

Sport and Recreation Victoria

Outcomes, Principles and Priorities for Community Sport and Active Recreation Infrastructure



Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the traditional Aboriginal owners of country throughout Victoria, their ongoing connection to this land and we pay our respects to their culture and their Elders past, present and future.

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Accessibility

If you would like to receive this publication in an accessible format, such as large print or audio, telephone 1800 325 206 or email communityinfrastructure@sport.vic.gov.au. This document is also available in accessible Word format at sport.vic.gov.au.

Background

Sport and Recreation Victoria's *Outcomes, Principles and Priorities for Community Sport and Active Recreation Infrastructure* in Victoria assembles existing policy and program information into a single, cohesive document. This document seeks to provide guidance for and encouragement to stakeholders to align their own outcomes, principles and priorities to maximise the value of this infrastructure across the state.

Community sport and active recreation is a key part of life in Victoria. It enriches our lives, helps keep us fit and healthy, connects our communities and supports the economy. Community sport and active recreation infrastructure – the facilities, places and spaces that enable participation and physical activity – are critical to facilitating the activities we enjoy.

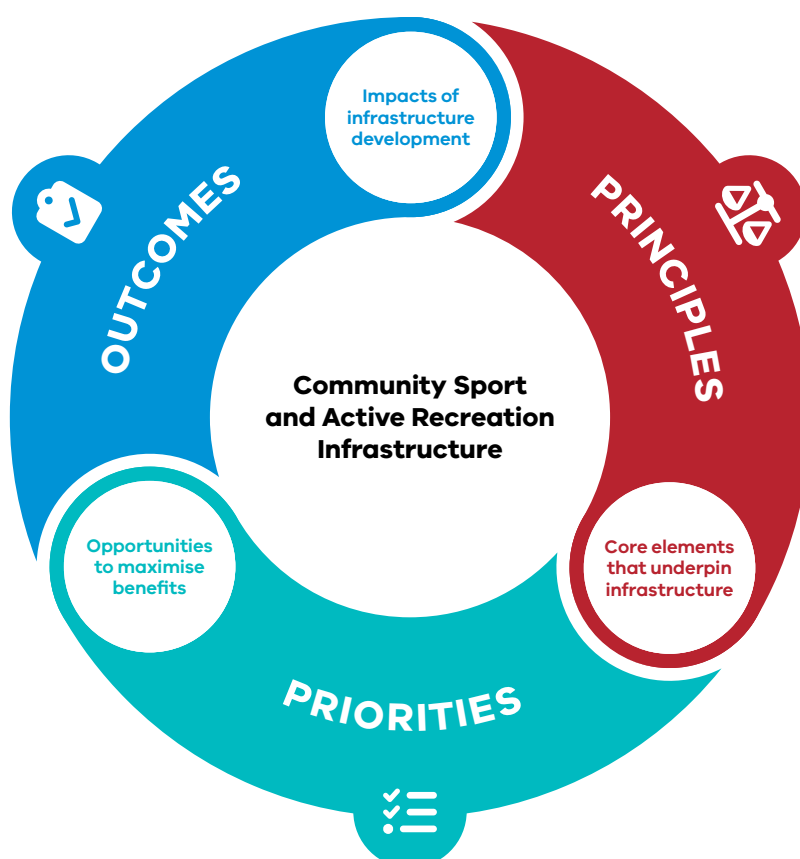
Delivering community sport and active recreation infrastructure is primarily the responsibility of the community sport ecosystem comprised of, but not limited to federal, state and local governments, national and state sporting organisations, sporting clubs, leagues, associations, recreation bodies, along with the education sector and private providers.

For decades now the Victorian Government, through Sport and Recreation Victoria, has partnered with organisations in the ecosystem to invest in and deliver community sport and active recreation infrastructure in Victoria. This recognises infrastructure's critical role in enabling participation and physical activity, as outlined in [Active Victoria 2022 to 2026](#), the Victorian government's strategic framework for sport and active recreation. This approach aligns with [Play Well – Australia's Sport Participation Strategy](#) to create great sporting experiences.

