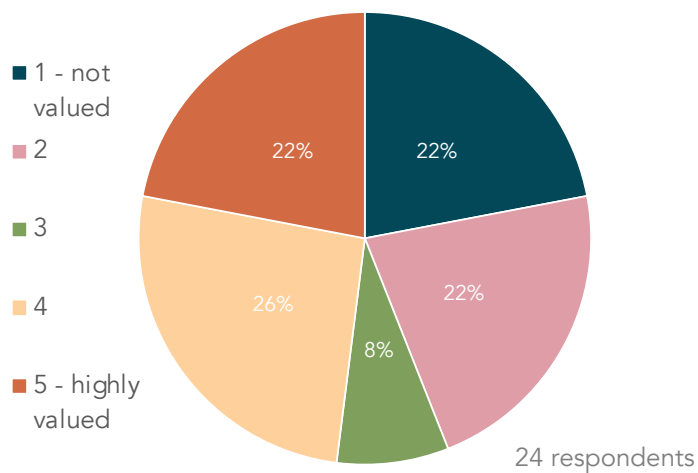
*Evidence of completion of Sport Australia Director Education courses in the past 24 months (including 'The Start Line' and 'The Defence'). *All courses are free and designed to support volunteer office bearers from local clubs.*



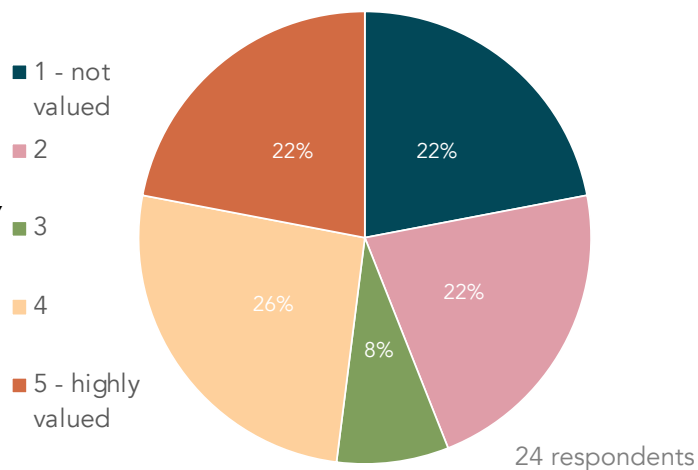
Participation offerings provided for Masters/older adults



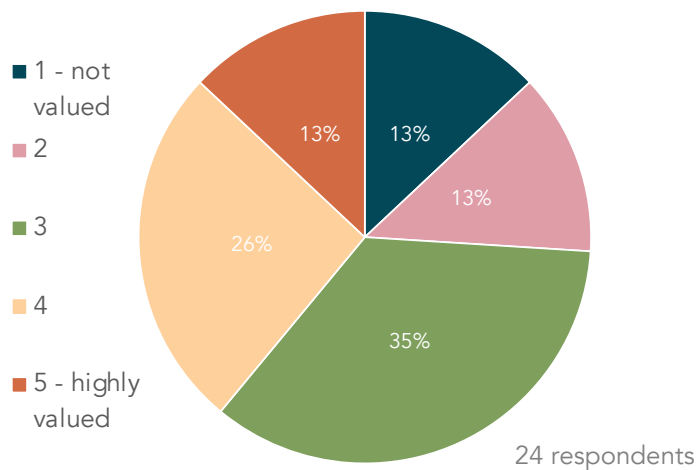
Participation offerings provided for priority groups as defined by Council's Human Rights Policy



