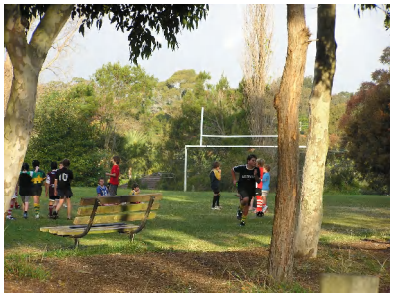
WILLOUGHBY CITY COUNCIL

RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE ISSUES PAPER



FINAL REPORT

NOVEMBER 2009

PARKLAND
ENVIRONMENTAL
PLANNERS

WILLOUGHBY CITY COUNCIL

RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE ISSUES PAPER

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This document is a discussion paper regarding the current status and future direction for open space and recreation in Willoughby City.

Willoughby City is located about 9 kilometres north of the Sydney central business district. The City borders the Lane Cove River to the west, Middle Harbour to the east, and Lane Cove local government area to the south, and Ku-ring-gai LGA to the north. Willoughby includes the key commercial centres of Chatswood and St Leonards, and smaller centres such as Northbridge.

Willoughby City is known as the City of Diversity, as an attractive place to live, work and visit. Key features of Willoughby are:

- Regional retail centres (Westfield, Chatswood Chase)
- Cultural centre (Chatswood Concourse).
- Educational hubs (TAFE Northern Sydney Institute, UTS – St Leonards campus).
- Health centres (Royal North Shore Hospital).
- Highways and arterial roads (Pacific Highway, Gore Hill Freeway, Eastern Valley Way).
- North Shore rail line (stations at Artarmon, Chatswood and St Leonards).
- Industrial areas at Artarmon and East Roseville.

Suburbs in Willoughby are Artarmon, Castle Cove, Castlecrag, Chatswood, Chatswood West, Lane Cove North, Middle Cove, Naremburn, Northbridge, North Willoughby, Roseville, St Leonards, Willoughby, and Willoughby East.

Willoughby also has diverse open space and recreation settings, ranging from waterways, bushland, parks and gardens, sporting fields and courts, and built recreation facilities such as lawn bowling clubs.

1.2 Purpose of this paper

Council requires a review and update of the recreation and open space plans which were prepared for the City in the mid-1990s. Council wishes to recognise completed actions and new issues regarding open space and recreation that have arisen in the meantime, and place such issues in the context of recent changes to legislation and strategic recreation and open space planning at State and regional levels.

Issues that have arisen since the mid-1990s include the increasing demand for sporting fields in Willoughby, and the at-capacity use of the Willoughby Leisure Centre for indoor sport and recreation.

This paper will be used as the basis of consultations as part of preparing a new Open Space and Recreation Plan and Action Plans.

1.3 Scope of this paper

The scope of this project is to address open space and recreation issues in the City of Willoughby.

'Recreation' and 'leisure' are terms that are perceived to have a similar meaning. Marriott (2004) differentiates them by defining leisure as a "state of mind or an experience". Leisure can be achieved by using settings or involving oneself in activities which are freely chosen, which provide a range of benefits to participants and others, and which are not unduly detrimental to the wider community or environment. Recreation can be defined as a range of activities which provide the means by which leisure experiences are achieved.

For the purposes of this paper, recreation is considered as an activity, voluntarily undertaken, primarily for pleasure and satisfaction during leisure time (Pigram, 1983). Recreation undertaken in parks and other public open space is considered to be outdoor recreation.

The term 'leisure' has a wider meaning than does recreation, including free and committed time available for rest or recreation, such as watching television or reading. Thus, 'recreation' has a narrower focus than 'leisure'.

A sport is generally an activity that:

- is a form of recreation.
- involves competitive physical activity, or training for such activities.
- is usually organised or structured, being governed by a set of rules or customs.
- can be undertaken as an individual or as part of a team.
- can be undertaken outdoors or indoors.

Open space can be considered as outdoor settings that are used for recreation, such as natural areas, water and foreshore areas, parkland, sport grounds, play spaces, formal gardens, and linear walking and cycling tracks.

Recreation facilities and settings in local government areas outside Willoughby have been considered where relevant, because they add to the supply of recreation opportunities which are available to Willoughby residents.

Castle Cove Golf Course

1.4 Aims and objectives of this paper

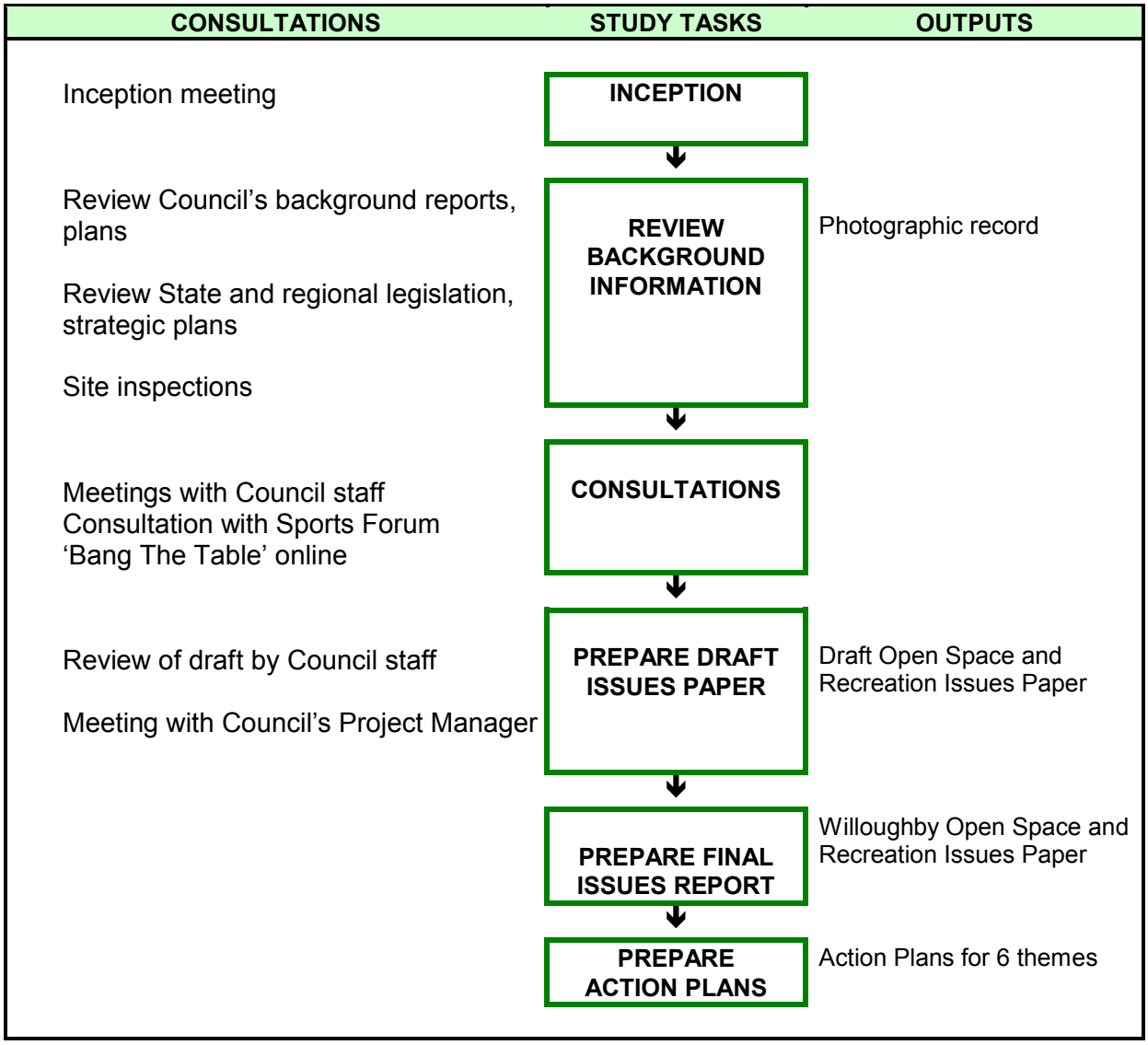
Willoughby City Council wish to:

- ❒ review and update the Recreation Plan (1993), Summary Recreation Plan (1995) and Open Space Plan (1996).
- ❒ present a 'Report card' in terms of whether Council has achieved the recommended actions in the Recreation and Open Space Plans.
- ❒ outline the current trends, legislation and planning context that influence open space and recreation planning, provision and management.
- ❒ provide the basis for further consultations with residents and recreation groups about the future direction for open space and recreation in Willoughby.

1.5 Process of preparing this paper

The tasks involved in preparing this Issues Paper are set out in **Figure 1.1**.

Figure 1.1 Process of preparing this paper



1.6 Contents of this report

This report contains the following sections:

- Section 2: State, regional and local legislation, policies and plans affecting provision of open space and recreation opportunities.
- Section 3: supply of open space and recreation facilities and settings.
- Section 4: demand for open space and recreation opportunities, as indicated by demographic analysis and population forecasts and participation trends.
- Section 5: assessment of provision of open space and recreation opportunities in 6 themes:
    - informal recreation.
    - connections and travel on trails and routes.
    - participation in sport.
    - access to water.
    - swimming facilities.
    - interaction with nature.
- Section 6: Conclusion.

2 PLANNING CONTEXT

2.1 State government legislation and policies

2.1.1 Legislation

Several key pieces of legislation influence the provision of open space and recreation opportunities in Willoughby as follows.

Local Government Act 1993

The *Local Government Act 1993* requires Councils to identify, classify and manage land that it owns. Public land that is classified as community land generally includes parks and other open spaces. Under the Act, Councils are required to prepare Plans of Management for community land. Willoughby Council has prepared Plans of Management for all its community land, mainly parks, reserves and bushland areas. Councils are also required to categorise community land as either natural area (foreshore, watercourse, wetland, bushland), sportsground, park, area of cultural significance, or general community use. Core objectives for management apply to each category of community land.

Under the Act, Councils are also required to prepare an annual State of Environment report, in which information on open space, recreation and natural resources is usually presented.

Local Government Amendment (Planning & Reporting) Bill 2009

In June 2009 the Department for Local Government introduced to Parliament the Local Government Amendment (Planning and Reporting) Bill. The Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) package proposes to change the way in which local government is required to conduct their corporate planning. Councils are now required to prepare a Community Strategic Plan to identify the community's main priorities and expectations for the future and to plan strategies to achieve these goals.

Crown Lands Act 1989

The *Crown Lands Act 1989* governs the planning, management and use of Crown land, including reservation or dedication for a public purpose such as Public Recreation, and leasing and licensing. The Department of Lands is responsible for management of the Crown reserve system throughout NSW. However, most of the Crown land in Willoughby is under the care, control and management of Council.

Crown land must be managed and used according to:

- the public purpose of the reserve.
- case law.
- any conditions and provisions within the zoning that applies in Council's Local Environmental Plan and State Environmental Planning Policies.
- the principles of Crown land management, which are to:

observe environmental protection principles in relation to the management and administration of Crown land.

conserve the natural resources of Crown land (including water, soil, flora, fauna, and scenic quality) wherever possible.

encourage public use and enjoyment of appropriate Crown land.

encourage multiple use of Crown land, where appropriate.

use and manage Crown land in such a way that both the land and its resources are sustained in perpetuity, where appropriate.

occupy, use, sell, lease, license, or otherwise deal with Crown land in the best interests of the State, consistent with the above principles.

Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979

The Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 and the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2000* provide the basis for preparing land-use planning instruments, including State Environmental Planning Policies, Regional Environmental Plans, and Local Environmental Plans.

The EPA Act also sets out processes for development and building approvals of developments on public and private land in Parts 4 and 5 of the Act.

The EPA Act enables Councils and other planning authorities to levy developers for a land, monetary or in-kind contribution towards the costs of providing community infrastructure.

Other legislation and requirements

Numerous other Acts and Regulations relate to the planning and management of recreation facilities and open space, including:

- ❒ access for people with disabilities: Disability Discrimination Act 1992.
- ❒ companion animals management: Companion Animals Act 1998.
- ❒ environmental management requirements: including the Noxious Weeds Act, Heritage Act, and pollution control.
- ❒ quality of buildings and structures: such as Australian Standards for play equipment and softfall, and the Building Code of Australia.

2.1.2 Strategic plans

NSW State Plan

A key priority (E8) of the NSW State Plan (2006) for 'Environment and Living' is:

'More people using parks, sporting and recreation facilities, and participating in the arts and cultural activity'.

The Department of Arts, Sport and Recreation is responsible for meeting targets for this priority, including to increase:

- the number of visits to State government parks and reserves by 20% by 2016.
- the number of people participating in sporting activities and physical exercise by 10% by 2016.

The NSW Government is committed to operating a sport development program and facilities to support sport and recreation organisations in NSW, and providing recreational boating infrastructure through the Sharing Sydney Harbour Access Program.

New directions that the State Government will consider to achieve the above targets include promoting the Healthy Parks / Healthy People program, and developing a more strategic approach with local government to improve their sporting and recreational facilities.

Game Plan 2012

Game Plan 2012 (NSW Sport and Recreation Advisory Council and NSW Sport and Recreation, 2006) sets out guidelines for the sport and recreation industry in addressing priority issues until 2012. The Plan is based on the principle that physical activity builds stronger communities, and that social relationships and support lead to increased levels of physical activity. The government's aim is to encourage increased participation of players and volunteers. The number of adults and children participating in sport and physical activity in NSW is expected to increase at the rate of 1% per year. Relationships with and collaboration between participants, service providers, facility providers, funders and advocates are necessary to ensure the benefits of physical activity are realised.

Challenges facing the sport and recreation industry in meeting the stated aims primarily relate to participation, funding, facilities, and volunteers. The approach to address these challenges is 'community-centred' – by recognising the strength of social relationships and community engagement – to build the social capital of NSW.

Four key focus areas in Game Plan 2012 which underpin the vision of "shaping our community for a sustainable future" are:

- active community. The objective is to make it easier and affordable for people of all ages to be physically active and involved in their communities. The success measure is a one percent increase per annum in physical activity across all ages, gender, disability and culturally diverse groups.
- new vision for volunteers. The objective is to increase the number of qualified, confident volunteers – referees, technical officials, coaches and administrators - who feel valued and supported and want to remain in the industry. The success measure is a 1% increase per annum in the number of volunteers working in sport and recreation.

- innovative funding. The objective is to provide sustainable funding from government and non-government sources. The success measure is increased per capita amount of funding from government (all levels) and non-government sources.
- fresh approach to facilities. The objective is to increase the availability of usable open space and ensure facilities are of a quality standard to meet community expectations. The success measures are a two percent increase in access to usable open space; quality assurance framework with standards for new sports facilities (especially multi-use facilities) is accepted and implemented by sport organisations; and a feasibility study completed for a multi-sport facilities model.

Specific strategies following on from these key focus areas relate to:

- providing quality, multi-purpose and safe facilities.
- increasing opportunities for available land for open space through creative means.
- joint use of facilities through partnerships.

2.1.3 Initiatives

Several general initiatives to promote use of open space and participation in recreational activities include:

- 'Healthy Parks Healthy People' program, which encourages people to visit parks and gardens by highlighting the mental and physical benefits if spending time in parks.
- 'Premier's Sporting Challenge', which encourages primary and secondary school students to take part in regular moderate to vigorous sport and physical activity.

2.1.4 Funding

The State government provides funding for various aspects of open space and recreation as follows:

- Department of Planning: Metropolitan Greenspace Program for regional parks and open space.
- Department of Sport and Recreation: Sport & Recreation Facility Grant program –grants from $500 - $200,000
- NSW Maritime: 'Sharing Sydney Harbour Access' grants for access to Sydney Harbour and tributaries; projects such as boat ramps, jetties, pontoons & foreshore tracks.

2.2 Regional plans and policies

2.2.1 Sydney Metropolitan Area

Metropolitan Strategy

The Metropolitan Strategy for Sydney (Department of Planning, 2005) aims to achieve a more sustainable city, including to enhance liveability. Seven subject areas of the Metropolitan Strategy include Parks and Public Places. The vision for Parks and Public Places is that:

- Sydney will have fair access to quality parks and public places for leisure, sport and recreation for the local community and visitors. The city will have a range of open spaces that meet the diverse and changing needs of the community.
- a network of recreation trails will provide walking and cycling opportunities linking centres and parks.