Delivering infrastructure isn't just about participation and physical activity. Infrastructure makes a strong contribution to building liveable communities, social connection, volunteerism, employment and training outcomes, economic activity, and improves the quality of our environment. In fact, community sport and active recreation infrastructure contributes an estimated \$7.04 billion in value to the Victorian economy annually, as outlined in [The Value of Community Sport and Active Recreation Infrastructure](#).

The value of this infrastructure in Victoria is maximised when our collective investment prioritises welcoming, accessible, adaptable and strategically located infrastructure that maximises participation and physical activity, builds stronger communities, and delivers long-term health, social and economic benefits for all.

Just like a circular economy, the community sport ecosystem thrives when its components align and work together. This infographic highlights how outcomes, principles and priorities are interlinked and rely on ongoing outcome measurement to better inform principles and priorities to in turn maximise outcomes for community sport and active recreation infrastructure.





OUTCOMES

Impacts of infrastructure development

Sport and Recreation Victoria pursues an outcomes approach to ensure more Victorians secure the benefits of sport and active recreation participation.

While identifying and measuring outcomes are traditionally considered at the end of project delivery, it is vital that planned outcomes from community sport and active recreation infrastructure development are clearly defined at the outset of a project. This helps align all subsequent decision making to a project's planned outcomes including stakeholder engagement, design, delivery and management in an effort to achieve and maximise those planned outcomes. Identifying outcomes also provides a basis for measuring the success of a project.

Guided by [Active Victoria 2022-2026](#), the Victorian Government invests in infrastructure to drive 2 key outcomes, as outlined below.

1. Sustained Participation – more Victorians participate equitably in sport and active recreation

To achieve this, greater focus is required to address barriers and improve participation and physical activity equity by:

Lifting participation and physical activity in groups that participate less – increase participation and physical activity in groups who face additional barriers, including women and girls, people with disability, Aboriginal Victorians, culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities, people from LGBTIQ+ communities, older adults (65+) and people who experience socio-economic disadvantage.

A significant participation gap remains for these groups compared with the Victorian general population. For example, 37.5% of adults living with disability participate regularly in physical activity compared to 50.1% of the Victorian adult population¹.

Lifting participation and physical activity in places that participate less – increase participation and physical activity in places with low physical activity, exemplified by poor health outcomes and socio-economic disadvantage.

Disadvantaged communities are generally less active and face more barriers to participation and physical activity. Providing high-quality and accessible programs and activities facilitated by community sport and active recreation infrastructure is critical to enabling greater participation and physical activity.

Access and proximity to a broad range of community sport and active recreation infrastructure – from public swimming pools to playspaces – is linked to better health, social wellbeing and economic outcomes.

¹ AusPlay Data 2024-25 (2025) Clearinghouse. Australian Sports Commission.
Available at: ausport.gov.au/clearinghouse/research/ausplay/results (Accessed: 22 December 2025).

2. Infrastructure – Victoria has inclusive and accessible facilities, places and spaces for sport and active recreation

Delivering inclusive and accessible facilities improves community liveability with particular focus on the two outcomes below.

Enhanced Liveability – community liveability is improved through the availability of well-designed and well-managed community sport and active recreation infrastructure. High-quality and flexible design further enhances safety for women and girls and fosters community pride and enjoyment.

Infrastructure also positively contributes to healthy habits and active lifestyles, strengthens social connections, and enhances the quality and appeal of surrounding environments.

Boost Economic Activity – community sport and active recreation infrastructure creates long-term local economic activity including direct and indirect supply chain benefits, employment and volunteerism opportunities, develops skills, and attracts events that increase visitation and spending.

Social procurement policies and tools can maximise employment and economic outcomes for local communities during construction and operational phases.

Measuring Outcomes

Measuring outcomes is a critical step in determining the impact of investment. Sport and Recreation Victoria's [Community Sports Infrastructure 2024 Outcomes Statement](#) highlights the impact that community sport and active recreation infrastructure has had across several parameters including participation and physical activity, inclusion, economic growth, environmental and sustainability outcomes.

