Name	COM03 Sport and Recreation
Policy Type	Council
Responsible Officer	Director Governance and Community
Approval Date	16/11/2026
Review Date	15/11/2030

1. Purpose

This policy establishes a framework for the planning, provision and management of sport and recreation opportunities, including the roles of Council and community groups and the prioritisation of resources.

Sport and Recreation are important to the Litchfield lifestyle, providing health, social and economic benefits to the community.

Council will work collaboratively with the community and other levels of government to support well-planned, coordinated and sustainable sport and recreation facilities and opportunities that encourage community participation.

2. Scope

This policy applies to Council Members, employees, consultants and contractors involved in the planning, provision and management of sport and recreation facilities and services on behalf of Litchfield Council.

3. Definitions

For the purposes of this Policy, the following definitions apply:

Council	Litchfield Council, being the elected body constituted under the Local Government Act.
Recreation	Any structured or unstructured, active or passive activity undertaken during leisure time for enjoyment, relaxation or physical, mental and social wellbeing.
Sport	Any activity involving physical exertion or skill that may be undertaken individually or in teams, generally involving organised participation or competition.

4. Policy Statement

4.1. Defining Council's Responsibility

4.1.1. Council has a primary role in providing leadership in planning for sport and recreation and in supporting existing and future partnerships with the community to provide a diverse range of opportunities. Council will fulfil this role by:

- Recognising and promoting sport and recreation is important to the Litchfield community and ensuring that a minimum level of service as defined in the Sports and Recreation Provision Framework outlined in Table 1 of this policy, be delivered.
- Ensuring that existing parks, reserves and facilities managed by Council are maintained effectively and that committees and lessees managing reserves and facilities maintain facilities to the agreed standards as per their funding agreements and applicable asset management requirements.
- Advocating for external funding from the Northern Territory and Commonwealth Governments to support minimum service provisions and future asset management requirements.
- Planning ahead for the upgrading of existing facilities and the provision of new facilities and ensuring that planning undertaken by others for community sport and recreation facilities is realistic, sustainable and at a suitable standard for public use.
- Continuing to develop and strengthen Council's partnerships with lessees, community groups and other agencies to deliver a range of sport and recreation opportunities.
- Establishing and supporting partnerships with community groups (either as lessees or management committees) who manage and maintain reserves and facilities, through the provision of advice, and/or financial support, assistance with funding applications and support for long term planning.

4.2. Key Principles

4.2.1. In achieving the vision, Council will be guided by the following key principles for the planning and provision of sport and recreation facilities, services and programs:

- *A holistic planning approach* – sport and recreation crosses over many areas of Council governance and provides a broad range of benefits and therefore will not be managed in isolation.
- *Access* – all members of the community will have the opportunity to participate in sport and recreation regardless of age, ability, gender, sexual orientation, cultural background or socio-economic status.
- *Equity* – sport and recreation activities and interests vary widely within the community, and each has equal legitimacy. Council recognises that all residents

should have the opportunity to participate in a spectrum of recreational opportunities.

- *Innovation* – seeking innovative solutions to new challenges that emerge due to population change and sport and recreation trends.
- *Minimise duplication* – efficient use of community assets to meet needs is a core principle, and duplication of sport and recreation facilities is not desirable, including those provided by Territory Government Departments such as Education.
- *Maximise efficient use* – ensure community assets are efficiently and effectively used to meet current and future community needs.
- *Environmental and economic sustainability* – ensuring sport and recreation initiatives preserve natural resources, achieve sustainable environmental outcomes and support the local economy.
- *Sustainability, Adaption and Resilience* – Council will consider the impact of climate change in the planning, development and management of sport, recreation and open spaces to ensure facilities and natural environment, sustainable and resilient for future generations.
- *Responsible asset management* – a sustainable approach to sport and recreation asset management with a focus on supporting financially viable multi-use and shared facilities, minimising unplanned maintenance costs and appropriately planning for asset renewal.
- *Social and cultural wellbeing* – using sport and recreation as a vehicle for bringing the community together and providing opportunities for social interaction and healthy lifestyles.
- *Positive partnerships with individuals and groups* – working collaboratively with the community, government agencies, sport and recreation bodies and the private sector in planning provision and management of sport and recreation.