Relevant objectives and initiatives for Parks and Public Places are to:

- **increase access to quality parks and public places** by improving the quality of regional open space, and improving access to waterways and links between bushland, parks and centres.
- **provide a diverse mix of parks and public places** by improving the quality of local open space, and by investigating the future options for open space provision and management.

In the Metropolitan Strategy, Chatswood is identified as an existing major centre and St Leonards is identified as an existing specialised centre.

2.2.2 Northern Sydney region

Inner North Sub-region

Following on from the Metropolitan Strategy for Sydney, key directions for the Inner North Sub-Region (Department of Planning, 2007) are to ensure:

- equitable access to parks and public places for all residents in the subregion.
- open space areas and facilities are managed sustainably to cater for residents and visitors to the subregion.
- opportunities exist for all residents to pursue cultural activities in the sub-region.

Strategies related to these directions are outlined below.

Table 2.1 Strategies for increasing access to parks and public places

First-level strategy	Second level strategy	Third-level strategy
F1 Increase access to quality parks and public places.	F1.2 Improve the quality of regional open space.	F1.2.1 Inner North Councils and State Government to focus on enhancing the capacity and quality of existing open space.
	F 1.3 Improve access to waterways and links between bushland, parks and centres.	F1.3.1 Councils to work in partnership with DECC, DoP and RTA to explore ways to improve access to waterways and links between bushland, parks and Strategic Centres and local centres.

Initiatives relating to increasing access to quality parks and public places in Willoughby are to:

- improve recreation opportunities in and around strategic centres, such as Chatswood.
- investigate opportunities to provide access to, and improve the quality of, foreshore parks and foreshores of Sydney Harbour and its tributaries (Department of Planning and Department of Environment and Climate Change).
- complete gaps and improvements to existing trails such as Chatswood to Dee Why via Middle Cove.
- upgrade existing walking tracks along the Lane Cove River.
- promote future access points along the foreshore and access to water-based activities (Sharing Sydney Harbour Access Program).
- enhance regional cycle routes.

Other directions for open space and recreation in the Inner Northern Sub-Region are in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2 Strategies for providing diverse parks and public places

First-level strategy	Second level strategy	Third-level strategy
F2 Provide a diverse mix of parks and public places.	F2.1 Improve the quality of local open space.	F2.1.1 Councils should continue to maintain or enhance the provision of local open space particularly in centres and along transport corridors where urban and particularly residential growth is being located.
		Where there is local open space, councils should consider an open space embellishment program that improves facilities to encourage use.
		Councils should consider the mechanisms to increase the capacity of local sports fields to a district level.
		State government and local Councils to develop links between smaller reserves to create diversity and broader user experience.
		Local Councils to consider modifying under-utilised open space for informal activities such as skating, basketball, netball, and the establishment of cafes.
	F2.2 Investigate future options for open space provision and management	-
	F2.3 Provide for urban civic	F2.3.1 In planning for future growth of centres, local Councils to consider the need for civic space. Councils should identify opportunities to enhance existing civic space and provide new

	space in planning for centres.	civic spaces.
F3 Improve Sydney's major sporting and cultural event facilities.	F3.1 Improve Sydney's major sporting and cultural event facilities.	F3.1.1 Inner North Councils to investigate the provision of additional multi-purpose indoor sports facilities to meet the needs of the current and future populations of the subregion.

Northern Sydney Region

The Northern Sydney Regional Recreation Demand and Opportunities Assessment (Parkland Environmental Planners and CD Recreation Services, 2002) investigated and summarised recreation supply, demand and opportunities in 11 Northern Sydney local government areas, including Willoughby. Representatives of participating Councils and other owners of open space in the region identified the highest priorities for recreation in Northern Sydney (in approximate order of priority) as:

- regional planning for significant walking and cycling linkages between foreshore parks and other open spaces, in partnership between local and State government.
- family-friendly parks for all age groups across the region, focusing on existing open space.
- more and quality district sporting fields.
- redevelopment of surf clubs for multi-purpose recreation and community uses.
- commercial opportunities adjacent to natural areas.
- accessible youth meeting, activity and social spaces.

Most of these priorities apply to Willoughby.

The review of background information, meetings with Councils and local knowledge found that the highest levels of demand in the Northern Sydney region have been demonstrated for the 'themes' of:

- Target groups, particularly young people.
- Linear walking, cycling and shared tracks.
- District outdoor sporting facilities and indoor sports courts.
- Informal recreation opportunities, especially family-friendly parks.
- Access to water, particularly beaches and foreshore parks.

Lower levels of demand have generally been expressed in the region for:

- Swimming facilities.
- Interaction with nature.

- High impact activities.

These themes are the basis of the assessment for Willoughby local government area later in this issues paper.

Broad demands for recreation in Northern Sydney that reach across these themes are:

- planning and provision of recreation spaces and facilities at the regional or sub-regional scale, such as regional sporting fields, aquatic centres and indoor sports facilities.
- multi-purpose facilities and settings that cater for different age groups, such as 'family-friendly' parks.
- affordable activities, particularly for families, young people and people on low incomes.
- safety to and within recreation areas through careful design.
- quality recreation facilities and settings, particularly natural areas and sporting fields.
- pedestrian, bicycle and shared linkages between recreation settings and other community facilities.
- improved facilities and programmed recreation opportunities for target groups.
- improved co-ordination and distribution of information among recreation managers and providers.
- acquiring and/or improving land suitable for recreation as it becomes available.
- improved public transport to regional open space, and to facilities such as skate parks.

In general, opportunities to address recreation needs in the Northern Sydney region include:

- planning and provision of recreation spaces and facilities at the regional or sub-regional scale.
- improving the quality of existing recreation settings and facilities.
- taking opportunities to acquire and / or develop additional spaces as they become available.
- improving public transport within Northern Sydney to ensure that recreation facilities are accessible.
- addressing safety to and within recreation facilities and areas.
- ensuring facilities and spaces are accessible for people with disabilities, parents with prams, older adults, and women and girls.
- looking at ways to improve the affordability of recreation activities.

The Northern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils (NSROC), which includes Willoughby, is pro-active in regional planning. It is currently preparing a Regional Sports Strategy in response to the Assessment of Northern Sydney's Recreation Demand and Opportunities (DIPNR 2005).

2.2.3 Sydney Harbour

The Sydney Harbour Catchment Regional Environmental Plan aims to protect and manage the Sydney Harbour catchment and promote recreational opportunities within the catchment.

The Sharing Sydney Harbour Access Program (SSHAP) is a 20-year vision to increase public access to and enhance recreation enjoyment of Sydney Harbour foreshores for residents and visitors. The program has funded projects in Willoughby including the creation of three new foreshore bushland walking tracks at Castle Cove, Castlecrag and Sailors Bay that will link with existing trails and provide access to and along Middle Harbour.

2.2.4 Cross-boundary planning

Willoughby Council co-operatively works with other surrounding Councils on issues crossing local government area boundaries. For example, The St Leonards Strategy is a joint strategy by Willoughby, Lane Cove and North Sydney Councils and the Department of Planning to guide the future development of St Leonards as an employment centre. The implications of the Strategy will result in demand for recreation opportunities. To meet this demand, new public open spaces for workers, redevelopment of sites and the creation of the 'Gore Hill Parklands' will incorporate pedestrian and cycle connections.

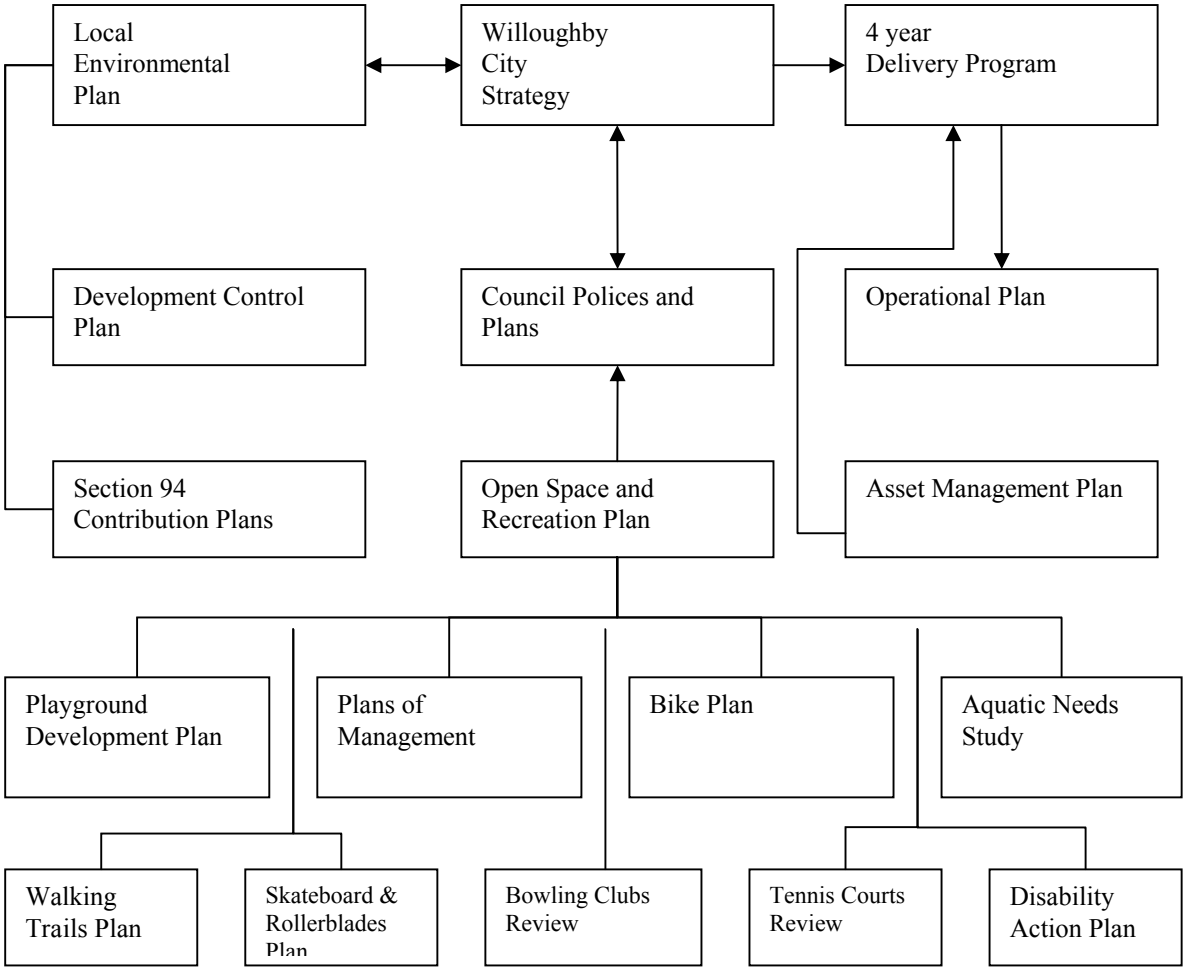
2.3 Local plans and policies

2.3.1 Planning context

Numerous local plans and policies guide planning, provision and management of open space opportunities in Willoughby as shown in Figure 2.1.

Specific information regarding each plan above for each theme for open space and recreation is included in Section 5.

Figure 2.1 Context of Open Space and Recreation Planning in Willoughby



2.3.2 Basis for management in Willoughby

The basis for management in Willoughby City is the Council's Willoughby City Strategy. The strategy was reviewed in consultation with the community and adopted by Council in December 2009. Its Vision, Principles and Key Strategic Directions are:

Vision

Willoughby: the vital hub of the region, where residential, commercial, cultural and environmental interests are respected and balanced, and our communities enjoy a diversity of lifestyles.

Principles

Council's overarching principles, which underpin its actions, are:

Sustainability
Social justice
Community

Key Strategic Directions
The six key strategic directions are:
Community and Cultural Life
Natural Environment
Homes
Transport, Mobility and Infrastructure
Economic Activity
Civic Leadership

The key strategic directions and sub-themes are listed in Table 2.3.

Table 2.3 Key Strategic directions for Willoughby City

Key Strategic Directions					
Community and Cultural Life	Natural Environment	Homes	Transport, Mobility and Infrastructure	Economic Activity	Civic Leadership
Sub-themes					
Celebrating Diversity and Community Spirit	Natural Ecosystems, Biodiversity and Environmental Health	Housing Demand and Diversity	Transport and Mobility	Local Business and Industry	Open Government
Community Services and Facilities	Sustainable Practices	Neighbourhood Character and Heritage Conservation	Infrastructure	Central Business Districts	Community Engagement
Healthy Lifestyles and Lifelong Learning				Tourism, Marketing and Investment	Business Efficiency and Service Delivery

2.3.3 Willoughby City Council policies and resolutions

Access and equity

Council recognises the importance of providing broad accessibility to facilities and services. This means acknowledging and managing a diversity of sometimes conflicting needs and expectations when it comes to recreation. Council's community strategic plan, the *Willoughby City Strategy*, highlights this under the value "social justice".
The Recreation and Open Space Issues Report supports Council's broader view of encouraging social justice in order to provide everyone with a "fair go". As discussed in the *Willoughby City Strategy* social justice is "about recognising that our society is made up of many different communities and working to ensure that no group or section of society is excluded". Specifically it refers to the promotion of equity, access, participation and rights.

In August 2006 Council adopted a policy on Access and Equity, with six (6) objectives – see below. The application of these objectives to open space/ recreation can be summarised as follows:

1. Recognising and valuing diversity - to the best of its ability and resources, Council will provide a wide range of recreation opportunities to address the diversity of the community's needs.
2. Community facilities and service delivery - Council will implement the Disability Discrimination Act Action Plan for public open space, and consult with the Council's Access Committee for the setting of priorities.
3. Community participation and decision making - Council will consult the community in the preparation of Reserve Action Plans/ Master Plans/ Park Improvements Plans/ recreation Development Plans and in the upgrading/ improvements to all sportsgrounds.
4. Effective communication – Council will ensure that open space/ recreation information is available as either written, web-based or phone contact with staff, and that regular surveys/ consultations are undertaken to invite direct feedback.
5. Accessible urban environment – Council will incorporate improved access to all public open spaces when improvements are implemented.
6. Sustainability in economic, social and environmental areas – Council will create 'people–friendly' public open spaces that promote community togetherness, improve physical well-being and protect the natural environment.

Use of open space

In April 2005 Council undertook a review of the current policies relating to the use of public open space. Ultimately Council endorsed the principles and objectives for managing and protecting public open space, as espoused in Willoughby Local Environmental Plan 1995 as amended (WLEP), the Local Government Act 1993 and the community land Plans of Management adopted by Council, and Council's Open Space Plan 1995.

Furthermore, Council decided to consider proposals for public open space:

- where a public benefit can be clearly demonstrated.
- where the public open space will not be diminished in quantity nor quality.
- where the proposal has broad community support.

The WLEP 1995 is currently being updated into a Standard Instrument consistent with the 2006 Government planning legislation. New zonings and objectives will apply to public open space previously classified as Open Space 6a – Existing Recreation and Open Space 6b –Private Recreation. The new zonings are:

- RE1 Public Recreation – for parks, reserves, playgrounds and sportsfields.
- RE2 Private Recreation – for private owned golf courses, tennis and squash courts, and bowling greens.
- E2 Environmental Conservation – for bushland.

There have been amendments to the Local Government Act since its inception in 1993; some amendments have applied to the community land provisions of the Act. These amendments have provided prescriptive management objectives to the classifications of community land.

Rationalising existing open space

The Open Space Plan (1996) referred to 'Rationalising existing open space' (pages 20-23) which provided guidelines for managing open space land – both public and private - when changes to existing uses are proposed. These guidelines have been useful in assisting Council decisions over the life of the previous Open Space Plan, and are summarised as follows.

Unusable open space

There should be consultation with community on the future of small unusable areas of open space. The preference is to retain all areas of open space regardless of size; plant these areas with suitable vegetation to contribute to the City's visual and environmental landscape.