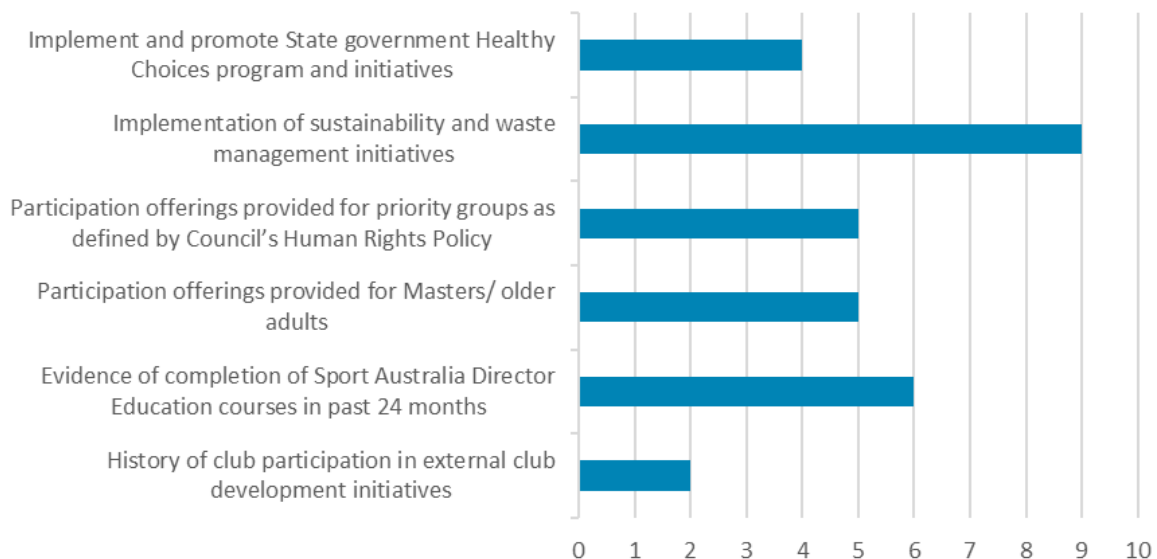
Implementation of sustainability and waste management initiatives



Implement and promote State government Healthy Choices program and initiatives



Which of the Incentive Criteria would you prefer to be a stepped approach (select all that apply)



If you were able to achieve the above items, what kind of incentives would your club appreciate?

There were 11 comments to this question.

- Higher participation and being a positive role model for the community.
- Can't answer as don't represent a club.
- Team Sports are "fortunate" to enjoy ratepayer and taxpayer subsidies, grounds and facilities. They felt that the policy was the minimum standard and if not meet it then the grounds etc. be withdrawn. 'No one pays or subsidises informal sport.'
- Grant for equipment.
- Supportive of the approaches in theory but can't be uniform as there are so many variables facing clubs.
- Reduction in fees payable to Council.
- No incentives are required.
- Increased funding for programs that benefit marginalized members such as LGBTQIA players.
- Discount in lease fees would be fair as that applies to all clubs.
- Discounts and recognition.
- Zero Council charges to the club.

Do you have any further comments or feedback regarding the proposed Incentive Criteria changes?

There were six comments to this question.

- Volunteers are expected to do a lot for no money, not fair; Sport should not be bogged down with social justice and political issues, creates a discriminatory environment, with municipality having suburbs of higher-income and socio-economic populations than other suburbs. The incentive will go to those who already have advantages.
- Trying to turn volunteer-run sporting clubs into vehicles for delivering government policy initiatives rather than government taking responsibility for doing it. Volunteers are stretched with work, family, club and now are being asked to take on being educators, social policing and being waste experts all for no money. Displays a complete ignorance of what exactly is involved in 'club land' and how many hours volunteers already contribute. Get clubs to tell you how many hours their volunteers spend in season and out of season and consider those responses before pressing on with this process. Finding volunteers is increasingly difficult.
- How will you manage kids' clubs with an expectation to provide for older adults?
- Respect for the local community.
- Danger of overcomplicating and overloading volunteers. Also when a mandatory initiative does not bear fruit or is irrelevant to a club, volunteers become jaded. Rather than denying tenure to a club, Council could provide assistance to recognise what outcomes are actually achievable for a specific club and to work with them to achieve those.
- All clubs need to have programs/leagues in place to cater for persons with physical/neuro disabilities.

