



**FEDERATION
COUNCIL**

LOWE SQUARE HOWLONG MASTER PLAN

2022

Reference Number: 25/7204

Adopted by Council: 28 March 2023

Council Resolution Number: 75/2023FC



CREATING OPPORTUNITY CELEBRATING COMMUNITY

Executive Summary

Crown Land Requirements

Low Square is a Crown Reserve No. 30390 which is under the care and control of Federation Council for Public recreation and conservation.

The master plan has been prepared in accordance with section 3.41 of the Crown Land Management Act 2016 and is to be read in conjunction with any other crown land management plans for the site.

Any other plans may include

In addition to a plan of management, the Minister may do any of the following—

- (a) require or permit an applicable Crown land manager of dedicated or reserved Crown land to prepare one or more other plans for the management of the land,
- (b) require an applicable Crown land manager to submit a draft plan to the Minister for approval before it is adopted,
- (c) require an applicable Crown land manager to provide a copy of a plan the manager has made to the Minister even if it does not require the Minister's approval.

Note - Other kinds of plans could include, for example, strategic, financial or business plans.

If a plan requires the Minister's approval before it is adopted, an applicable Crown land manager can adopt the plan under this section only with the approval of the Minister. The Minister may require changes to the plan before giving approval.

The applicable Crown land manager must inform the Minister when the manager intends to exercise functions in a manner inconsistent with an adopted plan. A failure to do so does not, however, affect the validity of the exercise of the function.

Under Councils draft plan of management, the reserves primary use is for public recreation.

The land is defined as community land in accordance with Part 2 Division One of the Local Government Act 1993.

Background

The original Master Plan was developed in 2011 and there has been considerable progress and investment made into the site over the last 10 years. Low Square is the main recreation precinct in Howlong which is located in Federation Council.

The Recreation Reserve is managed by a Section 355 Committee of Management appointed by Council. Each user group is represented on the committee which meets regularly to discuss management issues and future planning.

According to the 2016 census which is the last available data there was a total population of 2777. In recent years, with the trend towards regional living and new employment opportunities in the local area anecdotally there is an increase in total population, predominantly in the younger family age groups.

Howlong is a substantial town 28 kilometres west of Albury and is situated on the Murray River which separates the Australian states of New South Wales and Victoria. The town and Low Square is located on the Riverina Highway.

Low Square is home to a broad range of strong sporting clubs, the redevelopment Community Hall as well as passive recreation facilities including the RSL memorial,

swimming pool and skate park. Longer term planning is critical to ensure that the many users and their future needs are considered to make the most of limited funding, volunteer resources and participation opportunities.

The list of identified projects and the investment required is significant however the master plan provides the framework for future priorities, with the highest being moved forward as opportunities arise but in the shorter term should focus on;

- Redevelopment of the BMX track to a Pump Track facility
- Multi-purpose pavilion servicing the second oval and surrounding clubs
- Lighting upgrades
- Driveway and access improvements
- Ongoing upgrades to allow for efficient maintenance and maintaining amenity



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Methodology

The master planning project was undertaken by an external recreation planning consultant from GippSport Community Solutions and included:

- Completing a review of the original 2011 Master Plan
- Consultation with the user groups and Committee of Management
- Feature Survey works (undertaken by Council)
- Drafting of the agreed priorities
- Review by all parties before adoption

Supporting Information

Literature Review

Federation Council was established on 12 May 2016 and its Corporate Values were adopted in 2017. The priority of the new council is to ensure that the local services valued by our communities were continued, whilst considering ways to provide improvements.

Corporate Values:

Embracing change - We will create our future by being innovative and encouraging new ideas, opportunities and better ways of doing things.

Quality outcomes - We will strive for excellence and to deliver value for money for the community.

Accountability - We will plan well and report on our progress. We will ensure fair and transparent decision-making and take responsibility for our actions.

Collaboration - We support each other as a team and will engage closely with the community.

Customer focus - We will be responsive and accessible to the community. We will be open, respectful and truthful in our dealings.



Section 355 Committees

Under the Local Government Act 1993 Section 355 Council is able to delegate some of its functions to a committee of Council.

Council has a number of Section 355 Committees which are formed to help council perform some of its key functions. These functions usually relate to the care and basic maintenance of facilities, recreation grounds and halls or the running of council events. This is the case at Lowe Square.

Demographic Profile

The Census usual resident population of Federation Council area in 2016 was 12,277, living in 6,378 dwellings with an average household size of 2.23. The ABS Estimated Resident Population 2020 shows projects a growth of 1.3% to 12,598

Located within an agriculturally rich and diverse area on the border of New South Wales and Victoria, the Southern Riverina region is the centre of one of the most productive wool, grain, lamb and beef-cattle growing areas of Australia.