Developer contributions

These can be in the form of land or money contributions. Land contribution is preferred where there is a recreation or conservation benefit derived from the land offered– otherwise money contribution towards improvement/ embellishment of existing open space is appropriate.

Council acquisition of land for open space

Given the high cost of purchasing land in the City, the following basic principles apply if acquisition is considered. Such land must:

- improve public access to larger areas of open space, or
- be a critical link between two pieces of open space, or
- form part of a continuous foreshore area, or
- contain known rare and threatened species, or
- contribute to a high visual quality landscape or have significant natural elements such as rocks, waterfalls etc, or
- be in an area deficient in open space, or
- be able to provide additional sports facilities, especially for use under floodlights.

Rezoning of private open space

Willoughby City contains some areas of private open space, such as bowling greens, that are becoming underutilised due to a decline in membership. It is recommended that there should be no reduction in the total amount of open space, given the NSW Government's Metropolitan Strategy population projection for Willoughby City.

The preferred strategy is to seek alternate recreation uses for private open space that is profitable. Council should assist in this process using analysis in the Open Space and Recreation Plan, and the current Census information to suggest alternate uses. Joint ventures between Council and clubs to provide sports facilities could be considered, subject to public access.

Drainage reserves, laneways and pathways as open space

An important recreation activity is walking and biking for leisure, exercise and as an alternative to vehicle transport. The retention of drainage reserves, laneways and unmade pathways is critical to maintaining access for the community in the present and the future. Council should not consider disposal of these land parcels if they:

- improve public access to areas of open space, or
- form a link between two or more pieces of open space, or
- provide access to a foreshore, river or creek, or
- are capable of being developed as a pedestrian or bicycle way.

Unmade roads and LATMs as open space

Opportunities should be explored to gain open space within the existing road reserve when local area traffic management schemes (LATMs) are proposed. The narrowing of wide streets by extending tree planting onto the parking lane, removing bitumen and extending the grass verge provides solutions for improved stormwater absorption, slowing through traffic and increasing open space in local streets.

Alienation of open space

As a matter of policy, there will be no further alienation of open space. Alienation includes, but is not limited to:

- conversion of land at present used for general recreation, to fields, ovals, courts, greens, courses etc for specific sports purposes. Sporting facilities are to be provided additional to, not in place of, public land for general recreation.
- leasing or donation of parkland and foreshores for the exclusive use of sporting bodies, community or charity groups.
- construction of any building in parkland and foreshore other than buildings that provide a necessary facility directly related to the primary use of the land for general recreation.
- the location in parkland and foreshores of any public utility, unless it ca be shown not to materially reduce the land areas or interfere with the character of the area and its use by the public.
- construction of any road other than a road serving the primary use of the land itself for general recreation.
- use of the land for parking, including temporary parking, such as during transport strikes.

2.3.4 Key performance indicators

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are currently being developed as part of the Council's Delivery (of Services) Program. The relevant KPIs are listed below:

Open Space Activity Areas	Key Performance Indicators
Bushland	
1.Conserve Biodiversity & maintain natural ecosystems	Proposed Reserve Action Plan updates completed to direct on site works

2.Protect & monitor creeks and waterways from stormwater runoff and improve water quality	Number of sites stabilised revegetated and maintained
3. Improve the protection of foreshores, watercourses and bays	Number of sites upgraded and maintained
4. Provide& maintain safe walking access into, through and between bushland areas	Track work completed as identified in audits & Reserve Action Plans
5. Manage potential impacts of bushfires on natural ecosystems and development	Number of scheduled burns prepared, completed and maintained
6. Implement & promote environmental education programs	Number of events and workshops and participants involved. Quarterly program updated and publicised
7. Promote community involvement in volunteer activities & promote bushland & environmental awareness	Completion of Bushcare Action Plans. Annual tally of volunteer hours, number of active groups. Positive feedback from community. Number of bookings for workshops and training sessions

Parks

1. Upgrade & maintain existing parks & reserves to meet the needs of users	Increased usage levels in parks. Positive written/ verbal feedback. Satisfaction survey.
2. Upgrade and maintain playgrounds and youth recreation facilities to meet needs of users and safety standards	Increased usage levels in playgrounds. No playground injuries reported. Positive written/ verbal feedback from local youth.
3. Improve access to existing open space and recreation facilities as per DDA plan	Increased use of parks & reserves by people with disabilities. Positive written/ verbal feedback from groups or individuals.

Sport

1. Upgrade and maintain safe playing surfaces of existing sportsgrounds to meet the needs of users	Surveys of sports groups taken every 2 years. Number of injuries due to field conditions. Minimum field closures due to rain.
2. Increase capacity for more sport activities & shared use of facilities for a broad range of sports	Percentage of booking requests that are accommodated.

Streetscapes

1. Conserve and maintain existing street trees	Number of claims due to damage by trees. Positive written/ verbal feedback. Number of CSRs and turnaround times
2. Increase the provision of shade to streets to ameliorate climate.	Number of trees planted each year. Survival rate of new trees.
3. Implement sustainable plantings & habitat linkages in streetscapes and verges	Number of discrete road verges stabilised and planted each year.

2.4 Open space and recreation planning principles

2.4.1 Recreation Opportunity Spectrum

The Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) is an outdoor recreation planning tool that recognises that the recreational needs of a community are most likely to be satisfied if a range of recreational experiences are provided through a range of settings (Clarke and Stankey, 1979).

2.4.2 Outdoor recreation and open space guidelines

The Department of Planning recognises that open space management is a significant component of local government responsibility in NSW. The Department encourages Councils to prepare open space and recreation plans to help with planning the present and future provision of open space and recreation facilities. To assist Councils with preparing these plans, the Department prepared guidelines for outdoor recreation and open space planning (Department of Planning, 1992). These guidelines outlined several concepts that Councils are encouraged to adopt in preparing their open space and recreation plans, including:

- ❒ providing quality open space areas that cater for diverse recreation experiences which satisfy the community's needs for recreation.
- ❒ moving from the rigid 'standards' approach of providing open space (where open space provision is expressed in terms of the number of hectares per 1,000 people) towards a needs-based approach that considers the characteristics and specific needs of local communities.
- ❒ compiling an inventory of all open space areas that becomes an important management tool.

Despite being developed in the early 1990s, these concepts still hold in open space and recreation planning in NSW.

2.4.3 Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles aim to minimise opportunities for anti-social behaviour in Council recreation facilities and parks, and maximise the perception of safety of users and the community. Implementation of CPTED principles involves:

- ❒ fostering a strong sense of identity and community ownership of parks.
- ❒ improving security lighting in high-use areas and along major pedestrian pathways.
- ❒ maximising casual surveillance from surrounding areas.
- ❒ providing controlled access points, and directional signage.
- ❒ providing clear pathways to and within parks.

2.5 Recreation industry trends

Issues and trends in the recreation industry affecting planning and management of recreation and open space include:

- ❒ increasing recognition of the need for balance in the provision of 'structured' and 'unstructured' recreation. This is reflected, for example, in the widespread development

of bicycle and walking trails and leisure pools rather than concentrating on sporting facilities.

- ❒ the widespread adoption of 'access for all' principles in open space and recreation facility planning, design and construction.
- ❒ increasing recognition that safe, accessible and visually attractive recreation facilities and open spaces will encourage and promote more active lifestyles.
- ❒ increasing concentration on health promotion and education, especially in response to concerns about the increasing weight of children.
- ❒ recreation providers are finding many constraints to providing more recreation opportunities due to shortage of land, and limited resources. More resources are being directed towards improving the quality of recreation facilities and spaces to increase their use capacity, rather than developing new spaces and facilities.
- ❒ escalating public liability insurance costs are a significant cost for sporting and community organisations, which are affecting the viability of the groups, and their ability to organise events. There has been a recent shift from the public winning cases against Councils for injuries sustained in Council-owned and managed open space towards the courts taking a view towards taking personal responsibility for actions that lead to injuries. As such, high risk activities are no longer readily accepted by open space and recreation managers. An increasingly litigious society has forced recreation managers to require increasing risk insurance, and costs have increased significantly.
- ❒ the role of local government in managing recreation and sport is changing as follows:

    - trend away from government provision towards Councils to contract the delivery of leisure services to commercial and community organisations.
    - increasing levels of professionalism are required for the management of sporting activities, facilities and events due to risk management requirements.
    - pressure to do more with less funding and staff. Council budgets for recreation and open space rarely increase in real terms.
    - increasing onus on local government to implement Commonwealth and State Government initiatives, such as Active Australia programs.
    - an increasing move towards 'user pays' for participation in recreation activities.

- ❒ a trend away from single-purpose or dedicated facilities towards shared or multi-use facilities. Construction of multi-purpose recreation complexes, combining facilities for indoor sport, weights and fitness training, swimming and other recreation activities. Such facilities are increasingly being funded and/or operated by the private sector. This results in less duplication of facilities, more sustainable assets in the longer term, and streamlined management.
- ❒ an increasing number of facilities are being constructed or upgraded with synthetic surfaces.
- ❒ due to the increase in the number of leisure activities available being participated in, there is fierce competition for the "leisure dollar". Recreation providers can no longer rely on "walk-ins", with facility management now more business-like to attract and retain customers.

- financial resources are becoming increasingly limited. Facilities previously funded by one organisation are now provided by partnerships between various types of organisations including State government, local government, private sector and user groups.
- on-going pressures to charge users for traditionally free or low-cost subsidised services to cover the costs of provision, or “user pays”.
- perceptions and incidences of crime are guiding design of recreation spaces, particularly through adopting Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles.
- the drought and water shortages are encouraging Councils to adopt Water-Sensitive Urban Design (WSUD) principles in recreation facility and open space design.

3 SUPPLY OF OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES IN WILLOUGHBY LGA

3.1 Supply

The northern suburbs of Sydney are characterised by harbour foreshores and large bushland areas. The area offers many unstructured recreational opportunities, including bushwalking, and scenic viewing. In addition, structured recreation, such as sport, is well catered for.

Willoughby LGA has 147 open space areas covering about 424 hectares. Regional open spaces include Bicentennial Reserve, Chatswood Rotary Athletic Field, Chatswood Oval, the Gore Hill Parklands, Willoughby Park, Harold Reid Reserve, Northbridge Park and Explosives Reserve.

The Willoughby LGA provides a broad range of opportunities across the recreational spectrum. These include recreation facilities such as indoor pools and courts, skate park, children's playgrounds, sporting fields and courts, and golf courses. Potential opportunities are also available for water based recreation. Facilities are generally in good condition. However access to most of these facilities is rated moderate to poor.

Neighbouring local government areas also contain significant open space, including Lane Cover River National Park, the Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park and Garigal National Park.

Residents of the Willoughby LGA have access to a broad range of open space areas. These are provided by a variety of organisations, including Council, state government and private recreation providers.

The 1996 Open Space Plan (Manidis Roberts) identified the following key features of the supply of open space within and adjacent to Willoughby LGA:

- There is a disproportionately high percentage of regional open space. Regional open space is defined as open space that serves more than one local government area, and users of this space are prepared to drive significant distances to visit.
- Access to 87% of open space areas is rated moderate to poor. The assessment of access was based on number of steps, grade, accessibility for strollers, people with disabilities and proximity to parking.
- More than 50% of the open space areas were less than 0.5 hectare in size.
- More than 50% of the open space areas is contained in areas greater than 10 hectares.
- There are significant areas of foreshore lands but access to most of it was poor due to terrain.
- A significant number of open space areas are adjacent to roadsides. There are 38 such settings at an average size of 0.69 hectare each.
- The majority of open space in Willoughby LGA caters for unstructured recreation needs.

3.2 Issues

As the population of Willoughby is expected to increase, the use of open space and recreation facilities will correspondingly increase. However, factors such as ease of access and the type of open space and recreation facilities determines the nature and frequency of their use.

Deficiencies in the supply of open space were identified in the mid 1990s in Artarmon, South Willoughby, Naremburn, North Chatswood and South Chatswood. To attempt to address these

deficiencies, in recent years, Council has acquired land through Section 94 contributions to construct parks such as Mashman Park and Whitton Park. Council also purchased land as part of The Concourse development in Chatswood CBD.

Several factors affect Council's ability to fund priority open space and recreation projects. Such factors include:

- the highly developed nature of Willoughby means a lack of suitable land for new facilities in Willoughby. Any suitable land is relatively expensive to purchase at market rates for open space and recreation purposes. Rather than necessarily purchasing expensive land for open space, Council's focus is on 'quality not quantity'. Council improves, embellishes and sustainably manages land for recreation.
- recent changes to Development Contributions under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act mean that Councils are now able to levy developers only for local open space and recreation facilities, not regional spaces and facilities.
- Limitations on development contributions to a maximum of $20,000 per dwelling, which does not allow for land acquisition in the Willoughby LGA, where land prices are relatively high. A development levy of 1% is insufficient to provide funds for land purchase for public open space.
- rate pegging by the State Government which limits the amount of funds Council can obtain from ratepayers.

3.3 Opportunities for open space and recreation in Willoughby

Opportunities for additional open space and recreation in Willoughby include:

- through redevelopment of sites, such as the former ABC site, Artarmon which incorporates a pool and indoor sports courts.
- encouraging private developers to incorporate desired recreation facilities in their proposed development eg the indoor leisure centre and pool within the Regency, Chatswood.
- jointly using facilities. The Standing Committee on Public Works (2004) promoted joint use and co-location of open space / recreation facilities and public buildings such as schools, hospitals, universities and community centres. Eg Council has agreements with the public schools within the LGA for the joint use of their sportsfields.

Other opportunities are identified in each theme discussion in the following sections.

4 DEMAND FOR OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES IN WILLOUGHBY

4.1 Population characteristics

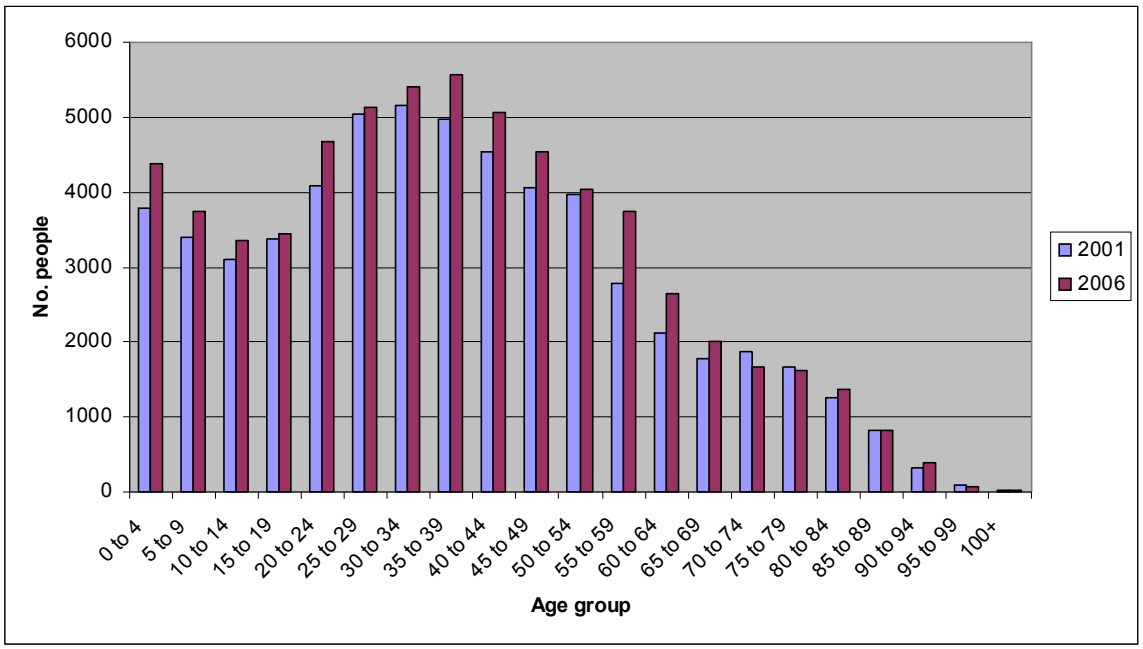
4.1.1 Existing population

At the 2006 Census, Willoughby's total population was 64,858 people including overseas visitors. This is a significant increase of 11% from the population of 58,252 people at the previous Census in 2001.
The population recorded at June 2008 was 68,000.

