

Opposition to Synthetic Turf is Growing

The Natural Turf Alliance

Our sporting fields are being replaced by fake turf. Community Groups all over Sydney are fighting Councils over the installation of synthetic turf on our playing fields without real consideration of natural grass alternatives.

Why are grass fields being replaced with synthetic turf?

With population growth there is increasing demand for playing fields, particularly for organised sports like soccer. Sports clubs argue that capacity to play can be increased by at least 50% when a grass field is converted to synthetic turf.

The planning legislation (Part V of the Planning Act) facilitates the installation of synthetic turf as councils can currently proceed without public consultation provided the council satisfies themselves that the environmental impacts are not significant or can be mitigated.

When community consultation has taken place, it has generally been focused on feedback from sporting clubs. In many cases, the local community is largely unaware of the proposed development until it's approved by council.

What's happening in the Hornsby and Ku-ring-gai Shires?

After the rejection of a synthetic playing field in Mimosa Oval in South Turrumurra, Ku-ring-gai Council is now proceeding with the detailed planning for synthetic turf at Norman Griffiths Oval in West Pymble. A further development at Warrimoo Oval in St Ives is under consideration after rejection of a synthetic field at the Barra Bruil Oval site.

In Hornsby, the draft master plan for Westleigh and



Hornsby Parks includes provision for synthetic turf fields for local sporting clubs.

Many other local councils throughout Sydney, including Sydney, Hunters Hills, Mosman, Lane Cove and the Northern Beaches are at various stages of planning to install synthetic turf.

There are strong environmental and community concerns

There is growing opposition from local communities due to community, environmental and health concerns.

- Synthetic fields are largely designed to cater for one sport and restrict other sporting and community access due to construction requirements.

- Scientific evidence suggests that when the air temperature is over about 30°C, the surfaces of synthetic fields become excessively hot (over 60°C) making the field unusable.
- There's growing evidence of injuries to soccer and other players caused by falls on synthetic turf pitches. These surfaces are not safer than grass.
- There is increasing evidence from existing synthetic fields that microplastics together with infill and chemicals will enter our waterways, damaging sensitive natural ecosystems in urban areas.
- The use of synthetic turf leads to loss of natural areas that provide foraging area for birds and space for soil organisms. In our increasingly urbanised environment, we should be trying to preserve our precious natural environments for future generations.

Is there a better alternative to synthetic turf?

In a recent online meeting organised by David Shoebridge, case studies presented by turf experts showed how a properly constructed and maintained grass surface can provide enhanced use of playing fields whilst maintaining community access and minimising environmental damage.

There is already evidence that a properly maintained natural grass sports field like Middle Head Oval in Mosman will allow use throughout both winter and summer by sports groups and the local community. These fields are sensitive to the local environment and have proven to be more cost effective over a 20-year life cycle than a synthetic surface.

Councils should consider all options before proceeding

In March 2021, NSW Planning Minister Rob Stokes asked his department to investigate sustainable alternatives to synthetic turf amid growing concerns about its impacts, saying:

"I am sufficiently concerned about the environmental impacts ... and will ask the Department to examine what alternative technologies or techniques exist to maximise the use of community sporting facilities without hurting our environment".

What can communities do to raise these issues with council?

It's time for state and local government to review their approach to the management of our playing fields. Councils should explore all natural grass alternatives before proceeding to put synthetic turf in our valuable parks and playing fields.

If you have concerns about synthetic playing fields in your area, please let your local MP and councillors know now. Plans are already progressing fast.

You can give your feedback to councils and state government now by signing the petition at www.change.org/nosyntheticurf - or scan the QR code below.

Contact the Natural Turf Alliance At: naturalturfalliance@gmail.com



Above: Proposed Norman Griffiths Oval Development

Don't put synthetic turf on Sydney's ovals
Support Sydney's Natural Green Spaces
 Scan QR Code or visit change.org/nosyntheticurf

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