

16 REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR INFRASTRUCTURE AND OPERATIONS

16.1 Funding support: Gerringong Rugby League Football Club

- CSP Objective: Outcome 2.1: We protect our people, place and biodiversity through thoughtful planning and actions, preserving the natural environment that defines our spectacular landscapes.
- CSP Strategy: 2.1.2 Celebrate and protect our natural environment by promoting its value and preserving scenic landscapes, while developing strategies for current and future generations.
- Delivery Program: 2.1.2.2 Protect natural areas through restoration and protection projects at priority sites on Council owned/managed land where grant funding is available for non-operational activities.

Summary

The Gerringong Rugby League Football Club (GRLFC) is seeking Council's support for a proposal to undertake drainage upgrade works at Michael Cronin Oval, Gerringong.

Financial implication

Although the GRLFC are expecting this project will be fully funded by the club through self-funding, donated plant and labour costs, and the expectation of a successful grant to cover materials costs, in accordance with the recently adopted '*Works on Council Owned Facilities and Managed Land (Funding Support) Policy*', this project would be deemed as major works and require the oversight and project management by Council staff estimated at \$33,000. These costs have not been included into any project estimates or grant funding applications and must occur owing to the leasing policy.

Similarly, other associated project costs related to survey investigations of existing services, geotechnical investigations, soil testing for potential contaminants, materials disposal, review of environmental factors, site safety, WHS, site re-establishment and contingencies have not been included, but have been estimated at approximately \$100,000 (depending soil contamination results) which raises concerns about the financial risk of these potential costs.

While this project may be considered worthwhile, it is not included in Council's current Delivery or Operational Plans and accordingly there is no budget allocation for this work. Council have previously provided the GRLFC with a letter of 'In-Principle' support for a grant application for this project on the basis that all costs related to Council's project management, along with all other project costs would need to be funded by the GRLFC as part of a conditional agreement before any Landowner's consent is issued by Council.

This has been advised to the GRLFC on numerous occasions by Council staff and the CEO and that there should be no expectation that should latent conditions arise that result in additional costs, that Council would fund any shortfalls or rectify incomplete works.

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Risk implication

In addition to the financial risks outlined above, under the *'Works on Council Owned Facilities and Managed Land (Funding Support) Policy'*, major projects such as this would be managed by Council with investigations, design and specifications developed before a request for quotation or tender are issued. In this instance, the GRLFC is proposing to self-fund the work utilising a local licensed plumbing company to act as the head contractor.

This contractor would be responsible for all regulatory compliance, on-site management and delivery of the project and is donating all plant and labour costs. The approved appointment of this contractor would need to satisfy all of Council's licensing and insurance requirements, along with risk, safety, quality and environmental management statutory requirements. The reliance on a local company to volunteer their services to undertake an accelerated construction program, while commendable, creates risk should latent condition arise or wet weather substantially extend to project's duration or cost.

There is also a risk this proposed engineering solution will not achieve the desired drainage outcomes as expected by the community. The GRLFC has indicated that this proposal is the first stage of planned future works to augment this drainage system, which will result in the need for future field closures and disruptions.

Policy

Works on Council Owned Facilities and Managed Land (Funding Support) Policy

Consultation (internal)

Director Infrastructure & Operations, Manager Engineering & Technical Services,
Manager Property & Commercial

Communication/Community engagement

Gerringong Rugby League Football Club

Kiama District Sport Association

Attachments

Nil

Enclosures

- 1 Application - Gerringong RLFC - Redacted [⇒](#)

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

1. Endorse in-principle support for the drainage improvements at Michael Cronin Oval, noting that as advised by the Chief Executive Officer any project shortfalls will not be funded by Kiama Municipal Council.
2. Continue to assist the Gerringong Rugby League Football Club (GRLFC) to seek grant funding for the completion of the full drainage improvements at the Oval.