4.3. Policy Implementation

4.3.1. Council will implement this policy through:

- Adoption of the Sport, Recreation and Open Space Strategy Policy and establishment of an objective framework for prioritising new requests for support or investment.
- Considering an annual budget for sport and recreation that is sufficient to meet the policy outcomes, and which increases in line with needs such as population growth.
- Continuing to advocate to the Northern Territory and Commonwealth Governments for continued funding for the ongoing development of sport and recreation facilities in line with the Sport and Recreation Provision Framework.

- Seeking external capital funding sources and supporting grant applications to enable investment in new or upgraded facilities in line with Council's Asset Management Plans (AMPs) as they are developed.
- Ensuring development of recreation reserves, sporting facilities and recreation facilities occurs in such a way to provide sustainable long-term access to the community.
- Advocating to the Northern Territory and Commonwealth Governments for all new developments to receive a minimum level of service in regard to sport and recreation opportunities.
- Considering the key principles of this policy when planning and developing all new infrastructure.

4.4. Policy Considerations

4.4.1. Sport and Recreation Benefits

4.4.1.1. The provision of sport and recreation opportunities is essential for the physical, social, environmental and economic health of the Litchfield community. Council recognises and values the benefits of sport and recreation in enhancing regional health and wellbeing outcomes through increased physical activity, supporting community inclusion and connection, and improving mental health and wellbeing. Therefore, for all investment in sport and recreation opportunities, Council is committed to assessing its value of return across the following dimensions:

- Health: Health and physical activity opportunities
- Social: Community integration and social interaction, and
- Economic: Support and development of local economies

4.4.2. Limited Resources and Priorities

4.4.2.1. Investment in sport and recreation opportunities requires consideration of limited resources, including land. Therefore, the expectation is that a range of resourcing opportunities will be obtained to maximise the sport and recreation opportunity 'return'. This can be done by:

- Establishing strategic partnerships, such as with the Northern Territory and Commonwealth Governments to maximise return on existing land and facilities already provided in the community.
- Improving community access to sport and recreation facilities within school campuses to avoid the need for duplication through advocacy to the Northern Territory Government.
- Ensuring all Council facilities are managed in accordance with applicable lease agreements and agreed service levels to maximise benefits.

- Using available financial and other resources in the most efficient way to encourage multiple use and shared investment in viable facilities. This can include hard decisions where Council needs to choose the most viable of two options and withdraw support for the other.
- Creating an information-rich environment for community groups, residents and visitors that ensures resource sharing and awareness of opportunities.
- Building capacity within the community to manage local sport and recreation clubs and groups and providing an environment that nurtures these groups and that encourages sustainability and good management.
- Ensuring that any support or investment for new facilities is based on feasibility or business case analysis demonstrating its viability. This includes ensuring that existing facilities are being used effectively before considering new facilities.

4.4.3. Managing Reserves

4.4.3.1. There are eight (8) existing reserves that comprise the main provision of sport, recreation, and open space for the Litchfield community. In keeping with the strong history of community partnership, the planning and management of these, and any future reserves, should be undertaken within a partnership framework. Council's preference is to have a formal lease and funding arrangements in place where possible.

In general, the preferred approach is:

1. *Formal Lease* - For large multi-user reserves, a formal lease should be agreed and entered into with an incorporated community based, not for profit, organisation (such as a community board, incorporated management committee, sporting club or regional sports association). The responsibilities of the lessee will be supported with an annual contribution from Council as determined by their funding agreement.
2. *Community Advisory Group* - Where a lease may not be possible, or there are no suitable organisations willing to become the lessee, then a community advisory group should be established to help engage the local community and provide input into planning and management decision making.
3. *Council Managed with Community Engagement* - Where neither of the above options are possible then Council will manage the reserve. Council will seek to engage with the community on the development of future plans for the reserve. Council will also encourage the establishment of

regular users within the reserve with the aim to develop over time increased community involvement in reserve management.

4. *Council Managed* - Small parks and undeveloped reserves will be managed by Council.

4.4.4. Asset Management Plans

4.4.4.1. To ensure that Council has sufficient assets that can be sustainably maintained over the long-term, Asset Management Plans (AMPs) are paramount. AMPs provide Council with a clear understanding of how to manage and maintain its infrastructure and other assets to designated standards and service levels in a planned and sustainable way. Council does not currently have specific AMPs for its recreational reserves. To support the management of Council's open space assets, future demand, risks, regulatory requirements, AMPs for recreation reserves are to be included in Council's asset management planning process.