Population density is highest in high-rise apartment buildings in Chatswood and St Leonards.

Age is the key indicator of participation in recreational activities.

Figure 4.1 Willoughby City population by age group 2001-2006



The Willoughby population is concentrated in the 20 to 59 year age group, reflecting the median age of Willoughby residents of 36 years.

Figure 4.1 shows that in the past 5 years, there has been growth in numbers of people in several age groups, particularly:

- 0 to 4 years, reflecting a 'baby boom' in Australia. A concentration of children in this age group live in Willoughby and Chatswood.
- 20 to 24 years. Young adults are concentrated in the Chatswood CBD and Pacific Highway/railway corridor, and in St Leonards.

- 35 to 44 years and 55 to 64 years.

Despite the overall population increase in Willoughby City, the number of people in the 70 to 79 years age group declined.

Willoughby is also a highly multi-cultural community, with a diverse mix of backgrounds. Willoughby's population has a higher proportion of people born overseas (40%) and people from a non-English speaking background (30%) compared with the Sydney Statistical Division. China is the main overseas country in which Willoughby residents were born (5%), followed by the United Kingdom (5%), Hong Kong (4%), New Zealand (2.5%), South Korea (2.5%) and Japan (2%). Since 2001 there has been a steady growth in the number of people from Korea, Hong Kong and India living in Willoughby.

People born in Asia are concentrated in the Chatswood CBD and Chatswood, Roseville, St Leonards, and Artarmon.

Willoughby has a more highly educated and skilled population compared with Sydney. 33% of adults in Willoughby have a degree compared with 20% of Sydney residents, and only 31% of Willoughby residents have no qualifications compared to 43% in Sydney. The proportion of people with university qualifications is highest in Chatswood West, Artarmon, St Leonards, Castlecrag and Northbridge.

66% of Willoughby residents are full-time workers, with 29% part-time. Willoughby has a lower unemployment rate than the Sydney Statistical Division (SD).

Willoughby has a higher household weekly income than for Sydney as a whole. 44% of households in Willoughby earn a high income ($1,700 per week or more), compared to 34% of Sydney households. High income households are concentrated in Castlecrag, Northbridge and Artarmon. Low income households are concentrated in Chatswood, Roseville, Willoughby and Artarmon.

In 2006, 47% of dwellings in Willoughby were separate houses. Willoughby has experienced a recent high level of residential development, especially in apartments, which comprised 33% of housing stock in Willoughby in 2006. Medium density dwellings comprised 13% of housing stock. Higher density dwellings are concentrated along the rail line and public transport routes in Chatswood, Artarmon, St Leonards and Willloughby.

The average household size in Willoughby is 2.5 people. Households in Willoughby mainly comprise couples / one parent with children less than 15 years (26%), couples without children (25%), and lone person households (23%). The most significant change in household types since 2001 was the increase in families comprising couples with children less than 15 years, and couples without children.

Nearly one-third (325) of households in Willoughby own their homes, 27% are purchasing, and 32% rent. Compared to the Sydney SD, the level of home ownership or purchase is slightly lower.

Stability of the population can be measured by the length of time people have lived at their current address. In 2006, 52% of Willoughby residents had lived at their current address 5 years ago, up from 47% in 2001. Long-term residents are concentrated in Lane Cove North, Chatswood West, Artarmon, Willoughby, Northbridge, and Castle Cove.

13% of households in Willoughby do not own a motor vehicle, which restricts mobility and increases reliability on public transport.

4.1.2 Forecast population and employment growth

The Inner North Sub-regional Strategy (2007) has set a target of 6,800 additional dwellings to 2031 in Willoughby. Using the average household size of 2.5 people in 2006, this equates to an increase of 17,000 people in Willoughby in the next 20 to 25 years.

The Strategy plans for an additional 60,000 jobs in the Inner North by 2031. It has targeted 16,000 of those jobs for the Willoughby LGA.

It is considered that provision for the jobs growth forecasted in the Strategy for the Willoughby LGA can be satisfied (and exceeded) within the draft Willoughby Local Environment Plan (WLEP). At February 2010, the draft WLEP was waiting gazettal by the NSW Planning Minister.

The main areas of the LGA that are likely to facilitate the predicted growth in employment capacity are in:

- Chatswood CBD, which has potential for an increase of around 7,300 jobs and
- St Leonards, particularly with the redevelopment of the Royal North Shore Hospital, which is expected to generate around 3,250 jobs according to the St Leonards Strategy, and the Alto Ford site.

Industrial land in Artarmon and East Chatswood also has the potential to increase employment capacity, particularly since the removal of the ancillary office restriction to certain areas to allow high technology uses and the increase in floor space potential from 1:1 to 1.5:1 for sites greater than 1000 sqm, which was introduced in July 2007. It is expected that at least an additional 7,600 jobs can be catered for in the industrial lands by 2031.

4.1.3 Recreation needs

The size, growth rate and characteristics of a population are key indicators of sport and recreation needs and demands. The key characteristics and their implications for recreation needs and demands in Willoughby are summarised in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 Population characteristics and implications for recreation demand

Population characteristics	Demand for recreation opportunities	Implications for Willoughby
Total population Population in 2008 = 68,000 people. 6,800 additional dwellings (x 2.5 people / dwelling) by 2031 = 17,000 people. High population density & growth in employment.	An increasing population requires a higher level of provision of recreational facilities and settings. Increasing population density means people need to easily access recreation opportunities from where they live and work.	Facility capacity and opportunities will need to keep pace with population and employment growth. Potential for overuse of facilities. Facilities that absorb the needs of residents and workers at peak times are required.
Age Mix of age groups. Comparatively high proportion of younger and middle aged adults indicating an aging population. Recent baby boom.	Age is the most important determinant of recreational patterns. Younger people are more active in a variety of recreational pursuits. Participation in sport is higher in younger age groups. As people get older they participate less frequently in activities that require high physical effort, and prefer walking and golf. People of all ages enjoy activities such as walking, observing nature, cycling, swimming and golf.	Focus on facilities for young children, young adults, and older adults such as child-friendly, accessible and sheltered spaces and facilities. Aging population requires focus on less structured non-sporting facilities and services e.g. walking tracks and parks.
Gender Approximately even % of males and females	Males are likely to use open space and participate more often than females in active recreational pursuits such as cycling and using indoor and outdoor recreation facilities. Females participate more in unstructured and informal activities such as walking, nature activities and aerobics; and sporting activities such as netball, gymnastics and badminton. Females prefer to use unstructured settings. Activities in which males and females participate equally include visiting parks, picnics and barbecues, bushwalking, baseball/softball, outdoor hockey, tennis.	Provision of sporting facilities in Willoughby has prioritised traditional male sports. Recognise the need to equitably cater for the different recreation preferences of males and females.

Table 4.1 Population characteristics and implications for recreation demand (cont.)

Population characteristics	Demand for recreation opportunities	Implications for Willoughby
Place of birth High proportion of people born overseas and from a non-English speaking background. People born outside Australia represent a spread of countries (China, UK, Hong Kong, NZ, South Korea, Japan).	People from a non-English speaking background (NESB) do not participate in sport as often as people from an English speaking background. This particularly true for women from a NESB.	People from different cultural backgrounds have different preferences and interests in recreation activities. Social meeting places, picnic and barbecue facilities, and indoor spo facilities are important. There are opportunities for integrating and sharing cultures in recreation settings.
Educational qualifications Relatively high education and skill levels.	People with higher levels of education and occupations use open space more often than the less educated, particularly the more expensive outdoor activities and indoor sports.	The generally higher level of education in Willoughby indicates a higher than average participation rate in recreation activities.
Household type Couples / one parent families with children under 15 years, couples without children, and lone person households are the dominant household types. Smaller households, including increasing % of people living alone (both old and young age groups).	Households with children and young people are more frequent users of recreation facilities than other household types.	The high number of families with children implies a higher than average demand for playgrounds, sports fields, swimming pools and indoor sports facilities. Opportunities to participate in recreation are important to alleviate social isolation.
Household income Willoughby is a comparatively high income area.	Use of recreation facilities and settings reflects the cost of using those facilities. People earning medium to higher incomes demonstrate an above average participation in gym activities, tennis and golf which cost money to play. People and households earning lower incomes are more likely to use free public and school facilities.	There is an ability to pay for recreation activities, although there is a need for affordable opportunities, particularly for older adults, young people and families.
Dwelling structure Diverse housing types, although separate houses (47%) and apartments (33%) dominate.	Detached dwellings generally have play space for children and space for gardening etc. Medium and high density dwellings have little play space which increases reliance on local public open space.	There is a need to provide sufficient open space, particularly children's play space, in medium and high density residential areas and areas where detached dwellings are on small blocks. Families require space beyond home for informal active recreation (kicking balls, walking dogs etc.). The denser population close to transport routes requires open space to compensate for limited private recreation space.

Table 4.1 Population characteristics and implications for recreation demand (cont.)

Population characteristics	Demand for recreation opportunities	Implications for Willoughby
Residential mobility More than 50% of residents lived at the same address 5 years ago. Increasing rate of stability of residents.	High turnover of residents means that awareness of recreation opportunities and local social networks is lessened.	Promotion of recreation opportunities is important to increase awareness of new residents about recreational opportunities to encourage them to participate.
Vehicle ownership Reliance on motor vehicles for transport is high. However, 13% of Willoughby households do not have a car.	Vehicle owners have the mobility to use open space more frequently for active recreation, and use a greater variety of recreational spaces and facilities. People without access to a vehicle tend to visit local parks within walking distance of their homes or on a public transport route.	Greater access to motor vehicles increases access to recreation options. Households with one or no vehicles are constrained in their access to a range of recreation opportunities. Public transport and quality close-to-home recreation opportunities are particularly important for these households. Almost average levels of vehicle ownership imply average mobility and access to district and regional scale facilities.

Sources: various Australian and overseas studies.

4.2 Facility use

4.2.1 Willoughby Leisure Centre

Willoughby Leisure Centre is the only indoor public recreation facility in Willoughby City. From 2006 – 2009, their participation numbers were:

WLC Centre Attendance 2006 - 2009

	2006	2007	2008	2009	DESCRIPTION TOTALS
Aquatics	62,879	62,412	68,159	55,758	**249,208**
Health Club	3,106	3,677	4,185	3,468	**14,436**
PlayClub	1,102	1,440	1,962	1,670	**6,174**
Sports Hall	4,161	3,791	5,852	6,615	**20,419**
Memberships	60,447	58,918	98,265	95,608	**313,238**
Swim School	40,123	41,490	43,157	50,611	**175,381**
YEAR TOTALS	**171,818**	**171,728**	**221,580**	**213,730**	

4.2.2 Sportsgrounds

Participation in active recreation/ sports was collated in 2009 by surveying the sports clubs hiring the City's sportsgrounds. Players registered in the main sporting codes pre-dominantly live in the Willoughby City area or live in adjacent suburb areas. Their numbers are:

Netball	4,772
Cricket	3,595
Football (soccer)	2,426
Touch football	1,700
Athletics	1,079 – includes Little Athletics
Rugby	446
Football(AFL)	400 (snrs +jnrs)
Baseball	370 (snrs+ jnrs)

All 13 schools in Willoughby City use sportsfields either owned or maintained by Council for their school sport or PSSA district competitions. Their hours of usage are mainly within the school day 9am – 3pm.

Since 2005 there has been an increasing presence of outdoor fitness classes or 'boot camps' using sportsfields and parkland. In 2009 there were 15 personal trainers (with Council licence) with approximately 150 participants in total.

4.2.3 Club-based facilities – lawn bowls and tennis

In 2008 a review of the 1997 audit of bowling clubs was undertaken. The review found that the numbers of active bowling clubs in the City had halved - from 8 clubs operating in 1997, only 4 clubs remained in 2008. Membership was declining: in 1997, there were 653 registered players; in 2008, there were 300 registered players.

In 2009 an audit of tennis courts/ clubs was undertaken. There are 62 tennis courts in the City, on public and private land; this does not include single courts in private homes. There are 4600 registered players according to information supplied by the clubs operating these courts.

4.3 Satisfaction with open space and recreation opportunities

The satisfaction of Willoughby residents with various aspects of recreation and open space services is relatively high compared with other Council services.

Willoughby residents have become increasingly satisfied with the provision of recreation and open space services in recent years as shown in Council surveys, summarised in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2 Satisfaction with recreation and open space in Willoughby

Aspects of service provision	Performance rating (mean score)	
	2003	2008
Parks and reserves cared for	63%	70%
Bushland protected	62%	70%
Natural environment cared for	61%	68%
Sufficient bushland maintained	59%	66%
Sports facilities cared for	62%	66%
Sufficient open space	58%	64%
Sufficient sports and recreation facilities	59%	63%
Sufficient youth activities	51%	55%
Sufficient bike paths	48%	54%

Source: Direction First (2003, 2008).

4.4 Participation trends

Sport and recreation trends data from various published sources assist in identifying existing and likely future sport and recreation participation levels in Willoughby.

4.4.1 Recreational activities

Surveys of people across Australia and in NSW show trends in participation in recreation activities over time. Broad trends will assist in planning in Willoughby, but there are limitations in applying national and state data to local areas that may not reflect the broader trends.

Youth and children

Australia

National surveys of participation by children aged 5 to 14 years in leisure and cultural activities outside school hours and away from home were undertaken in 1999-2000, 2003 and 2006 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2000, 2004, 2006). Relevant results are shown below.

Changes in participation between 2000 and 2006 of Australian children aged 5 to 14 years in culture and leisure activities showed a marginal increase in participation in organised sport (59% in 2000 to 63% in 2006).

The most popular non-organised activities for children in NSW are cycling, skateboarding / rollerblading and swimming. Most popular organised sports for children in NSW are soccer, swimming and netball.
In 2006 Australian children were more likely to participate in organised sporting activities if:

- they are aged 9-11 years.
- they or their parents were born in Australia or an English speaking country.
- they live outside a capital city.
- they live in a couple family.
- their parent(s) are employed.

Children participate in organised sport at a higher rate than adults do.

Table 4.3 Most popular exercise, recreation and sporting activities by Australian children

Activity / sport	2000 Aust %	2003 Aust %	2006 Aust %	2006 NSW %	Change 2000-06 Aust.	2006 Age Aust	2006 Gender Aust
Bike riding	63.8%	62.1%	67.8%	65.4%	↓	5-8 years	Boys
Skateboarding / rollerblading	30.9%	22.8%	23.6%	22.1%	↓	9-11 years	Boys
Swimming	14.4%	16.6%	17.4%	17.4%	↑	5-8 years	Boys / Girls
Outdoor soccer	11.4%	13.4%	13.2%	19.8%	↑	9-11 years	Boys
Netball	9.1%	9.1%	8.5%	9.1%	↔	12-14 years	Girls
Tennis	8.5%	8.6%	7.3%	6.4%	↔	9-11 years	Boys / Girls
Basketball	7.6%	7.7%	6.6%	3.8%	↔	12-14 years	Boys
Australian Rules	6.6%	7.3%	7.5%	2.1%	↑	12-14 years	Boys
Cricket (outdoor)	5.3%	5.0%	5.4%	5.1%	↓	12-14 years	Boys

Martial arts	4.0%	4.9%	4.5%	4.4%	↑	9-11 years	Boys
Athletics	3.9%	3.8%	2.9%	3.0%	↔	9-11 years	Girls / Boys
Gymnastics (trampolining)	2.6%	3.5%	3.5%	3.0%	↑	5-8 years	Girls
Rugby league	3.6%	2.9%	4.2%	7.7%	↓	9-14 years	Boys
Hockey	2.4%	2.5%	1.9%	1.7%	↔	12-14 years	Girls
Softball		1.7%					
Touch football		1.6%					
Rugby union		1.3%					
Soccer (indoor)		1.2%					
Horse riding / equestrian events		1.2%					
Surf life saving		1.1%					
Golf		1.0%					
Baseball		0.9%					

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (2000, 2004, 2006)
↑ Increase in participation rate; ↓ Decrease in participation rate; ↔ No change in participation rate.