Sport and Recreation Victoria works with investment partners, including local government, to capture data through project Outcome Reports, to measure those impacts.

Measuring planned outcomes, by collecting baseline data from the outset is essential to understand infrastructure's lasting, meaningful impact. Embedding data collection and performance measurement early in the planning process strengthens accountability, funding decision making processes, and policy development.

Ongoing data collection – including participation rates, usage patterns, community feedback and emerging technologies for real-time insights – ensures that infrastructure continues to meet evolving needs and maximises benefits for Victorians.



This case study highlights the benefits of integrating and co-locating sporting infrastructure with broader community services. Planned outcomes for this project included a focus on greater access for people who participate less, providing high-quality facilities in a SEIFA decile 1² area next to a large public housing estate, and innovative design to enable greater environmental sustainability.

CASE STUDY

Djerring Flemington Hub and Debneys Park

The Djerring Flemington Hub (the Hub) is in Debneys Park (the Park), Flemington, within the City of Moonee Valley. The park is a well-used open space bordering Moonee Ponds Creek, Debney Meadows Primary School, and the Flemington Housing Estate.

The existing Hub had reached the end of its useful life and was no longer fit-for-purpose. Further, the Park lacked adequate sport and active recreation facilities for residents, including teenagers, older adults and different cultural groups, leading to activity rates lower than national guidelines.

The redevelopment, including the Hub and upgraded Park facilities, have been designed to promote social inclusion and engagement, through integration and co-location.

Djerring Flemington Hub Features

A new community centre includes a multi-purpose recreation hall, social room, canteen, sport office, scorers' box, 4 all-gender change rooms and amenities, umpires' rooms and first aid room.

Debneys Park Features

The sports ground incorporates a cricket oval, 2 overlaid football pitches with 100 lux LED lighting, a 3-wicket cricket training facility and 2 outdoor, lit multi-lined sports courts for basketball and netball.

OUTCOMES

- ✓ **More participation in an area of high need** – football (soccer) saw a 7% increase in overall participation. For the Essendon Royals Soccer Club junior girls' participation increased by 39% or 79 participants and at the Newmarket Phoenix Soccer Club, senior men increased 77% or 49 participants.
- ✓ **More participation by groups who participate less** – high proportion of facility users are from low income and culturally diverse backgrounds, with the facility serving as a hub for residents, community groups and sporting clubs.
- ✓ **High quality facility to boost community wellbeing** – the high-quality Hub is adjacent to the public housing estate and offers residents a welcoming, inclusive space for recreation, learning, and connection – strengthening community connection and enhancing wellbeing.
- ✓ **Environmentally sustainable design** – the facility is built to a 5-Star Green Star rating which was designed in collaboration with the Green Building Council of Australia. The architecture features an exposed glulam timber structure to blend innovative design with eco-conscious principles. Other features include water harvesting, solar charging stations, and rooftop garden.

² Australian Bureau of Statistics Socio-Economic Indexes for Area (SEIFA) and decile 1 is a rank in the Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage (IRSD).



PRINCIPLES

Core elements that underpin infrastructure

The adoption of principles that underpin the planning, investment, delivery and management of community sport and active recreation infrastructure provides a clear and consistent foundation to guide decisions to achieve planned outcomes.

These principles seek to ensure investment is equitable, evidence-based, and maximises benefit to communities. They support consistent, transparent decision-making and provide a framework for inclusive, sustainable and adaptable community sport and active recreation infrastructure.

These principles are:

Inclusive, flexible, and sustainable design

- Infrastructure should be physically accessible, inclusive and respond to communities' cultural needs and aspirations. Co-design, where everyone's input is valued, is encouraged to embed cultural safety and local leadership to ensure facilitation of the desired participation and physical activity opportunities for groups and communities that participate less.
- Infrastructure should be flexible, adaptable and multi-purpose to ensure that everyone from walkers to sporting club participants are welcome to participate in a continuum from unstructured activity and recreation to club-based sport. Infrastructure should evolve with changing community interests and participation trends. The [Lighting Outdoor Sports Facilities for Active Recreation](#) implementation checklist gives practical suggestions to increase community use of sports facilities for unstructured activity and recreation, as an example of flexible, adaptable infrastructure.