Summary

24 residents responded to the Allocations' Policy Review page on Conversations Merri-bek. Broadly, respondents saw a thriving and flourishing club as one that has a family atmosphere, is a community hub, is financially sustainable, inclusive and respectful of the community, where children are having fun and volunteers are valued. Clubs also needed to be a place of respect, enjoyment and welcome, and where there was a collaborative approach to achieving goals. As well as the club being a place of pride, tradition and maintaining reputation. Clubs also need to be accessible and approachable.

The majority of respondents saw the majority of the **eligibility criteria** as important for clubs to adhere to, responding 4 or 5 (highly valued) to each of the elements of the criteria. Participation in the Good Sports Program was the

least highly valued with only 62% of participants rating it 4 or 5. The percentage of respondents that did not value an element of the criteria ranged from 12-21%. Whilst reasons for respondents assigning a particular value were not asked, comments indicated that some respondents saw these as the minimum requirements on clubs, with others concerned about clubs going over their allocated times and the negative effect clubs can have on the community.

The **priority criteria** provide a much more diverse split of respondents. 33% of respondents are neutral when it comes to membership trends with 46% valuing it highly (4 or 5). Whereas 17% are neutral when thinking about the percentage of club members living in Merri-bek and 54% value it highly (4 or 5). When it comes to a club being inclusive 58% of respondents see this as highly important and only 13% are neutral. Cleanliness and maintenance are seen as highly important, with 75% assigning 4 or 5. Fees provided a mixed response yet the majority (52%) rated this at 4 or 5. Community partnerships as a criterion were also rated as highly valued by 75% of respondents. The venue being suited to the request was seen by 75% as valued highly. Historical usage is not so important to respondents coming in at 52% for highly valued, with capital investment being the least important at 30% of respondents valuing it highly. Comments from respondents show the complexity of the community and the desire for equity between club and non-club users.

The **incentive criteria** provide a further spread of results with only 17% of respondents highly valuing club participation in external club development initiatives, 39% neutral and 44% not valuing it. Evidence of participation in the Sports Director Education program is also poorly valued with only 17% valuing it highly. 18% of respondents highly value offerings for masters with 46% not valuing them. However, 48% of respondents feel it is highly important to work to be inclusive of groups defined by Council's Human Rights Policy, with 44% not valuing this. Waste management has an identical split and 39% of participants feel it is important for clubs to promote healthy choices.

Respondents would like to see clubs offered grants for equipment, reduction in fees payable to Council, increased funding for members who are part of marginalised groups, and recognition of their good work as incentives for clubs that reach these achievements. The general comments at the end of this section include concern about over-burdening volunteers and the expectation of being involved in issues traditionally seen as social justice or government policy. There is also concern that clubs with higher socio-economic populations will more readily achieve these outcomes, with any incentive going to those who already have some advantage.

Whilst a small number of respondents (24), the Conversations Merri-bek page shows a diversity in the community between club members and residents. Residents are sending a clear message that clubs need to value and work with the community, whilst club members that responded are not wanting Council to burden already overworked volunteers.

Discussion: Themes and Implications for Policy, Values and Club Development

Discussion

A core focus of this community engagement process has been to hear from stakeholders what a flourishing club looks like and determine how best the allocations policy can help clubs move in that direction, whilst enabling Council to be a good steward of its resources. Starting with what makes a flourishing club, the activating values for flourishing and the role of the policy, this discussion will provide recommendations on the shape of the policy as well as the future direction of the Sports and Recreation team at Merri-bek Council.

Flourishing Clubs

Synthesising responses from across the engagement process, a flourishing club holds to values such as inclusion, equal access, connection, acceptance of all skill levels, sharing of resources, holistic, being more than compliant, demonstrating active welcome, universal design, and being person-centred. From the perspective of Council's priority groups, these values need to be reflected across the whole community.