Adults

Australia

The Australian Sports Commission (2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007) have conducted the most recent, comprehensive, annual national surveys of participation in exercise, recreation and sport by Australian adults 15 years and over.

Participation of Australian adults in sports and physical recreation activities was highest in 2006 (Standing Committee on Recreation and Sport, 2007) if they:

- ❒ were aged 15 to 34 years.
- ❒ lived in a state capital city.
- ❒ were born in an English speaking country.
- ❒ were employed.
- ❒ live in a group household.
- ❒ were still at school or had a university degree or higher.

Stratton, et. al. (2005) found that participation in sport or recreational physical activity was highest among:

- ❒ males aged 18 to 44 years.
- ❒ people who live in a major city.
- ❒ people employed in professional and advanced services occupations.
- ❒ high income households.
- ❒ the highest 20% socio-economic status for areas (SEIFA).
- ❒ couple (with or without children) or lone person household.
- ❒ degree or diploma holders.
- ❒ people with proficiency in English.
- ❒ people in excellent health
- ❒ ease of transport access

- ❒ people with at least weekly contact with family or friends.
- ❒ people with a high feeling of safety.

Stratton et. al. recommended a need for programs to target:

- ❒ people with poor proficiency in English, as this is an indicator of a sense of connectedness and belonging with the community.
- ❒ people in poor health.
- ❒ younger females 25 to 44 years.
- ❒ people aged over 45 years.
- ❒ people with little social contact or access to transport.
- ❒ people with lower socio-economic characteristics.

Artarmon Reserve

New South Wales

The most popular recreational activities of adults in NSW are listed in Table 4.4. On the whole, participation in non-organised, informal activities is significantly higher than participation in organised activities for males and females of all ages.

Table 4.4 Most popular sport and physical activities of adults in NSW

Activity	NSW Participation Rate 2001	NSW Participation rate 2003	NSW Participation rate 2007	Change 2001-2007	Age	Gender
Walking	26.8%	36.0%	31.6%	↔	45-65 +	Females
Aerobics / fitness	12.5%	16.2%	19.8%	↑	25-34	Females
Swimming	19.0%	17.5%	13.8%	↓	25-34	Females
Cycling	7.9%	7.7%	8.3%	↑	25-44	Males
Running	7.0%	7.1%	7.3%	↔	15-34	Males
Golf	8.4%	8.4%	5.6%	↓	55-64	Males
Tennis	11.0%	9.8%	6.7%	↓	15-44	Males
Soccer (outdoor)	4.7%	5.3%	5.9%	↑	15-24	Males
Bushwalking	6.6%	6.8%	6.2%	↓	45-54	Females
Touch football	3.4%	3.6%	3.6%	↑	15-24	Males
Surf sports	3.4%	2.9%	2.8%	↓	15-24	Males
Netball	3.3%	2.8%	2.4%	↓	15-24	Females
Cricket (outdoor)	2.9%	2.6%	2.7%	↔	15-24	Males
Yoga	1.9%	3.3%	3.1%	↑	25-34	Females
Weight training	2.6%	2.7%	1.9%	↓	25-34	Males
Dancing	2.1%	2.5%	1.5%	↓	15-24	Females
Basketball	2.7%	3.3%	2.7%	↔	15-24	Males
Lawn bowls	1.8%	2.8%	1.1%	↓	65 +	Males
Martial arts	2.2%	2.2%	1.9%	↓	15-24	Females
Fishing	2.3%	2.1%	1.6%	↓	35-64	Males
Rugby league	1.9%	1.6%	1.8%	↔	15-24	Males
Soccer (indoor)	0.8%	1.8%	1.4%	↑	15-24	Males
Aquarobics	1.0%	1.4%	0.8%	↓	65 +	Females
Horse riding/ equestrian/polo	1.2%	0.9%	1.1%	↔	15-54	Females
Rugby union	0.9%	1.0%	1.0%	↔	15-24	Males
Canoeing / kayaking	0.7%	0.6%	1.0%	↑	15-24	Males
Rock climbing	1.3%	-	0.5%	↓	15-24	Males
Waterskiing / powerboating	1.1%	1.0%	0.4%	↓	25-34	Males
Volleyball	1.5%	0.6%	0.5%	↓	15-24	Males
Hockey (outdoor)	0.9%	0.8%	0.5%	↓	15-24	Females
Cricket (indoor)	1.1%	1.0%	0.7%	↓	25-34	Males
Tenpin bowling	1.0%	1.0%	0.2%	↓	25-34	Males/ females
Australian football	2.3%	1.0%	0.3%	↓	15-24	Males
Roller sports	0.9%	0.6%	0.3%	↓	15-24	Males
Athletics	0.7%	0.6%	0.5%	↓	15-24	Males
Scuba diving	0.6%	0.6%	0.4%	↓	15-24	Males
Sailing	1.2%	0.9%	0.4%	↓	35-54	Males
Badminton	0.6%	-	0.6%	↔	15-24	Males
Softball	1.1%	-	0.4%	↓	15-24	Females
Orienteering	-	0.6%	0.4%	↓	15-24	Males

Source: Australian Sports Commission (2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008)

Table 4.5 further illustrates the activities that are more popular with NSW adults in some age groups compared with other age groups. Activities at the top of the table are participated in most by younger people.

Table 4.5 Participation by Australian adults in 2006 by age

Activity	Total Participation %	15-24 %	25-34 %	35-44 %	45-54 %	55-64 %	65+ %
Rugby union	1.0%	4.3	0.6	0.5	0.3	0.1	-
Athletics / track and field	0.6%	2.7	0.1	0.3	0.1	-	0.1
Indoor hockey	0.2%	0.8	0.1	0.1	-	-	-
Basketball	3.3%	11.5	3.5	2.4	1.1	0.2	0.1
Cricket (outdoor)	3.2%	9.0	4.1	3.0	1.5	0.4	0.2
Australian football	2.7%	9.4	3.2	1.9	0.7	0.2	-
Soccer (indoor)	1.9%	6.5	2.5	1.2	0.4	0.1	-
Martial arts	1.8%	3.8	2.2	1.4	1.0	1.0	1.5
Rugby league	1.3%	5.3	1.4	0.5	0.1	-	-
Rugby league	1.3%	5.3	1.4	0.5	0.1	-	-
Volleyball	1.2%	4.0	1.3	1.0	0.6	0	-
Cricket (indoor)	0.9%	1.9	2.2	0.6	0.3	0.1	0
Boxing	0.7%	2.0	1.0	0.6	0.4	0	0
Orienteering	0.5%	1.6	0.5	0.3	0.2	0	0
Rock climbing	0.5%	0.9	1.2	0.4	0.3	0	0
Scuba diving	0.5%	0.7	1.0	0.3	0.5	0.2	0.1
Water polo	0.2%	0.9	0.2	0.1	0	-	-
Running	7.4%	12.3	11.5	10.5	5.3	2.5	0.6
Netball	3.6%	10.0	5.9	3.6	0.9	0.2	0.1
Weight training	3.1%	3.7	4.6	3.8	2.3	2.5	1.3
Touch football	2.4%	5.4	4.2	3.0	1.1	0.1	0.1
Badminton	0.9%	2.2	1.1	0.9	0.2	0.5	0.2
Roller sports	0.6%	1.4	1.2	0.6	0.2	0.1	-
Table tennis	0.5%	0.9	0.5	0.7	0.3	0.4	0.1
Softball	0.3%	0.8	0.3	0.3	0.2	-	-
Triathlon	0.3%	0.5	0.7	0.6	0.1	0.1	-
Swimming	13.6%	13.6	17.0	17.3	15.4	11.0	6.1
Tennis	6.8%	9.4	8.0	6.7	8.1	5.5	2.6
Surf sports	2.3%	4.2	3.2	2.8	2.4	0.5	0.3
Squash / racquetball	1.3%	1.4	2.5	2.0	1.4	0.3	0
Horseriding/equestrian/polocrosse	1.3%	2.2	1.5	1.6	1.3	0.5	0.3
Waterskiing / powerboating	0.9%	1.1	1.4	1.2	0.9	0.3	-
Tenpin bowling	0.7%	0.8	0.7	0.8	0.8	0.5	0.6
Soccer (outdoor)	4.2%	13.7	3.9	4.4	1.8	0.3	0
Hockey (outdoor)	1.0%	2.8	0.7	1.2	0.5	0.2	0.1
Gymnastics	0.2%	0.7	0	0.3	0.2	0.1	0.1
Rowing	0.4%	1.1	0.3	0.2	0.5	0.2	0.1
Dancing	2.4%	5.6	1.5	1.3	1.7	2.8	1.7
Shooting sports	0.5%	0.7	0.3	0.8	0.2	0.7	0.2
Cycling	10.1%	8.1	13.2	17.0	9.8	8.6	3.1
Bushwalking	4.7%	1.8	5.1	5.6	7.1	5.9	2.5
Yoga	2.9%	1.6	3.7	4.1	2.9	3.4	1.9
Canoeing / kayaking	0.7%	0.6	0.9	0.7	1.1	1.1	0.1
Golf	4.2%	3.8	5.7	7.2	7.7	10.2	6.9
Fishing	2.1%	0.9	1.7	3.0	2.6	3.2	1.6
Sailing	0.5%	0.4	0.2	0.8	0.5	1.0	0.5
Walking	36.2%	13.7	30.3	34.9	47.0	49.5	45.2
Lawn bowls	2.1%	0.5	0.8	0.8	0.7	2.8	7.6
Carpet bowls	0.2%	0	0	0	0	0.1	1.4

Source: Standing Committee on Recreation and Sport (2007)

Notes:
Shading indicates above-average participation in activity at a level higher than the total participation %.
%s reflect the proportion of the total population and people in each age group who participate in that activity, so %s don't add to 100 in each row.
%s don't add to 100 in each column because people participate in more than one recreational activity.

(-) denotes participation rate is not statistically significant, or less than 0.1%.

The table above shows:

- the highest rate of participation in sport and physical activities is among people aged 15-34 years.
- golf, fishing, sailing, walking, lawn bowls and carpet bowls generally become more popular as people age.
- as age increases, participation rates in faster sports such as soccer (outdoor) and netball decline significantly.

Recent national surveys by the Australian Sports Commission (2000-06) have shown that certain activities are more popular with some age groups rather than others. The following findings are relevant to Willoughby.

Young people 15-24 years participate most in:

- aerobics / fitness 25%
- soccer (outdoor) 14%
- walking 14%
- swimming 13.5%
- running 12%
- basketball 11.5%
- netball 10%
- tennis 9.5%
- Australian football 9%
- cricket (outdoor) 9%
- cycling 8%
- indoor soccer 6.5%
- dancing 6%

Activities in which participation increases with age, at least until the age of 65 years, are:

- canoeing / kayaking
- golf
- fishing
- sailing

- walking
- lawn bowls
- carpet bowls.

The most popular activities for older Australians 65 years and over in 2006 were:

- walking 45%
- lawn bowls 8%
- golf 7%
- swimming 6%
- cycling 3%
- tennis 2.5%
- bush walking 2.5%
- dancing 2%
- martial arts 1.5%
- fishing 1.5%
- weight training 1.5%
- carpet bowls 1.5%

Activities that are popular in most adult groups, or “whole of life” activities, include:

- swimming
- tennis
- tenpin bowling
- dancing
- cycling
- bushwalking
- yoga
- golf
- fishing
- sailing
- walking.

Activities most popular among adult males in NSW in 2006 are:

- walking 23%
- aerobics / fitness 15%
- swimming 15%
- cycling 12%
- golf 12%
- running 10%

- soccer (outdoor) 9%
- tennis 8%
- surf sports 6%
- touch football 6%
- cricket (outdoor) 6%.

Activities most popular among adult females in NSW in 2006 are:

- walking 44%
- aerobics / fitness 22%
- swimming 16%
- tennis 7%
- bushwalking 6%
- netball 5.5%
- yoga 5.5%
- running 5%
- cycling 6%
- dancing 4%.

Reasons for participation

The reasons given by Australians who participated in sports and physical recreation activities 13 times or more in the year before interview (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2007) are in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6 Reasons for participating in sport and physical recreation activities

Motivator	% of Australians	Gender	Age group
Health / fitness	82%	Females	25 years and over
Enjoyment	54%	Males	15 to 24 years
Wellbeing	41%	Females	35 years and over
Social / family	34%	Males	15 to 34 years
Weight loss	17%	Females	25 to 64 years
Competition / challenge	12%	Males	15 to 34 years
Walk the dog	8%	Females	35 years and over
Transport	4%	Males, females	All ages

Note: Total does not add up to 100% because each person could give more than one answer.

Constraints on participation

Reasons for non-participation are highly individualistic, and vary at different times and with personal circumstances.

The key constraints on participation of Australians who either did not participate in sports and physical recreation activity or participated irregularly (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2007) are in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7 Constraints on participation in sport and physical recreation activities

Constraint	% of Australians	Gender	Age group
Insufficient time due to work or study	23%	Males	15 to 54 years
Not interested in sport or physical activity	19%	Males, females	15 to 34 years
Injury / illness (temporary or ongoing)	18%	Males	45 years and over
Age / too old	17%	Females	65 years and over
Insufficient time due to family	11%	Females	25 to 54 years
Already active	7%	Males	45 to 64 years
Cost	1%	Males, females	18 to 34 years
Insufficient time (other reasons)	1%	Males, females	All age groups

Note: Total does not add up to 100% because each person could give more than one answer.

4.4.2 Recreation participation trends

Introduction

There are a number of established and emerging trends in participation in recreation activities, and use of sport and leisure facilities, which are important to consider when planning for recreation. The following information has been sourced from national surveys undertaken by the Australian Bureau of Statistics and Australian Sports Commission, and recreation studies undertaken for other local government areas.

Societal trends

Trends in participation in recreation activities are being driven by several wider trends in Australian society:

- **Aging population**. The Australian population is gradually aging as life expectancy increases, birth rates stay low, and "baby boomers" grow older. This results in increasing demand for facilities and lower impact activities that cater for the needs of older age groups. Many retirees have the time, energy and commitment to improve their physical fitness once they no longer work.
- **Work practices**. Increasing demands on peoples' spare time, the increase in casual and shift work, and the increase in the proportion of families with two parents working full time requires flexibility in the times that facilities are available for people to enjoy recreation. This leads to a greater demand for indoor facilities that are available all day and evenings, every day of the year. Organised sports on weekday evenings give people more time on weekends for informal recreation with family and friends.

General participation trends

- **Significant popularity of informal recreation activities**. Although organised sport is a very visible form of recreation, various surveys indicate that participation in organised sporting activities is not as popular as unstructured recreation activities.
- **Flexibility in provision of facilities**. Changes in recreation preferences towards newer and more varied activities which are available in more time periods.
- **Volunteerism**. Apart from participants, all sporting and recreation clubs need support from volunteers such as office-bearers, coaches and officials to keep their activities going. Australians are less likely to spend their time volunteering now than they were during the 1980s, which can be directly related to the rapid change and complexity of people's daily lives, family commitments and litigation issues. Consequently,

volunteering is declining in many sport and recreation organisations. The dependence of clubs on voluntary labour and support will require them to provide greater incentives and better management practices to attract and retain volunteers. Larger clubs are increasingly employing administrators, coaches and other officials.

- **Interest in health and fitness**. There is a growing interest and awareness in physical fitness and healthy living among all age groups. Fitness is increasingly seen as part of a balanced lifestyle for health, rather than just a leisure activity. Recent changes include:
    - the concern about obesity in children has led to the recognition that children should be encouraged to keep physically active, and the development of activity programs for children.
    - cardio-vascular activities (such as aerobics) no longer dominate group fitness activities. Cardio work is now being balanced with activities focusing on strength and flexibility such as yoga, Pilates, weight training, and more recently using magnetic plate machines.
    - personal fitness activities are becoming an increasingly sophisticated, comprehensive and commercial service offered by gyms and individual personal trainers often in Council parks and indoor fitness centres. "Boot camps" are a high-profile form of such activities.
    - activities requiring commitment for attendance at a specified time are declining in favour of activities that can be participated in informally, such as walking, swimming, cycling and gym activities.
- **Increase in demand for outdoor recreation**. Outdoor recreation activities that take place in natural settings, such as bushwalking, mountain bike riding, camping and fishing, are growing in popularity. There is likely to be substantial demand for natural settings and destinations close to urban populations in future.
- **New activities**. New activities are constantly emerging as a result of overseas trends, cultural diversity and the increasing impact of technology on leisure choices, including computer games and new equipment such as scooters.
- **"Old" activities**. People in their 20s are taking up pastimes once done by older people, such as knitting and crocheting, and lawn bowls (Paiement, 2006).
- **Growth in sports tourism**. There is an increasing number of events and participation in sports tourism, including Masters events, and State and national championships catering for all ages.