4.4.4.2. AMPs are to be developed for Council's recreation reserves. Once developed, these plans will provide Council with an accurate picture of the condition and status of all assets located at each reserve. The AMPs will also establish standards of service, estimated capital expenditure requirements and review dates to support the sustainable planning, construction, maintenance and operation of Council's sport and recreation facilities and associated services.

4.4.5. Sport and Recreation Provision Framework

4.4.5.1. The provision of sport, recreation and open space should be provided both equitably and sustainably across the Litchfield Municipality and should also be responsive to future growth needs. The framework outlined below draws on the existing approach to the levels of service being provided to reserves across Litchfield. This approach has been predominantly reactive, whereby Council maintains existing infrastructure, and undertakes repairs and maintenance, to the highest level of standard possible within existing budget allocations. Additional resourcing to address arising critical needs is assessed and implemented on a case-by-case basis. The following framework categorises reserves into a hierarchy of provision and identifies current minimum standards of service that Council will continue to work against until appropriate detailed AMPs are developed. The table of Minimum Levels of Service below is based on this approach.

Table 1: Sport and Recreation Provision Framework

Hierarchy of Provision	Service Catchment	Minimum Level of Service	Develop, Support & Advocate
Regional			
Freds Pass Sport & Recreation Reserve	Within the Local Government Area.	Maintain existing infrastructure, and undertake repairs and maintenance, to the highest level of standard within existing budget allocations.	Develop an Asset Management Plan. Improved infrastructure and facilities in line with Freds Pass Sport and Rec Masterplan.
Nature Based Recreation		**Minimum Level of Service**	**Develop, Support & Advocate**
Knuckey Lagoon Recreation Reserve (KLRR)	Within ten minutes' drive for 80% of residents.	Maintain existing infrastructure and undertake repairs and maintenance, to the highest level of standard within existing budget allocations.	Develop an Asset Management Plan. Develop a Council endorsed Masterplan to guide infrastructure and facility development; and advocacy for funding – including grants.
McMinns Lagoon Recreation Reserve	Within ten minutes' drive for 80% of residents.	Maintain existing infrastructure, and undertake repairs and maintenance, to the highest level of standard within existing budget allocations.	Develop an Asset Management Plan. Develop a Council endorsed Masterplan to guide infrastructure and facility development; and advocacy for funding – including grants.
Township Sport & Recreation		**Minimum Level of Service**	**Develop, Support & Advocate**
Howard Park Recreation Reserve	Within ten minutes' drive for 80% of residents.	Maintain existing infrastructure, and undertake repairs and maintenance, to the highest level of standard within existing budget allocations.	Develop an Asset Management Plan. Develop a Council endorsed Reserve specific Masterplan to guide infrastructure and facility development; and advocacy for funding – including grants.
Berry Springs Recreation Reserve	Within ten minutes' drive for 80% of residents.	Maintain existing infrastructure, and undertake repairs and maintenance, to the highest level of standard within existing budget allocations.	
Livingstone Recreation Reserve	Within ten minutes' drive for 80% of residents.	Maintain existing infrastructure, and undertake repairs and maintenance, to the highest level of standard within existing budget allocations.	

Humpty Doo Village Green	Within ten minutes' drive for 80% of residents.	Maintain existing infrastructure, and undertake repairs and maintenance, to the highest level of standard within existing budget allocations.	
Mira Square	Within ten minutes' drive for 80% of residents.	Maintain existing infrastructure, and undertake repairs and maintenance, to the highest level of standard within existing budget allocations.	
Urban		**Minimum Level of Service**	**Develop, Support & Advocate**
Only applicable in small lot development area such as Coolalinga and new housing estates	Within 500m walk for 90% of residents.	Maintain existing infrastructure, and undertake repairs and maintenance, to the highest level of standard within existing budget allocations.	Develop an Asset Management Plan Access to park of a minimum size of 0.5 Ha. Access to play space. Access to picnic facilities. Park must provide access to water, have good road frontage (preferred 50%).

5. Associated Documents

Sport, Recreation and Open Space Strategy 2021-2031

6. References and Legislation

Northern Territory Local Government Act 2019

7. Review History

Date Reviewed	Description of changes
16/06/2021	New policy adopted
16/11/2026	Policy reviewed and updated to reflect current practices, with minor amendments.