- Community sport and active recreation infrastructure should apply [Universal Design](#) principles in planning, design and management to ensure the built environment is usable by all people regardless of their ability.
- Community sport and active recreation infrastructure should be built to withstand and adapt to climate change and extreme weather events incorporating [Environmentally Sustainable Design \(ESD\) principles](#) while seeking to reduce energy and water use, minimising waste and lowering operational costs.

Community need and impact

- Investment should consider how broader community needs beyond sport and active recreation – such as social and health services, emergency response and neighbourhood community services – could be addressed through community sport and active recreation infrastructure.
- Community sport and active recreation infrastructure investment should seek to resolve evidenced participation gaps to ensure projects are delivered in the right places and for the right purposes. Projects should have a strong evidence base, using participation data and demographic analysis to identify areas of greatest need and therefore opportunity.
- Planning should consider population growth or changes, emerging trends, and changing participation and physical activity patterns. Planning approaches that consider the hierarchy of local, district and regional facilities to ensure a connected and accessible network of participation and physical activity opportunities should be adopted.

Equitable Access

- Community sport and active recreation infrastructure should be genuinely welcoming, safe and inclusive for people of all abilities, genders, backgrounds and identities.
- Implementation of the [Fair Access Policy Roadmap](#) is critical to advancing a level playing field for women and girls, that will result in greater health outcomes, a stronger sport sector, and fairer use of public infrastructure.
- Community sport and active recreation infrastructure should provide affordable, accessible and conveniently located physical activity opportunities for diverse users, including active recreation.
- Facilitation of active recreation activities in traditional community sports infrastructure through improved facility availability, transparency of usage, optimum scheduling and fixturing, and inclusion of supporting infrastructure that enhances usability and activity (for example, sports lighting and walking paths).

Long-term management and viability

- Whole-of-lifecycle investment planning, from construction to maintenance and renewal, should be undertaken to demonstrate infrastructure viability and ensure asset management accountabilities are allocated and known.
- Facility management arrangements and partnerships should be considered from the outset and should reflect the model best able to deliver planned outcomes, including whole-of-community benefits.
- Strong connectivity to transport, schools and community services improves accessibility, increases use, and supports the long-term viability of sport and active recreation infrastructure.



This case study demonstrates that embedding key principles into a clear vision for an inclusive and equitable 'village green' can transform a run-down oval into a vibrant community hub. Upgraded lighting, turf and access have increased participation and enabled all residents to engage in year-round physical activity.

CASE STUDY

Errington Reserve Sports Ground reconstruction and lighting upgrade

Errington Reserve in St Albans is an important local space for inclusive sport and social connection. The oval and facilities at the reserve lacked adequate lighting, had a poor turf surface, and limited community access. Antisocial behaviour and a lack of suitable amenities for women and girls inhibited participation, contributing to lower health outcomes in St Albans and the Brimbank Council area.

The vision for the redevelopment was to create a 'village green' that encourages everyday use, such as taking children for a bike ride around the oval and staying for a picnic in the playground, or doing a lap of the running and walking circuit, or even sitting under a shady tree and watching cricket.

Sport and Recreation Victoria's investment in the redevelopment included the reconstruction of the oval, upgraded floodlighting to meet Australian rules football 100 lux Australian Standard for club competition and match practice and the installation of a 'cloud based' lighting control system.