4.5 Demand issues in Willoughby

Key factors that will influence the needs and demands for open space and recreation in Willoughby include:

- an increasing population, which will result in increased use of existing open spaces and recreation facilities, demand for additional recreational opportunities and increased expectation for more/ better facilities.
- changing demographics of the community, particularly an increasingly aging and multi-cultural population.
- increasing residential density, which results in an increasing population of residents and workers who use open space and recreation facilities resulting in pressure on existing spaces, competition for limited space, and potential conflicts.
- increasing fuel costs which will affect transport modes used to access open space and recreation facilities.

To meet the needs of an increasing and changing population, open space and recreation opportunities should be:

- ❒ diverse, incorporating settings and facilities to meet the needs of various age groups.
- ❒ accessible, particularly near public transport.
- ❒ high quality and durable.
- ❒ flexible, allowing for multiple users at different times

4.5.1 Sports demands

There are specific demands on grass sportsfields as participation in field-based sport increases. Some of these increases are due to:

- fight against childhood obesity
- over 35yr olds males returning to sport
- female participation in sport.

There are 28 grass sportsfields in the City. A calculation of the total yearly supply (winter and summer sports) of available 'sustainable' playing hours on the 28 fields indicate that approximately 42,000 hours are available for the playing of sport on grass fields each year. This figure includes deductions for wet weather, maintenance, watering restrictions and the Sunday competition play ban.

The sustainability of a grass field in the cooler Winter months is crucial as over-use and heavy wear of the grass will result in death of the grass and the un-playability of the field surface. In 2009 the Winter demand for sportsfields in the City resulted in a usage rate of 276 hours per week; however the sustainability usage rate for the grass fields is only 226 hours per week. Consequently the grass fields are being over-used by approximately 50 hours per week in Winter, resulting in dead wear patches, higher maintenance costs with returfing and fields unavailable for use.

The demand for training/ game time on fields is based on the current participation and team numbers from the sporting clubs operating in the City. Based on player registrations (living in the Willoughby City), a series of participation scenarios for each of the main Winter field-based sports codes – soccer, rugby (union & league), touch football and baseball reveals that:

Soccer has 180 teams (approx 2000 players) -	needs extra 21 fields
Rugby has 48 teams (approx 610 players) –	needs extra 10 fields
Touch has 160 teams (approx 1400 players) –	needs extra 11 fields
Baseball has 30 teams (approx 360 players) –	needs extra 5 fields

AFL has been seeking access to another field (currently using Gore Hill Oval only), but there are no spare bookings available.

Hockey has been asking for access to a field in Winter for the last 10 years, however their special requirement for a water-based synthetic grass surface cannot be supplied in the City.

The Sports Action Plan includes strategies and actions to address demand, such as the use of synthetic grass for playing surfaces, and off-field sites for mid-week training.

5 ASSESSMENT

5.1 Informal recreation

5.1.1 Scope

Informal parks have different purposes and levels of significance, and variously cater for local, district or regional user populations. The suitability and attractiveness of informal parks for informal recreation varies according to their size and shape, linkages, terrain, location, relationship to surrounding land uses, and the presence or absence of attractive features.

At the local level, parks provide for passive pursuits (sitting, quiet contemplation, strolling and socialising) as well as the active, informal pursuits of children and families (such as ball games, kite flying, children's games and use of play equipment).

At the district and regional levels, informal parks provide for large-scale recreation activities that cannot be accommodated in local parks. They may comprise a range of developed and semi-natural settings with sufficient size to accommodate a variety of informal uses such as large social gatherings, picnicking, play, walking and cycling, while protecting and enhancing natural features, ecologically sensitive areas, cultural heritage and/or visually significant areas. Examples of such parks in Willoughby City are Bicentennial Reserve, and waterfront reserves.

This section also addresses the specific informal recreation needs of the social target groups of children, young people, older people, people with disabilities, and people from a culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) background, and women and girls. These groups have been identified in Council's Social Plans as requiring special attention in terms of recreation needs.

5.1.2 Planning context

Willoughby City Council prepared Social Plans for target groups (children, families, youth, older people, people with disabilities, culturally and linguistically diverse people, and gender) in 2004. An action plan corresponding to each Social Plan sets out specific actions to be achieved by Council. Other planning documents that apply to each target group are mentioned below.

Children

Council adopted a Playground Development Plan in 1998, and then commenced a program of constructing new and upgrading existing playgrounds. Council is currently reviewing and updating that Plan, and preparing a Playground Strategy using the results of the 2006 Census.

Australian standards for children's play equipment and soft fall direct the planning and design of children's playgrounds.

Young People

A Skateboard and Rollerblade Facility Development Plan was prepared in 1998.

Older people

The Willoughby Social Plan is the only current strategy or plan prepared by Council that addresses recreation for older people in Willoughby City.

People with disabilities

The *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* aims to eliminate, as far as possible, discrimination against people with disabilities in many areas, including access to premises. The Act also aims to promote recognition and acceptance in the community that people with disabilities have the same fundamental rights as the rest of the community.

Council's annual Disability Discrimination Act - Action Plan sets out required improvements to access for people with disabilities to open space in Willoughby. Such requirements include providing wheelchair accessible barbecues and outdoor furniture, multi-use cycleways / wheelways, and accessible access to bushland.

People from a culturally and linguistically diverse background

The Willoughby Social Plan is the only current strategy or plan prepared by Council that addresses recreation for people from a culturally and linguistically diverse background in Willoughby City.

Women and girls

The Willoughby Social Plan is the only current strategy or plan prepared by Council that addresses recreation for women and girls in Willoughby City.

5.1.3 'Report card'

Table 5.1 Report card for informal recreation in Willoughby

Recommendation of Recreation Plan or Open Space Plan	Completed?	If yes, how completed?	If no, reason for not completing action	New action required?
Regional parks				
Develop Bicentennial Reserve / Flat Rock Gully as a regional multi-purpose park, catering for structured and unstructured uses. Improvements include walking tracks, cycleway, signage, viewing points and pedestrian and cycle access from surrounding suburbs.	Yes	Was built to a Master Plan.	-	No
Unstructured parks				
Allocate proportionally higher funding for development and maintenance of existing unstructured parks in: ❒ Chatswood ❒ Willoughby ❒ Naremburn ❒ Artarmon ❒ Castlecrag	Ongoing	Better funding occurred.	-	No

Table 5.1 Report card for informal recreation in Willoughby (cont.)

Recommendation of Recreation Plan or Open Space Plan	Completed?	If yes, how completed?	If no, reason for not completing action	New action required?
Picnic and barbecue facilities				
Improved picnic grounds.	Yes	Every time a park is upgraded.	-	Yes Continue to embellish parks.
Provide one undercover picnic area.	Yes	Shelters are provided as parks are upgraded	-	Yes Shelters should be incorporated as a standard structure wherever picnic settings are installed.
More picnic and barbecue areas adjacent to scenic locations which incorporate undercover areas where appropriate.	Yes	See comment above	-	Yes Shelters should be incorporated as a standard structure wherever picnic settings are installed.
Park furniture				
More public seating in parks and other open space areas.	Yes	Ongoing	-	-
More park furniture	Yes	Ongoing	-	-
Community gardens				
Investigate the provision of community gardens.	No	-	No resources for the investigation; it is currently in the WCC Strategy for 08/09	Yes Examine options in high density areas such as Artarmon. Consider land for a garden in schools or churches, not just in parks.
Neighbourhood centres				
Prepare feasibility study for neighbourhood centres in West Artarmon and South Willoughby	Yes and no	'Kids Cottage' in West Artarmon is a children's centre with the potential to be a community centre.	A feasibility study for a neighbourhood centre in South Willoughby has not been prepared.	No
Children's play facilities				
Improved and safer playgrounds for children 0 to 14 years	Yes	Ongoing as part of Capital Works Program	-	Yes Some local playgrounds yet to improve and make safer. Review playgrounds that were upgraded in the last 10 years.

Table 5.1 Report card for informal recreation in Willoughby (cont.)

Recommendation of Recreation Plan or Open Space Plan	Completed?	If yes, how completed?	If no, reason for not completing action	New action required?
Prepare a children's playground plan when the 1996 Census data is available.	Yes	Completed a Playground Development Plan in 1997.	-	Yes Update the Playground Development Plan using the 2006 Census data.
Rationalise existing playgrounds to ensure they are located close to populations of children.	yes	This was included in the Playground Development Plan 1997.	-	Yes Rationalisation and location of playgrounds will be reassessed in the new Playground Development Plan.
Indoor covered playground in Chatswood CBD	No	-	No suitable area. Indoor play spaces in shopping centres such as Westfield.	No
Variety of creative and quality play opportunities throughout Willoughby	Ongoing	-	-	-
Upgrade play facilities in selected local parks.	Yes	Happens each time a park upgrade is planned	-	Yes Playground upgrades will be addressed in the new Playground Development Plan.
Regional quality playground focusing on creative playspaces and structures at: ❒ Willoughby Park ❒ Bicentennial Reserve.	Yes	Both parks have playgrounds rebuilt to regional standard	-	See above
Maintain the current district level playgrounds: ❒ Lowanna Park ❒ Muston Park ❒ Bales Park ❒ Artarmon Reserve ❒ Beauchamp Park	Yes	All parks listed have had their playgrounds upgraded in the last 10 years.	-	See above
Upgrade remaining local parks with playgrounds to include more creative play facilities, safer equipment, better quality seating, stroller access, undercover play area and more shade. Priorities are: ❒ Thomson Park ❒ Edinburgh Road ❒ Chatswood Oval	Yes	Playgrounds were built in these 3 parks in the last 10 years.	-	Yes New Playground Development Plan is needed to set new priorities.

Table 5.1 Report card for informal recreation in Willoughby (cont.)

Recommendation of Recreation Plan or Open Space Plan	Completed?	If yes, how completed?	If no, reason for not completing action	New action required?
Shade structure over play equipment at all existing and future district and regional play facilities. Priorities are: ❒ Chatswood Park. ❒ Bicentennial Reserve.	No	-	We prefer to use trees as the shade structure where possible to reduce maintenance costs.	No
Following careful consultation with local residents, remove the playground from Marlow Street Reserve.	No	-	Not a popular decision in 1997.	Yes Needs review with 2006 Census data for the new Playground Development Plan.
Off-road bike paths for children	Ongoing	Where possible, small bike tracks are incorporated into park upgrades	-	Yes Children's bike paths should be integrated into the Bike Plan.
Skateboarding opportunities	Yes	Skateboard and Rollerblade Development Plan was compiled in 1998. A skate park was built at Chatswood Park.	-	Yes Review and update the Skateboard and Rollerblade Development Plan.
Rollerblading opportunities	Yes	Included in the Skateboard and Rollerblade Development Plan.		Yes Review and update the Skateboard and Rollerblade Development Plan.
Young people 15 to 19 years				
Investigate the need for entertainment facilities (particularly cinemas, entertainment centres).	No	-	Cinema centres in Mandarin Centre and Westfield completed.	No
Encourage the provision of meeting places such as cafes and cheap restaurants.	Yes	Cafes, fast food outlets and low-key restaurants became more common in the mid-1990s onwards due to market forces.	-	No
Provide dances for under 18s.	No	-	Not a Council role/ function.	No

Table 5.1 Report card for informal recreation in Willoughby (cont.)

Recommendation of Recreation Plan or Open Space Plan	Completed?	If yes, how completed?	If no, reason for not completing action	New action required?
Install basketball half-courts in: ❒ Lowanna Park, Chatswood. ❒ Chatswood Oval. ❒ Bales Park, Chatswood. ❒ Muston Park, Chatswood. ❒ Willoughby Park, Willoughby.	Partly	A full basketball court was built on top of the Chatswood Youth Centre and in Thomson Park.	Lowanna - not suitable. Chatswood - no room. Bales and Muston – could consider when Master Plans done but probably no room. Willoughby – not included in Master Plan.	Yes Provide more half courts in larger district park and car parks. Also co-locate with practice walls.
Improve and extend bicycle paths	Ongoing	Bicycle use is encouraged by the Bike Plan.	-	Yes Encourage more bike paths as per the Bike Plan.
BMX facilities	No	-	No development plan for BMX. Council built a formal BMX track at Northbridge Park. Tracks have built ad-hoc by kids at Castle Cove Park and West Street Reserve.	Yes. Review need for BMX. Prepare an Action Plan for BMX.
Install a rollerblading / skateboard facility on a rooftop in the CBD.	No	-	No opportunity appeared; no audible community support.	Yes Roof-top sports opportunities should be investigated when new development occurs. Recreation facilities may be included in new developments in the CBD or the industrial areas.
Provide skateboard facilities.	Yes	A Skateboard and Rollerblade Development Plan was completed. Skate park built in Chats-wood Park.	-	Yes Update the 1998 Skateboard and Rollerblade Development Plan.
Older people (65 years and over)				
Appropriate programs for the aged.	No	-	Programs are run by external providers who use Council facilities.	No
People with disabilities				
Develop a sensory trail.	Yes	Included at Flat Rock Gully	-	Yes Refer to the DDA Action Plan.

Table 5.1 Report card for informal recreation in Willoughby (cont.)

Recommendation of Recreation Plan or Open Space Plan	Completed?	If yes, how completed?	If no, reason for not completing action	New action required?
Prepare Disability Discrimination Act Action Plans	Yes	Plan done, which is reviewed annually.	-	Yes – refer to new DDA Action Plan
Prepare action plans to address access for people with disabilities to Council's open spaces.	yes	Completed access audit for all public open space. Specific Access Plans have been prepared for Hallstrom Park, Bicentennial Reserve, and Willoughby Park. Priorities for access are set by Council's Access Committee.	-	Yes Council's Access Committee recommended the following parks continue to be modified (as recommended as part of the completed Major Parks Access Audit of June 2000): Hallstrom Park Playground. Bicentennial Reserve and Flat Rock Gully. Willoughby Park. Harold Reid Reserve. Chatswood Park and Oval. Bales Park
Accessible parks, swimming pools, sporting venues	Yes	As each facility is upgraded, access issues are addressed	-	As above
Play equipment for children with disabilities in Beauchamp Park.	no	-	Site in Beauchamp Park was not suitable.	As above
Accessible toilets in ❒ Beauchamp Park ❒ Bicentennial Park ❒ Harold Reid Reserve.	Yes	New toilets built in Beauchamp Park. New toilets built at Bicentennial Park. Harold Reid Reserve is in bushland. The toilets are accessible but the building is portable.	-	As above

Table 5.1 Report card for informal recreation in Willoughby (cont.)

Recommendation of Recreation Plan or Open Space Plan	Completed?	If yes, how completed?	If no, reason for not completing action	New action required?
Parking for people with disabilities according to AS 2890-1 in ❒ Willoughby Park ❒ O.H. Reid Memorial Reserve ❒ Beauchamp Park ❒ Bicentennial Park ❒ Harold Reid Reserve.	 Yes Yes No Yes No	-	-	As above
Kerb ramps at all access points in: ❒ Chatswood Mall ❒ Bales Park ❒ Cortile Reserve ❒ Fullers Road Reserve ❒ Civic Centre lawns ❒ Thomson Park ❒ Cleland Park ❒ Naremburn Park ❒ Willoughby Park ❒ O.H. Reid Memorial Reserve ❒ Beauchamp Park ❒ Bicentennial Park ❒ Harold Reid Reserve.	Probably	-	-	This work is covered in the DDA Action Plan.
Culturally and linguistically diverse				
Aged and frail aged NESB programs	Ongoing	-	-	Run by Council's Dougherty Units and Centre
Appropriate programs for NESB community.	Ongoing	-	-	Run by the Council's MOSAIC centre
Women and girls				
No specific recommendations	-	-	-	-

5.1.4 Current provision

Informal recreation for the general community

Parks suitable for informal recreation activities are located throughout Willoughby City.