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3. Issue conditional Landowner's Consent to the GRLFC to undertake the first stage of drainage improvements subject to:
- (a) Council staff providing project management and supervision of the project as per the Council policy and as advised by the Chief Executive Officer.
 - (b) The GRLFC agreeing to fund all costs for this project including (a) above.
 - (c) The GRLFC nominating a head contractor with suitable qualifications, experience, licenses and insurances.
 - (d) The nominated head contractor being responsible for all statutory and regulatory compliance including (but not limited to) risk, safety, quality and environmental management.
 - (e) The nominated head contractor being responsible for the delivery of the project to the Council's and GRLFC satisfaction.
 - (f) No work commencing on the site until written approval is issued by Council.

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Background

The Gerringong Rugby League Football Club (GRLFC) have made application to Council for a proposal to undertake drainage upgrade works at Michael Cronin Oval, Gerringong. The GRLFC has advised that following recent weather events and lack of adequate drainage within the reserve, the playing surface has deteriorated significantly resulting in repetitive field closures. Council acknowledges the work that GRLFC members and volunteers do in maintaining the reserve and the impacts the current situation is having on scheduled matches and club operations

To address this issue, the GRLFC is proposing to install subsoil drainage at 10 metre intervals across the entire field as an initial first stage of drainage improvements. The subsoil drainage will be connected into a series of pits and pipes before entering into the nearby Council owned stormwater network. Concept drawings and materials cost estimates have been provided by a local licensed plumbing company who have claimed experience in this type of work and will act as head contractor. The GRLFC have indicated that the plant and labour costs for the project will be donated by the head contractor, but there is a shortfall of approximately \$40,000 to cover the materials cost. The GRLFC is seeking to commence work in October 2026 to have the work completed and the field re-established before the start of the 2027 season.

The GRLFC formally submitted an application in accordance with the recently adopted '*Works on Council Owned Facilities and Managed Land (Funding Support) Policy*' on 24 July 2026. Council have met with the GRLFC to discuss the proposal and have advised that in accordance with the Policy, this project would be deemed as major works and require the oversight and project management by Council staff, which was not factored into the project cost estimates. Council's current internal resourcing would not support this activity without impacting or deferring the delivery of existing capital projects. An external project manager would likely need to be engaged at an estimated cost of ~\$33,000.

Similarly, the proposal currently does not include:

- Survey investigation of existing services;

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- Geotechnical investigations to confirm rock levels and material types;
- Soil testing for potential contaminants;
- Excavated material disposal to landfill costs;
- Review of Environmental Factors (REF);
- Turf reinstatement, aeration, maintenance costs;
- Quality assurance / Control and future asset handover documentation;
- Site safety and WHS
- Contingency allowances for other latent conditions that may arise.

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These have been estimated at approximately \$100,000 depending on test results.

In terms of the design, as noted above the GRLFC design is conceptual and based on the installation of subsoil drainage at 10 metre intervals across the entire field as shown in the attachments. By comparison, recent similar drainage systems completed at Gainsborough and Gerry Emery Ovals had an average interval of approximately 2.5 metres. As there has been no geotechnical investigation of the soil types or rock levels, there is risks that the proposed drainage system may not perform as intended.

Based on the size of Michael Cronin Oval, it is expected that the investigation, design and construction of a full drainage system similar to the above projects would have a cost in the order of \$350,000 and would avoid the need for future excavation and disruption to the field and deliver a fit for purpose solution. Council would oversee delivery of the project and manage all risks in relation to procurement processes, contractor capability, financial due diligence, project governance, risk management and quality assurance.

The GRLFC were advised that as the project is not included in Council's current Delivery and Operational Plans there is no budget allocation for this work, however Council staff would continue to work with the club in applying for future grants for the full scope of works. Council have recently provided the GRLFC with a letter of conditional 'In-Principle' support with less than 24 hours notice, to enable the submission of a grant application on 29 July 2026 for the \$40,000 materials cost shortfall. The outcome of this application is pending but is not expected to cover the full costs of the project as outlined above.

The GRLFC are concerned that delays in commencement of any drainage works, while awaiting future grant applications outcomes will impact on their upcoming season and as such wish to proceed with their proposal as submitted and seek Landowner's Consent to proceed.

Council is supportive of its sporting clubs and understand the value of drainage works in improving ground conditions and ability to play.