However, sporting clubs are often a microcosm of the broader community and for a club to live these values means it will be inviting to all interested community members, no matter their background. Further values such as safety, respect, diversity, community engagement, and actions such as good governance and administration, creating pathways, being flexible, and helping people become their best selves were elements of flourishing added by the SSAs.

From a club executive perspective, a flourishing club includes a positive culture, honesty, vision, belief, teamwork, respect, transparency, and care. They are places of belonging where contribution is valued. They need to be accessible and approachable and reflect their local community. Respect was another attribute as a hallmark of relationships both internally within the club and externally, including the local community. Flourishing clubs were seen to be learning clubs with a healthy sense of competition. Members are engaged and paying fees, and facilities are well cared for and maintained. Clubs are sustainable financially, environmentally, and socially. As part of the wider community, they desire to engage well, act with integrity, and work towards equality. This is to be reflected in the professionalism of club operations. Club members agreed with many of these elements and values, adding being positive community members and cultivating good relationships in their neighbourhood and beyond.

Coming from both club executives and members, attention to facilities is a key aspect of creating flourishing clubs and Council's perceived lack of focus on this continues to be a source of frustration.

Additionally from Conversations Merri-bek respondents, a flourishing club has a growing number of teams, shows respect to everyone, is cross-generational, committed, collaborative, and achieves its goals. They need to show pride in their facilities and operate with zero tolerance toward bad behaviour. Clubs need to be places where participants can learn, grow, and contribute. They also need to be good community members, fitting in with the neighbourhood and showing respect to residents. Part of showing respect for the community is not exceeding their allocated hours and being prepared to share their facilities with the broader community. Respondents were also asked to rate their perception of the various policy criteria. This yielded a diverse set of responses, showing a mix of values with a key highlight focusing on the need for clubs and the community to build better relationships with each other and develop mutual respect.

Values that Underpin Flourishing

Values that help clubs move in this direction include:

Equal Access - that people from any background with whatever level of need are able to not only enter buildings, and feel safe (emotionally, physically, socially, mentally), but participate at a level appropriate to them.

Inclusion – speaks to belonging, that everyone is welcome, accepted, and valued.

Acceptance of all skill levels – Similarly, due to ability, experience, and confidence, everyone is valued no matter their ability to play a particular sport or not.

Sharing Resources – This speaks to equity amongst individuals, clubs, and the community generally, ensuring people have what they need to participate.

Holistic – Recognising that sport does not operate in a vacuum but as part of a community and clubs need to look for ways to connect with that broader community.

Universal Design – People who are affected by decisions are empowered to have a voice in the decision-making process and, going a step further, all decisions are made from a person-centric approach.

Other key values include clubs being places of friendship, family-friendly and driven, encouragement of participation, trust, good role modelling, openness to change, supportive of members' wellbeing and responsiveness to climate change. When playing sport, being good sports and behaving well was seen as important,

along with good teamwork, passion, and commitment. Many want to be able to show care, kindness and empathy towards each other, including making the club a safe space for children.

Operational values that help clubs flourish include:

Pathways - Encouraging clubs to have clear progression for skilled players and those who want to improve their skills.

Retention - Recognising the good work that clubs are doing to maintain people at all levels.

Flexible - Encouraging clubs to be open to change as well as sharing resources and allocations.

Clarity and Transparency - There was a call for Council to provide clarity and transparency on expectations and processes arising from the policy.

Volunteering was also recognised as a key value by club execs and members. Active members have a desire that more members will become volunteers and as such become more immersed in the life of the club, which will ultimately help build community.

The Role of the Policy

From Council's perspective, it needs to be a good steward of its resources and ensure clubs are using the facilities well. The policy is a vehicle for this. The policy can provide minimum standards in safety, respect, inclusion, compliance, human rights, and facilities. With this in mind, clubs would like to see an approach to the policy that is broader than a 'one size fits all' approach. The policy can also help all stakeholders communicate better with each other and encourage club, Council, and community collaboration. With clearer communication, grievances can be addressed more quickly and efficiently.