Picnic and barbecue facilities are available in Artarmon Kids Cottage, Artarmon Reserve, Bales Park, Campbell Park, Castle Cove Park, Clive Park, Gore Hill Park, Greville Street Reserve, Hallstrom Park, Harold Reid Reserve, Lowanna Park, Mowbray Park, Muston Park, Naremburn Park, Northbridge Kids Pavilion, O.H. Reid Memorial Park, Warners Park, Wickham Park, and Willoughby Park. The most popular picnic areas are the regional Bicentennial Park, Bales Park, Hallstrom Park playground, and Willoughby Park.

Greville Street Reserve

Muston Park

Walking the dog is a popular recreation activity. The Companion Animals Act requires local Councils to designate at least one unleashed dog exercise area in their LGA. 13 unleashed dog exercise areas in parks and on ovals are distributed throughout Willoughby City. Leashed dogs are permitted to be exercised on designated walking tracks in 6 bushland reserves.

Formal gardens may be enjoyed at the Garden of Remembrance in Chatswood. Water features are located in Currey Park and Mashman Park, and the Griffin Fountain on Edinburgh Road in Castlecrag.

Exercise stations are located at Gore Hill Park.

A community garden is temporarily located in Warners Park. The garden will relocate to Market Gardens Park once the Willoughby Paddocks housing redevelopment is completed.

Mashman Park was developed on the former Caroma factory site on Victoria Avenue in Chatswood. Whitton Park was developed in Oliver Road in Chatswood after higher density housing was approved in the precinct in 1998.

Informal recreation for target groups

Children

There are some 40 children's playgrounds in public parks in Willoughby. Of these 40 playgrounds, half are full play sets, one-third are part play sets, and one adventure playground . The remainder are swings / slippery dip or a sandpit. Half of the playgrounds are either fully or partly fenced.

OH Reid Reserve

Warners Park

Children's playgrounds in Willoughby are local or district playgrounds, catering for local and generally limited play needs.

Playgrounds in Willoughby Park and Bicentennial Reserve contain a range of equipment for all ages and which attract users from a wider catchment.

In the last 10 years Council has completed a number of innovative playgrounds including Beauchamp Park, Chatswood Park, John Roche Playground, Castle Cove Park, Lowanna Park, Muston Park, and an adventure playground at Hallstrom Park.

Children's bike tracks are integrated with playgrounds such as in Bales Park, Bicentennial Reserve, Carlson Park, Hallstrom Park, Warners Park, and Willoughby Park.

Hallstrom Park

Greville Street Reserve

Play equipment which is accessible for children with disabilities is included in each playground as it is upgraded.

In addition to public children's play facilities, child care centres and commercial indoor play centres (such as in Westfield) also provide for children's play.

Young people

Provision of youth-focused informal recreation facilities in Willoughby include:

- ❒ skate park with a concrete bowl and jumps at Chatswood Park.
- ❒ full basketball courts in Thomson Park, Beauchamp Park, Gore Hill Park, Naremburn Park, Chatswood High School, and on the roof of the Chatswood Youth Centre.
- ❒ basketball half-courts in Artarmon Reserve and Greville Street Reserve.
- ❒ all-weather sports court at Northbridge Park.
- ❒ formed BMX track with clay mounds / jumps built by Council at Northbridge Park. Informal BMX areas have been built by users at Castle Cove Park and West Street Reserve.

Older people

Activities for older people in Willoughby are run at Council's Dougherty Centre in Chatswood. Ongoing improvements in parks to assist older people include walking paths with ramps and layback kerbs for easy entry, and comfortable seats for resting in shade.

People with disabilities

Provision is increasingly being made in public open space for people with disabilities as a result of Council's Disability Discrimination Act Access Plan and access audits prepared by Council.

Accessible toilets are located in Bales Park, Chatswood Oval, Gore Hill Reserve, Naremburn Park, Willoughby Leisure Centre, and Willoughby Park.

People from a culturally and linguistically diverse background

Council runs recreation programs for people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds at the Dougherty Centre and MOSAIC Centre.

Women and girls

There are no informal recreation facilities or programs in Willoughby which are solely aimed at women and girls.

5.1.5 Participation, demand and needs

Informal recreation for the general community

Introduction

When a park is programmed for renovation or improvements, community consultation is undertaken to gain understanding of the community's needs and issued. Submissions received are used to form the basis for park improvements. Most common requests are for a better children's play space, comfortable seating, a barbecue, picnic seating, shade trees, level lawn areas, and colourful gardens.

Some parks have ParkCare volunteer groups comprising local residents who look after sections of small parks close to their homes.

More/better regional / district and 'family-friendly' parks for all age groups

Parks that combine a variety of features and uses – contact with nature, pleasant social settings, children's play, cultural interest, varied topography and with a water feature or other focus – are usually those that are most valued and most used.

There is strong community demand for a large 'Centennial Park' type facility or smaller regional/district parks spread throughout the Northern Sydney region. Such parks need to be of higher quality to accommodate the demands of increasing resident and tourist populations, cater for a greater diversity of recreation opportunities for all ages, and become known as "nice places to go". Bicentennial Reserve serves this purpose in Willoughby to some extent. Community preference has been expressed for improving and upgrading existing regional / district informal parks rather than necessarily establishing new parks.

Components of regional / district informal parks should include grassed areas for casual play and walking the dog, children's bike tracks, cycleways, facilities for youth, seating, sheltered picnic tables and barbecues catering for large family and social groups, toilet and change facilities, access for people with disabilities, bubblers and taps, signage, car parking, lighting, a variety of trees and plantings, and access to food outlets.

Improved picnic facilities

With the increasing density of residential development arises the need for groups of families and friends to socialise and enjoy the outdoors in public open spaces. An undercover picnic area, more amenities and park furniture are needed.

Demand for unleashed dog exercise areas

Council's Companion Animals Committee provides input to Council for specific needs for dog exercise areas in Willoughby City. From time to time, the community requests further access to allow unleashed dog exercise. These requests can be trialled for 6 months and then reviewed. A current trial is under way at Willoughby Park Oval No. 1 where dogs are allowed off the leash from 6.00am to 7.30am when no sport or children are present.

Informal recreation for target groups

Broad participation

Specific population groups – children, youth, older people, people with disabilities, and women and girls – are often confronted with specific barriers to recreation participation. These barriers may include lack of appropriate or accessible facilities and programs, transport difficulties, absence of child-care facilities, and/or cost of activities.

Needs of target groups

Children

The most popular exercise, recreation and sporting activities of NSW children aged 5 to 15 years (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006) are bike riding (65%) and skateboarding / rollerblading (22%), followed by sporting activities (see Section 5.3). This survey did not include playing in playgrounds.

The provision of children's play facilities is often the focus of community perceptions about parks and recreation in a particular area.

Away-from-home play needs of children in specific age groups are:

- **0-4 years**: children below 5 years favour playing informally in children's playgrounds. Provision of small parks with play equipment within walking distance of the home or in centralised regional parks, served by footpaths for stroller access, in a quiet area, and with shaded seating for adult supervisors are important.
- **5-9 years**. Children in this age group often play in their immediate neighbourhoods – on the street, footpaths and nature strips. This age group need small parks within walking or cycling distance from their homes, with stimulating play equipment. Discovering their local area and meeting new friends is important, so passive open space and areas for both organised and informal junior team sports is essential.

The popularity and use of existing playgrounds, particularly district and regional playgrounds, is evidenced by observations. Specific requirements for playgrounds are:

- district and regional children's playgrounds is with innovative, safe, quality, challenging and creative play equipment catering for more activities and different age groups, needs and abilities.
- play equipment and softfall in local playgrounds meets Australian standards.

- additional quality furniture and amenities at playgrounds for children and people supervising children, such as shade, toilets, seats, bubblers, perimeter safety fencing, a variety of plantings and open grassed areas.
- accessible playgrounds for children with disabilities.

Other play opportunities needed in Willoughby are:

- bike tracks to learn to ride bikes safely, especially children aged 2 to 5 years.
- indoor play centre / covered playground in the Chatswood CBD.

Young people

Young people have a basic need for appropriate and affordable 'things to do' which includes recreational and sporting activities to divert them from getting involved in ant-social behaviour.

Many young people (about one-third) are not particularly attracted to 'mainstream' or 'structured' sport and recreation activities. They prefer to spend their leisure time 'hanging out' with friends. For these young people, non-mainstream opportunities, such as youth-friendly public space and skate facilities, are of particular importance.

Children and adolescents aged between 10 and 14 years start to seek out recreational opportunities beyond their immediate neighbourhood. Their recreation often involves group activities and team sports, in addition to informal recreation such as bike riding. Thus, playing fields for organised sport, areas for informal and specialised activities, and passive recreation areas are important for this age group.

As young people aged between 15 and 19 years become more independent, family-oriented activities become less important or desired. Participation in informal and active organised sports increasingly takes place away from home, in which participation may be limited according to the availability of transport.

Nationally, young people 15 to 24 years most participate most in aerobics / fitness, swimming, walking, soccer, basketball, netball, running, tennis, Australian football, and cycling. This age group need a wide range of recreation and social opportunities provided by indoor gyms and courts, bike tracks, pools, playing fields, outdoor sports courts, specialist facilities (such as waterslides) and passive recreation areas, and youth-friendly meeting spaces.

> The increasing popularity of "extreme sports" such as skateboarding, rollerblading, and BMX and dirt bike riding, has led to the development of facilities such as a skate park in Chatswood Park. Extreme sports continue to gain acceptance, with skate parks being incorporated into prominent and highly used parks and reserves.

Demand for BMX tracks in Willoughby is unmet. Informal BMX tracks have been illegally established in bushland as the increasing use of parks for other various activities and improvements to parks have excluded BMX riders. BMX groups are generally informal and unorganised, and are sometimes unaware they have to get permission to ride outside designated BMX tracks.

Young people are not homogenous, so it is important to provide a wide range of sporting and leisure opportunities for young people. Such opportunities would ideally focus on flexible design to cater for changing activities, for example a skating/rollerblading/bike facility, and multi-purpose court space.

Key needs of young people are:

- affordable, accessible and safe facilities and activities due to their lower incomes and transport constraints.
- youth-specific recreation facilities that meet the needs of girls.
- additional skate facilities, and improvements to and expansion of existing skate parks. was identified by most if not all Councils. Skate parks are popular and well used if they are accessible, larger and cater for varying skating abilities of youth and 'beginner' children.
- informal, active and outdoor facilities for skateboarding and rollerblading (sealed, wide, continuous pathways).
- half-court basketball facilities, especially in areas with a high proportion of teenagers.
- safe and supervised youth venues providing night-time entertainment, no alcohol concerts for under 18s, and dance parties; and for youth drop-in centres.
- informal meeting places in parks with seats and tables for young people to 'hang out'.

Older people

Open spaces and recreation facilities which are accessible to seniors and people with physical disabilities are also accessible to nearly everyone in the community.

Participation in active recreation declines with age. Supply of facilities for less active activities popular with the elderly, particularly lawn bowls, is essential.

Many older people desire to participate in 'mainstream' activities but cannot due to one or more barriers which may include reduced mobility, declining health, safety perceptions, poor transport and/or cost.

Older people favour small or large parks with sheltered and comfortable seating, picnic facilities, amenities, established gardens, and play spaces where they can take their young relatives and grandchildren while visiting.

As walking is also a favoured activity of older people, safe and easy pedestrian access on maintained footpaths in local streets is important. Pedestrian connections between homes, parkland, large natural areas and walking tracks, and accessible park furniture along pedestrian linkages, are also very important. Walking and use of parks by seniors may also be encouraged by incorporating Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles in design and maintenance of walking tracks and parks.

Support programs are essential in encouraging older people to participate in recreation. Such programs include:

- physical activities that promote fitness, strength, flexibility and balancing.
- walking and cycling clubs.
- special events that encourage active living.

Providing opportunities for indoor and outdoor swimming and fitness facilities assists with implementing these support programs.

People with a disability

People with a physical disability require easy pedestrian and wheelchair access on a continuous path of travel (CPT) to facilities and open spaces, and comfortable seating and shade.

Barriers to access to recreation for people with disabilities need to be reduced to ensure equity, and to satisfy legislation under the Anti-Discrimination and Disability Discrimination Acts.

More accessible parks, reserves and sporting facilities with access ramps, accessible toilets, and improved pathways have been identified as needs for people with disabilities. In addition, inclusion of people with disabilities in local recreation services and programs is required.

People from a culturally and linguistically diverse background

Needs for recreation programs for people from a culturally and linguistically diverse background, specially for older people, have been identified in Council's Social Plan.

Women and girls

There is a general need to facilitate opportunities for recreation and physical activity for women and girls.

5.1.6 Current initiatives

Informal recreation for the general community

Improvement of the quality of informal parks with basic recreational facilities, and upgrading and maintenance, are being undertaken by Willoughby Council in its ongoing Priority Improvement Program.

Current plans for additional regional / district informal parks include new public open spaces for residents and workers in the new Chatswood Civic Place, the Market Gardens Park in Willoughby, and the creation of the Gore Hill Parklands in St Leonards.

Landscape and Recreation Master Plans have been completed for Warners Park, Willoughby Park, Gore Hill Park, Naremburn Park, Castle Cove Park, Artarmon Reserve, Beauchamp Park, and Market Garden Park. These plans form the basis for ongoing improvements work in the parks to address informal recreation amenity.

Informal recreation for target groups

Children

In the next 5 years Council plans to construct new playgrounds at Gore Hill Park and at Market Gardens Park.

Council also plans to upgrade playgrounds to encourage higher use and ensure safety at Beauchamp Park, Cleland Park, Hotham Street Reserve, Kingsford Smith Park, O.H. Reid Memorial Reserve, Sanders Park, Sutherland Park, and Willoughby Park.

Young people

In the next 5 years, Willoughby Council plans to construct:

- a half-basketball court at Bales Park, subject to a Master Plan.

- a ball practice wall and skate area at Artarmon Reserve.
- a ball court and exercise stations at Castle Cove Park.
- a wilderness play area at Willoughby Park.

Willoughby Council is planning to investigate the provision of BMX tracks and facilities.

Older people

Park improvements planned for Gore Hill Park, Naremburn Park, Beauchamp Park and Artarmon Reserve will provide perimeter walking paths with more seating and additional covered picnic shelters.

People with disabilities

There will be undergoing improvements and modifications to the parks in accordance with the recommendations of Council's Access Committee. Parks being modified are Hallstrom Park, Bicentennial Reserve and Flat Rock Gully, Harold Reid Reserve, Bales Park, Chatswood Park and Oval, and Willoughby Park.

People from a culturally and linguistically diverse background

There are no specific initiatives for open space and recreation opportunities to cater for people from a culturally and linguistically diverse background.

Women and girls

There are no specific initiatives for open space and recreation opportunities to cater for women and girls.

5.1.7 Opportunities

Informal recreation for the general community

Regional and 'family-friendly' parks for all age groups

The key opportunities for regional and "family-friendly" parks in Willoughby are to improve the quality and diversity of existing larger parks (especially those adjacent to waterways and in bushland), and to develop additional informal parks consistent with the initiatives outlined above. There are limited opportunities to develop new large regional parks, but smaller parks with a range of quality facilities and settings could attract a regional catchment.

Demand for unleashed dog exercise areas

More data is required to be collected on the present distribution of unleashed dog exercise areas, and where the need is, and any gaps in distribution.

Additional designated unleashed dog exercise areas are required. Planning and design of unleashed dog exercise areas should be according to published guidelines, and they should include associated facilities such as seats, water, fencing and bins.

District and neighbourhood parks

Existing district and neighbourhood parks should continue to be upgraded in consultation with the local community.

Water restrictions have impacted on residential gardens and private water use. There is an opportunity to plant drought hardy plants in park gardens as a guide for the community.