PRINCIPLES

- ✓ **Inclusive, flexible, and sustainable design** – the sports ground is centrally located and easily accessed by the community. The lights were designed to operate with cloud technology. Council have created a program called 'Lighting up Errington'. On Fridays and Sundays, from April to October, between 5pm to 9pm the lights are automatically scheduled to turn on and off. With plenty of space to play, walk, run, and kick, it is an easier way for residents to stay active throughout the cooler months.
- ✓ **Equitable Access** – the redeveloped sports ground has provided the opportunity to offer new and more inclusive participation opportunities for diverse user needs. A range of events and programs are now conducted, including a more appealing modified football program, youth recreation activities, volleyball activities, various team programs and the In2active fitness program. The St Albans Football Club also support a team in the Football Integrated Development Association (FIDA) competition. FIDA is a group that helps people with intellectual disabilities play Australian rules football. Games are played every 2 weeks during the season.



PRIORITIES

Opportunities to maximise benefits


These identified priorities present opportunities to maximise the benefits of community sport and active recreation infrastructure.

Sport and Recreation Victoria's community sport and active recreation infrastructure investment is guided by a clear set of priorities that helps ensure actions are directed to where they will have the greatest impact.

These priorities are listed below and are focused on maximising participation and physical activity rates, meeting community needs, and reflect current policies including [Active Victoria 2022-26](#) and the [Fair Access Policy Roadmap](#).

Sport and Recreation Victoria encourage stakeholders to consider these priorities in their own investment planning to better align our collective efforts and maximise benefits for all Victorians:

- Participation and physical activity growth for groups that participate less or where current participation or physical activities are at risk.
- Disadvantaged areas (particularly located in SEIFA 1 and 2 decile areas) where communities participate less.
- Ensure areas experiencing population growth have appropriate and commensurate access to community sport and active recreation infrastructure.
- Maintain participation and physical activity in communities affected by extreme weather events, population shifts, or industry changes.
- Embed [Fair Access Policy Roadmap](#) initiatives to ensure gender equity in community sport and active recreation.
- Maximise and broaden community access, including for active recreation, to community sport and active recreation, infrastructure to facilitate greater physical activity.
- Facilities are co-located, shared, multi-use or integrated to meet a broader range of community service needs and ensure more people can access community sport and active recreation, including in schools.



This case study demonstrates that prioritised investment into the new sports pavilion at Wallan Secondary College enhanced use of the school oval and boosted participation, particularly for women and girls, highlighting the value of inclusive community sport infrastructure in a rapidly growing urban area.

CASE STUDY

Wallan Secondary College Sports Pavilion

Wallan Secondary College is in the urban growth area of Mitchell Shire. Mitchell's population is expected to grow from 18,758 today to 51,539 by 2046.

A new sports pavilion was developed at the school to support increased participation. The pavilion is located to the north of the school buildings and is easily accessible by the community via Windham Street.

The existing ovals and club facilities at Wallan were at capacity with local Australian rules football clubs and cricket clubs unable to cater for existing demand, let alone future growth.

The new sports pavilion at the school oval is modular with 2 all-gender change rooms, 2 umpire change rooms, accessible toilets with an ambulant shower and baby change facility, kiosk, and storage area.

A Community Joint Use Agreement between Mitchell Shire, Wallan Secondary College, and the Department of Education provides access to the pavilion and oval. Extending the use of the oval for community use after school hours supports the growth of Australian rules football and cricket participation in Wallan and surrounding areas.

PRIORITIES

- ✓ **Facilities are co-located, shared and multi-use to meet a broader range of community service needs and ensure more people can access and have exposure to sport and active recreation, including in schools** – the pavilion's location and management model allows access by the school and local sports clubs. This has resulted in over 940 students accessing the pavilion for weekly PE classes, as well as around 15 hours of club use a week throughout the year for Australian rules football and cricket.
- ✓ **Participation growth for groups that participate less or where current participation is at risk** – since the pavilion opened, the Wallan Football Netball Club has recorded a 38.5% increase in senior women's and girls' participation. The enhanced facilities have been complemented by council's targeted initiatives, including social media campaigns and 'come and try' days promoting Australian rules football for women and girls.

This document is subject to change

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Available at the Sport and Recreation
Victoria [website](#).