Coming to the policy itself, clubs were clear that it needs to be a vehicle to enable transparency with Council, that it can not be a burden on clubs, and it needs to foster a two-way relationship. Definitions of the criteria also need to be clear, showing how different criteria will be assessed. Council also needs to state what it will be accountable for and what support clubs can expect to help them meet the policy. It also needs to provide clear reporting mechanisms and demonstrate an understanding of what is out of the control of clubs, i.e. fixtures.

Overall, clubs are sensitive to the expected workload on volunteers, the complexity of processes, the recognition that different sports attract different

people, and that there needs to be room for negotiating the meeting of the policy.

As part of the interaction arising from the policy, SSAs would like to see Council working to generally support clubs, improve facilities, help clubs engage with the community, and develop them through workshops and other means. An overarching theme was a call for greater levels of transparency from Council to clubs and associations, particularly relating to facility upgrades and the specific evidence needed from clubs for facilities' allocation. SSAs would also like to see Council recognise activation and informal programs as part of clubs' eligibility for facilities' allocation. As well as a degree of flexibility from Council and clubs around the use of facilities that are in demand and facilities requested for elite use.

Recommendations

Policy

1. The policy be reframed away from three criteria with sub-elements that, according to clubs, appear punitive, and rigid and that represent an inequitable balance of power so as to represent a fairer approach. An alternative could be a rights and responsibility approach, allowing Council to be transparent in its expectations as well as its own obligations, not only spelling out what is expected from clubs. Some clubs feel they have an adversarial relationship with Council and this approach to the policy could help ease tensions.
2. The policy to include a preamble stating Council's desire to see clubs flourish, listing some of the elements of flourishing and associated values as explored above. As there was general agreement on these values, a preamble such as this could help create mutuality between clubs and Council. This could include recognition that clubs are run by passionate but often time poor volunteers, and that Council wants to work collaboratively to ease that burden where possible.
3. As part of the policy or a document that sits behind it, explain in more detail what is required to meet each element and what resources Council might provide to help clubs report, e.g. templates.
4. The policy moves away from a one size fits all approach to outlining a principle that allows negotiation and recognition of a club's attempt to meet that principle. These could then be deemed satisfactory or not satisfactory by the Sport and Recreation team.
5. Council to create an approach and attitude that allows for transparency of decision-making and processes for all things to do with clubs. One key aspect of this approach is to continue to bring clubs back to the vision of a flourishing

club. This engages the collective will to do better rather than an approach that can put clubs offside.

Sports and Recreation Team

6. Create a clear role delineation between club liaison and club development work and where possible have different officers assigned to the different roles.
7. Create an internal facing document that helps Sport and Recreation team members understand and use the policy to help clubs flourish. This could include notes on attitude to clubs, remembering that clubs run on volunteers, as well as how to negotiate with clubs on particular aspects of the policy.
8. The Sport and Recreation team to provide an online hub of services and activities as well as other available resources. Services could be offered online, in person, or a mix and include written templates and guides. Clubs are looking for support in:
 - Culture change
 - Strategic planning
 - Inclusion
 - Templates that enable clubs to easily report on aspects of the policy
 - Providing an active welcome
 - Networking with the broader community
 - Creating development opportunities in collaboration with SSAs
 - Governance
 - Management
 - Promotion
 - Mentoring and general support
9. Create a dialogue with clubs around infrastructure and facilities, helping clubs understand what they can do themselves to improve their grounds, what is Council's responsibility, and how funding allocation for capital works happens.
10. Create a repository of good news stories of clubs that are working well with diverse communities. The stories could include written and recorded interviews with club members on what is working well and how they achieved these results.
11. Celebration of local clubs. There was a strong desire to see the work that clubs do in the community recognised. Council could hold some kind of celebration night that affirms this contribution.