Only three hours from Melbourne, four hours from Canberra and six hours from Sydney, the region boasts a great climate and vibrant atmosphere and is an ideal location for families, businesses and visitors to experience its exceptional lifestyle and opportunities.

2016 Population Data for Howlong (Last available data)

People	2,777
Male	49.9%
Female	50.1%
Median age	47
Families	732
Average people per household	2.3
Median weekly household income	\$1,024



COVID 19

During 2020 and 2021 there has been a significant impact upon community activities and sport. Much of the sport played in Howlong is impacted by restrictions imposed by the Victorian and New South Wales Government, in particular Winter sport has had participation limited. Industry trends also suggest that it will be more difficult to retain and recruit volunteers as life returns to normal.

Sport Participation Trends and Impact on Recreation Planning

Statistics show a continued decline in organised sport participation over the past decade, with the Intergenerational Review of Australian Sport report predicting participation will further drop to 10% of the population by 2030.

While Australians may be turning away from organised formats, particularly around the pre-teen and teen years, they're still participating in sport through a range of informal, community-generated opportunities.

Sporting and Recreation facilities are still important for the formal groups, however participation rates may remain stable or decline there is likely to be an increase in the way that community uses open space, the increased use of the dog park is a good example of that.

Decreasing levels of volunteering, compliance or risk management obligations and other factors are also changing the ways maintenance, use, number and standards of recreational and sporting facilities are being provided by Councils into the future.

Longer term asset management considerations and environmental impact are also being considered as part of infrastructure projects.

2011 Lowe Square Master Plan Review

Over the last 10 years some of the external positive observations of the park include;

- The 2016 Skate Park implementation has added significantly to the community benefit of the site
- Turf quality has improved substantially
- Amenity of the trees and open space has improved with strategic planting
- Quality and range of facilities is excellent
- The Theme throughout the reserve
- There is an opportunity to do more co-location of facilities/ sharing to reduce the overall amount of hard infrastructure
- The work being done by volunteers and community support to all users' groups is very strong

Projects Completed

Project	Value	Included
Community Hall and Football Rooms Upgrade	\$1.7mil	Community Hall to sit 100. New Home and Away Changerooms, Community Gymnasium
Tennis Club Rooms	\$230,000	New accessible purpose built rooms with viewing area
Tennis Court Re-surfacing	\$230,000	Resurfacing of the 6 synthetic tennis courts
Public Toilet upgrade	\$110,000	Upgrade to current standards
BBQ Shelter	\$40,000	Construction of a new shelter to service the redeveloped playground area
Equestrian Sand Arena	\$50,000	Fencing a sand surface for the main arena
Skate Park	\$140,000	Construction of a new entry level concrete skate park
Playground Upgrade	\$140,000	Additional playground equipment
Drainage & Irrigation Upgrades	Maintenance budget	Ongoing improvements
Tree Planting	Maintenance budget	Ongoing tree maintenance work undertaken by the COM
Turf Maintenance	Maintenance budget	Expert turf maintenance practices in place by Council staff



User Groups/ Participation

Consultation with the user groups reflects the current participation levels;

Club Name	Membership Numbers/ Teams/ Status	Use
Howlong Cricket Club	7 teams, including 3 senior and 4 juniors along with 3 Blast programs	Training/ matches and some social use.
Howlong Football Club	4 teams- First-Grade, Reserve-Grade, Under 17s and Under 14s in the Hume Football League. Potential for female football.	Training/ matches/ social functions. The new community gymnasium has attracted regular use of 110 members
Howlong Junior Football (Auskick)	Numbers fluctuate each year with around 20 players.	Sunday program
Howlong Tennis Club	6-8 teams in Night competitions. 3 teams in summer pennant.	Night comps run Monday and Thursday Feb-May, Sep-Dec. And the Summer pennant starts first Saturday of Oct-Mar.
Howlong Netball Club	8 teams along with 2 Net Set Go Programs. Looking towards a summer program.	Training and Game Day
Howlong Pony Club	20 members (including adults)	One rally per month and casual use by members
Howlong Little Athletics	Membership numbers fluctuate each year around 30-60 members	Summer Season on Monday nights
Howlong RSL sub-Branch	The group meets monthly and coordinates local events.	Anzac and Remembrance Day events
Howlong Primary School	208 Students Prep- Grade 6	Limited school use and some interschool activities.
Howlong Swimming Pool	Varies according to season	Operates from Nov – March each year

Utilisation by Day of Week

Usual use as been included in this scheduled without the impact of COVID taken into account.

Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
Little Athletics	Football Training		Football Training		Football Games	Auskick
	Netball Training		Netball Training		Netball Games	
Cricket					Cricket Games	Cricket Games
Night Tennis	Casual Tennis	Casual Tennis	Night Tennis	Casual Tennis	Summer Tennis	Tennis Coaching
Summer Pool Use						
Dog Exercise						
Casual riding	Casual riding	Casual riding	Casual riding	Casual riding	Casual riding	Pony Club Rally
Community Gym						
Community Use of playground, skate park & BMX track						



Infrastructure List/Condition

Condition assessments were not undertaken as part of this master planning process, but a visual inspection was completed with input from Council staff and user groups. A Feature Survey was undertaken by Council to understand the site constraints and projects considered as part of this master plan.

Appendix 3 provides images of the current infrastructure.

Facility Name	Condition	Area's for Improvement
Main Oval & Support Infrastructure	Turf very good condition Coaches Boxes good condition Oval lighting poor standard	Oval Drainage required Electronic scoreboard Lighting design undertaken to be upgraded
Community Hall, Clubrooms & Gymnasium	Recently re-developed and excellent facilities	Nil
Main Entrance/ Driveways/ car parks	Condition varies throughout reserve, not adequate parking on major game days	Main entrance driveway works and additional car parking required. Cricket car parking to be removed from oval surrounds
Second Oval, including Little Athletics	Excellent Condition of turf	Need to maintain versatility for a range of uses along with cricket
Netball Courts & Support Infrastructure	Fantastic support infrastructure and courts in good condition	Courts will need crack repairs and resurfacing in future
Tennis Courts & Club Rooms	Recently upgraded and very good condition	Maintain standard, additional courts not warranted at this time as tournaments only benefit
Playground, Skatepark & Support Infrastructure	Recently upgraded and very good condition	Maintain standard with additional developments to meet community demand
Swimming Pool	Excellent outdoor aquatic facility	As per Councils swimming pool strategy

BMX Track	Average condition and not user friendly	Opportunity to re-design into a pump track
Old Netball Courts	Poor condition and not used other than and overflow car park	Area could be re-developed, visually unappealing but most likely needed for car parking
Equestrian Area	Excellent range and quality of equestrian facilities, however no cross country	Maintain with consideration given to improved access to facilities and parking for equestrian users
Dog Park	Good facility	Users would like an increase in size and storage
Cenotaph/ Memorial Garden	Recently upgraded/ relocated and highly valued	Maintain to its quality standard
Tree Planting & landscaping	The open space areas surrounded by strategic tree planting creates a very pleasant environment	Continue to the tree planting theme, maintain open spaces and develop new infrastructure in keeping of this theme
Storage Facilities	There are a range of storage facilities developed through the site	It is preferable to consolidate facilities and provide shared storage in the preferred colour scheme

Potential location of the proposed community garden



Master Plan Projects

Not all areas for improvements have been included into Master Plan Projects just those identified by the User Groups, Committee of Management or Council to be implemented over the coming 10 years as major projects or as funding becomes available. Smaller projects or maintenance works will be addressed over the coming years in consultation with the committee and Council.

Actions have been given a priority ranking scale using Very High, High, Medium or Low. In some instances, 'ongoing' has been allocated as these tasks are required on a regular basis.

Project Area/ Name	Indicative Cost	Priority
<p>1. Conversion of the BMX Track to a Pump Track</p> <p>Replace existing BMX track with a smaller Pump track facility better suited for community use with support infrastructure.</p> <p>Maintain clear space for future aquatic expansion if needed.</p>	\$150,000	Very High
<p>2. Redeveloped pavilion to service the second oval</p> <p>Replace existing cricket clubs' rooms with pavilion to cater for club and storage needs for cricket, equestrian, Little Athletics, dog users and others as needed. A large social space is not required due to main pavilion/ community hall.</p>	\$500,000	High
<p>3. Cricket Nets Relocation</p> <p>Increase cricket nets to 3 bays and a slight re-location 30-40 metres towards Victoria Street to improve emergency vehicle access to main pavilion.</p>	\$200,000	Medium
<p>4. Old Netball Courts conversion to car park</p> <p>Once the pump track is installed, redevelop courts into gravel overflow car parking</p>	\$200,000	Low
<p>5. Main Entrance entry works-</p> <p>Including re-location of the ticket box, sealing, widening and removal of entrance gates</p> <p>Further improvements to drain/ parking to service tennis club area</p>	<p>\$70,000 Completed 10</p> <p>\$50,000</p>	<p>Very High</p> <p>High</p>

<p>6. Car parking and other driveway improvements</p> <p>Maintain other gravel driveways in good condition and seal major areas if budget allows.</p> <p>Close of western end so that vehicles can not access the second oval. Create new parking areas where possible in this area</p> <p>Allow for a better turning circle for RV dump point</p>	<p>Maintenance budgets</p> <p>Sealing- TBC</p>	<p>Medium and ongoing</p>
<p>7. Tennis Club Improvements</p> <p>Lighting Upgrade after investigation</p> <p>Install Shade Structures for spectators</p>	<p>TBC</p> <p>\$10,000</p>	<p>Medium</p> <p>High</p>
<p>8. Reserve Power to Upgrade Oval Lighting</p> <p>Undertake a lighting design and identify power needs. Consider a link to the tennis lighting project.</p> <p>Upgrade to training standard.</p>	<p>\$284,000</p>	<p>Very High</p>
<p>9. Electrical scoreboard facilities</p> <p>Main oval conversion to electronic and portable electronic facility to service netball/ second oval.</p>	<p>\$20,000</p> <p>\$10,000</p>	<p>Medium</p> <p>Medium</p>
<p>10. Install Sub Surface Oval Drainage works to main oval</p>	<p>\$100,000</p>	<p>High</p>
<p>11. Second Oval Improvements</p> <p>Maintenance improvements have been identified for the Little Athletics facilities to improve use.</p> <p>Consider additional park spectator seating</p>	<p>Ongoing Maintenance</p>	<p>High</p>
<p>12. Tree Planting</p> <p>Ongoing strategic tree planting and completion of a GPS tracking project to monitor existing trees.</p>	<p>Ongoing Maintenance</p> <p>\$6K</p>	<p>Very High</p>

13. Irrigation System Improvements Works around tennis facilities, second oval, dog park, additional open space near playground and in other areas as required	Ongoing Maintenance	High
14. Community Garden To be considered for future development in area near public toilets/ playground if community support increases	\$80,000	Low
15. Equestrian area Replace existing yards with treated pine and ongoing maintenance. A relocation of pony club has not been forecast in this Master Plan	\$20,000	Medium
16. Netball facilities Plan for crack repairs and resurfacing, pave unsealed spectator areas and consider additional shelter over tiered seating.	\$120,000	High
17. Playground area Potential expansion to include more play equipment, 3x3 basketball area, accessible drink fountain	Ongoing improvements	Medium
Total	\$ 1,750,000	

Other important considerations when implementing the Master Plan:

- Painting (Woodland Grey) & Signage theme to be continued throughout the reserve
- Protection of existing assets is important and maintaining open space for community benefit and multi use is important, so additional fencing is not necessarily recommended.
- Formal sport participation trends are likely to change
- Adhoc storage or additional structures is not recommended, consolidation and haring of facilities is the preference
- There is a huge volume of work done by volunteers that needs to be supported, however decision making to be done by consultation at Committee level for decision making by Council. Future reliance on volunteers for maintenance or fundraising is not feasible.

Appendix

1. Site Survey & Site Plan
(Held by Council)
2. Outcomes of Public Consultation
3. Photos

Disclaimer of liability

The information contained in this report is intended for the specific use of the key stakeholders that have provided input into this planning project.

All recommendations by GippSport Community Solutions are based on information provided by or on behalf of the Committee of Management, User Groups and Council and it has relied upon such information being correct at the time this report has been prepared.

Readers should note this report might include implicit projections about the future, which by their nature, are uncertain and cannot be relied upon. They are dependent on potential events or technical assessments, which have not yet occurred.



References

The following references have been used in the development of this report:

- Government websites – Planning scheme data and maps, grant information.
- Federation Council website and relevant planning documents.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics – Population data.
- Sport Australia resources
- Other Recreation studies and strategies as identified in the document



Appendix 2

Outcomes of Public Consultation






Following public consultation, a number of submissions were received and discussed by the committee.

The following table summarises issues raised in relation to the plan.

9 submissions received against the removal of the basketball courts for overflow carparking.	Low Square committee agreed with these submissions and recommended that they be noted on the master plan. A further proposal was put forward for a multi-purpose court in this area.
1 submission stated that the costing of the pump track was too low.	Noted – Costs to be updated prior to seeking funding
1 submission was the location of the cricket nets on the Master Plan and also carparking and other driveway improvements.	Noted – Further discussion to be undertaken with relevant user groups prior to finalisation of this aspect of the plan

While it is recorded in the minutes of the Committee meeting that the Low Square Master Plan is a living document it should be noted that alterations to the Master Plan may require consent of the Crown and or Council.

Appendix 3

Facility Name	Images	
<p>Main Oval & Support Infrastructure</p>		
<p>Community Hall, Clubrooms & Gymnasium</p>		
<p>Main Entrance/ Driveways/ car parks</p>		

**Second Oval,
including Little
Athletics**



**Netball Courts &
Support
Infrastructure**



**Tennis Courts &
Club Rooms**



**Playground,
Skatepark &
Support
Infrastructure**



Swimming Pool



BMX Track



Old Netball Courts



Equestrian Area



Dog Park



**Cenotaph/
Memorial Garden**



**Tree Planting &
landscaping**



Storage Facilities