Under-utilised bowling club sites and tennis courts also offer opportunities for informal recreation activities.

Walking paths for shared use by cyclists, skaters and rollerbladers, runners, walkers, pram pushers and wheelchairs are a valuable addition to the larger parks as they provide a simple means for exercise and leisure.

Community gardens can be considered in high-density residential areas such as Artarmon and Chatswood. Suitable sites for community gardens can include churches, unmade road reserves, pocket parks and schools.

The ideal park should include shade trees, picnic tables and barbecues, a bike track, clean bathrooms, a tennis court, a basketball hoop, comfortable seats, drinking bubbler, a playing field with cricket nets, a safe children's play structure, a practice wall, and nearby car parking. Other desired features include colourful / interesting gardens, a water feature, local history, and landmarks.

Informal recreation for target groups

Some of the key opportunities to meet the recreation needs of target groups involve providing mainstream recreation facilities that meet the needs of all people. This requires the provision of relevant mainstream facilities and programs in accordance with 'access for all' principles covering the location, distribution, design, construction and management of those facilities.

Barriers to participation in recreation by target groups may be reduced by the provision of facilitating support services, including 'supportive environments', accessible facilities and programs, cultural and age-relevant programs, information, transport and other types of support.

Children

Council's Playground Plan will identify opportunities for new and improved play facilities.

A hierarchy of local to regional playgrounds, including adventure playgrounds for older children and teenagers, should be developed and implemented across the region, with provision of at least one large, high quality, innovative and multi-purpose playground per suburb.

Resources for playgrounds could be shared in partnerships between Councils, registered clubs, schools and shopping centres.

All existing playgrounds should be audited and upgraded so they meet Australian standards.

More childrens' bike tracks need to be developed. This will enable more small children to learn to cycle in a safe environment. This will hopefully lead to greater participation in this physical activity for recreation and transport. There are opportunities to provide more childrens' bike tracks as part of playground developments, preferably adjacent to shared pathways or off-road bicycle tracks.

An indoor play facility could be integrated into a new development in the Chatswood CBD.

Young people

In general, multi-use youth facilities should be provided in central and accessible locations. Development of 'youth friendly' public places should be in accordance with the *Urban Design Guidelines with Young People in Mind* (Department of Urban Affairs and Planning, 1999).

The 1998 Skateboard and Rollerblade Development Plan should be updated.

Recreational facilities for young people for activities such as skateboarding, rollerblading and basketball could be incorporated into new developments in the Chatswood CBD or in industrial areas, and / or on rooftops.

There are opportunities to implement current plans for new skate parks, and to address any resulting gaps in the distribution of skate parks, especially in areas with high numbers of young people.

Rollerblading can be a casual activity using existing paved areas such as the netball courts in Bicentennial Reserve, and shopping centre carparks after hours.

Promotion of the wider use of youth extreme sport and skate facilities is required through effective programs especially for girls.

Current plans for basketball half-courts should be implemented. Also, appropriate locations for basketball half-courts and co-located practice walls can be considered when preparing Plans of Management and landscape plans for larger district parks.

A needs analysis and strategic plan for BMX should be prepared. Opportunities for provision of BMX tracks could arise from changes in land use.

Youth 'hang-out' spaces can be integrated into existing parks and other public spaces, in consultation with young people.

Evaluations of existing youth centres should be carried out to address access issues, opening hours, and the extent to which programs collectively meet the full social, cultural and recreation needs of the youth population.

Older people

Recreation opportunities for older people can be integrated with 'access for all' initiatives and a focus on informal recreation, while recognising that many older people are participating in recreation activities in increasing numbers.

People with disabilities

Recreation opportunities for people with disabilities can be markedly improved by minimising specific barriers to participation (more information, poor public transport, more affordable options, more respite for those with caring responsibilities, distance/isolation, safety concerns, and a reluctance to participate by those living alone.

Mainstream facilities and programs can be provided in accordance with 'access for all' principles that cover the location, distribution, design, construction and management of those facilities.

Bowling club facilities that are excess to requirements for lawn bowls could be redeveloped to provide more appropriate multi-use recreation facilities for the broader community, including the active aged.

Women and girls

Council and the State government could more effectively work with sport and recreation providers to encourage increased access for women and girls to recreation facilities, services and programs. In particular, greater access to non-traditional recreational activities and sports could be encouraged.

Information sharing could be facilitated through a regional group focusing on recreation for women and girls.

Attitude changes could be achieved through education programs run in conjunction with community organisations such as Womensport and Recreation NSW.

More appropriate opportunities for girls can be developed using information on successful projects already developed in Australia and overseas.

5.1.8 Constraints

Informal recreation for the general community

Regional and 'family-friendly' parks for all age groups

Constraints on provision of regional parks for informal recreation include the availability of land, funding and competing recreational activities and land uses.

Unleashed dog exercise areas

Dog exercise areas need to be separated from other users, particularly children and sporting participants, and from natural habitats. Resident and park user opposition to unleashed dogs also affect their location.

District and neighbourhood parks

Minimising undesirable activities (such as crime, inappropriate behaviour, night-time noise and vandalism) is a challenge for managers of smaller district and neighbourhood parks. Locating district and neighbourhood parks centrally or close to linear parks or pedestrian and cycle routes to schools, shops and bus stops are also considerations when planning new or improved informal parks.

Informal recreation for target groups

Children

Other than safety issues, there are no specific constraints to providing recreation opportunities for children.

Young people

Constraints to providing recreational opportunities for young people include the availability of suitable sites, differences in perceptions of the compatibility of youth-specific activities with other activities, and resident opposition to outdoor youth facilities such as skate parks and basketball courts close to residences.

BMX activities are constrained by a lack of suitably sized land, environmental impacts in natural areas, risk management issues, and conflicts with bushwalkers.

Older people

With regard to activities and programs, many older adults prefer those which are guided, and where they receive advice, support and companionship. For frail and very old participants adequate supervision is essential in order to prevent injury. These issues potentially have funding implications.

People with disabilities

The cost of adapting and retrofitting buildings and facilities that pre-date access requirements is a major constraint to accessible recreation opportunities for people with disabilities.

People from a culturally and linguistically diverse background

Language is a key barrier for people from a culturally and linguistically diverse background that do not speak English well to participate in mainstream recreation programs.

Women and girls

Constraints on participation by women and girls in recreation include social stereotyping, body image, lack of childcare, concern for personal safety, harassment and cultural and social pressures.

5.2 Trails and routes

5.2.1 Scope

Linear recreation routes include walking tracks and paths in bushland, reserves and residential areas; on- and off-road cycleway networks; shared pathways; and mangrove boardwalks. Children's bike tracks that are associated with playgrounds are addressed in Section 5.1.

5.2.2 Planning context

At the State level, *Action for Bikes – Bike Plan 2010* is one of the key actions in *Action for Transport 2010*. Action for Bikes is a four point plan, with a 10 year plan for infrastructure development. Implementation of *Action for Bikes* will involve extending the bicycle network, improving cycling facilities, and raising community awareness of cycling.

The RTA provides funding assistance for links between local cycleways to the regional network. Priority is given to routes than can meet recreation and transport needs, for example a link through a park to shops. Councils are encouraged to apply for funding assistance from the RTA for suitable projects.

The "Survey of Bicycle Planning in NSW Local Government" highlighted the need to increase the availability of bicycle plans, develop bicycle plan guidelines, review bicycle-related funding, and conduct annual implementation reviews.

The Sharing Sydney Harbour Access Plan sets out a strategic framework for access to and along the foreshores of Middle Harbour and the Lane Cove River.

The NSW Government Planning Guidelines for Walking and Cycling (2004) aim to support Councils, communities and development industry to improve planning for walking and cycling.

The Sydney Regional Recreation Trails Framework (Hassell, 2005) provides a vision to build on identified high demand for an integrated trail network throughout Sydney as part of the overall open space system.

The current criteria for grants under the Sydney Metropolitan Greenspace Program are to encourage recreational walking and cycling linkages.

The aims of Council's Bike Plan are to increase the modal share of cycling, minimise the impact of private motor vehicles on the region, and promote improved levels of community health. Council's Bicycle Consultative Committee provides advice to Council to assist it to prioritise and plan works set out in the Bike Plan. The Committee has representation from both Council's engineering and open space staff, as well as Councillors and community representatives. Priority proposals for the bicycle network in Willoughby are set out below.

5.2.3 'Report card'

Table 5.2 Report card for trails and routes in Willoughby

Recommendation of Recreation Plan or Open Space Plan	Completed?	If yes, how completed?	If no, reason for not completing action	New action required?
Walking trails	yes	Ongoing, according to the Walking Trails Development Plan 1983.	-	Yes. The Walking Trails Development Plan needs to be updated.
Walking trails through Northbridge Park (reviewed as part of priorities in draft Open Space Plan).	Yes	Tracks have been upgraded.	-	Yes. Access between Northbridge Park and Tunks Park needs to be investigated to reduce conflict between golf and walking.
Investigate the capacity of Willoughby's foreshores to provide more physical and visual access to the waterways.	yes	The Sharing Sydney Harbour Access Plan reflects Council's plans for pedestrian routes to waterways.	-	Yes. Implement proposals consistent with the Sharing Sydney Harbour Access Plan.
Prepare master plans for three loop walking paths in the Middle Harbour foreshore area: ❒ Willis Park / Castle Cove Gardens / AC Press Park / Explosives Reserve, and via roads to Echo Point Marina and Willis Park. ❒ Willis Park / Harold Reid Reserve / Cawarrah Street / Willis Park. ❒ Warners Park / Sailors Bay Park / Cheyne Walk / North Escarpment / Warners Park. Construct these three walks as per master plans.	Partly	Parts of these 3 loop paths can be walked now, but no specific signage or brochure indicates the loops.	-	Yes. Requires review and update of the 1983 Walking Trails Development Plan.

Table 5.2 Report card for trails and routes in Willoughby (cont.)

Recommendation of Recreation Plan or Open Space Plan	Completed?	If yes, how completed?	If no, reason for not completing action	New action required?
Develop start / finish points to cater for loop walks around the foreshore areas at: ❒ Willis Park, Castle Cove. ❒ Warners Park, Northbridge. Facilities at these locations should include a small car park, entry sign-posting, secure bicycle facilities, and direct and safe access to and from the nearest bus stop on Eastern Valley Way.	Yes, partly	-	Resources allow the work to be done in stages.	Yes. Requires review and update of the 1983 Walking Trails Development Plan.
Develop adequate signage, co-ordinated with the City-wide signage system, to delineate the three paths.	Ongoing.	Over 30 inter-pretive signs are placed throughout the walking track system. A detailed brochure is produced as a walking path is developed and signed.	-	See above
Include these walks as part of a trails guide book for Willoughby.	partly	A walking network map for Willoughby LGA is being prepared.	Brochures are available and on the web, but not in book form. The walking network map will probably replace the trails guide book.	See above
Implement the remaining stages of the Walking Track Development Plan including: ❒ West Chatswood to Mowbray Park ❒ Artarmon to Tunks Park via Flat Rock Gully	Yes. Yes	Completed as part of Rail to River Walk. Path completed through Bicentennial Reserve and Flat Rock Gully; path extends through Artarmon Reserve to Chatswood CBD.	Resources and priorities have been directed to walking tracks in bushland and cycle paths.	Yes. Recent emphasis on the footpath linkages (and the missing links) within the City. Need to update the Walking Trails Development Plan 1983 to show current and proposed walking tracks. This has to link with the Sharing Sydney Harbour Access Plan.

Table 5.2 Report card for trails and routes in Willoughby (cont.)

Recommendation of Recreation Plan or Open Space Plan	Completed?	If yes, how completed?	If no, reason for not completing action	New action required?
(cont.) ❒ Muston Park to East Chatswood ❒ Chatswood to Castlecrag	Partly Yes	Accessible via pathways and roads. Connection to Eastern Valley Way still required. Accessible, but not signposted.		
Install high quality seating, viewing areas and picnic tables along walking paths. Priorities are: ❒ Flat Rock Gully, Naremburn ❒ Castle Cove Foreshore.	Ongoing.	Furniture has been installed at over 30 entrances at bushland reserves.	-	No
Continue to upgrade footpaths and intersections to cater for safe pedestrian movements all over Willoughby. Priorities include footpaths and crossings within 100 metres of parks.	ongoing	Footpath improvements and Access program in annual maintenance budget.	-	Yes. Continue the Footpath Linkages Program throughout the City, which supports walking as an alternate transport mode and for fitness.
Continue street tree planting programs in Chatswood, Willoughby, Naremburn, Artarmon and Castlecrag.	ongoing	Planting is funded through an annual maintenance budget.	-	Yes. Continue planting for greenhouse gas control, and walking linkages
Investigate footpath widening in specific areas similar to that in Robinson Street, Olga Street and Hercules Street, Chatswood.	Partly	Work done as part of Local Area Traffic Manage-ment (LATM) schemes.	-	No
Continue to implement the recommendations of the Regional Bike Plan Study for bike paths.	yes	Ongoing. A Bike Plan for Willoughby was prepared in 2006.	-	Yes. Implement the Bike Plan.
Off-road cycle tracks for recreational cycling. Suggested locations include: ❒ Bicentennial Reserve. ❒ Willoughby Park.	yes	Path completed through Bicentennial Reserve and Flat Rock Gully; path extends through Artarmon Reserve to the Chatswood CBD.	-	No.

Table 5.2 Report card for trails and routes in Willoughby (cont.)

Recommendation of Recreation Plan or Open Space Plan	Completed?	If yes, how completed?	If no, reason for not completing action	New action required?
cont.		Perimeter path around Willoughby Park oval has been completed.		
Consider the proposed shared bike / pedestrian pathway through Flat Rock Reserve to Tunks Park, with information and signage.	yes	Walking track into the valley to Tunks Park has been built.	-	No

5.2.4 Current provision

Walking tracks

A network of walking tracks and paths extends throughout bushland, parks and reserves, and suburban areas throughout the City.

A section of the Great North Walk in Willoughby extends between Epping Road along the Lane Cover River through Mowbray Park, Chatswood Golf Club and O.H. Reid Reserve to Fullers Bridge and the entrance to Lane Cove National Park.

Walking tracks linking various reserves in Willoughby include:

- Railway to River Walk from Chatswood railway station to the Lane Cove River, through various reserves (7 km return).
- North Arm Walking Track linking H.C. Press Park at Castle Cove with Harold Reid Reserve (4.5 km one-way).
- Griffin Federation Track (2 km).

Explosives Reserve

Bushwalks in reserves include:

- Harold Reid Foreshore Track (5 km circuit).
- Blue Gum Reserve (5 km).
- Explosives Reserve (4 km).
- Mowbray Park (4 km return).
- Wreck Bay (2 km).
- Artarmon Reserve.
- Ferndale Reserve.
- Flat Rock Gully.

Grants under the Sharing Sydney Harbour Access Plan have been received for tracks on the foreshores of Middle Harbour, Castle Cove and Sailors Bay.

A mangrove boardwalk is in Mowbray Park.

Cycle tracks

A number of on-road and off-road shared and dedicated cycle paths have been constructed throughout Willoughby City. Shared paths on the Gore Hill Freeway and Epping Road have recently been implemented by the RTA. More regional and local cycle paths are planned consistent with Figure 7.1 in the Willoughby Bike Plan.

Council has produced a bicycle network map and a combined "Walking and Wheeling" map. A walking network map is being prepared by Council to supplement detailed brochures on walking tracks.

5.2.5 Participation, demand and needs

Participation

Walking is the most popular sport / physical activity of adults in NSW, with one-third of NSW adults participating. The popularity of bushwalking among NSW adults is declining, from 7% in 2001 to 5% in 2006.

Approximately 3,000 people participate in Council's bushland walks program, activities and events per year.

Cycling is increasing in popularity. Two-thirds of children in NSW ride bikes (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006). Cycling is the fourth most popular sport / physical activity of adults in NSW, with 9% of adults participating. Between 2001 and 2006 there was a 22% increase in the number of Willoughby residents using bicycles on their journey to work (New and Rissel, 2008).

More and maintained walking and jogging routes

The community place a high value on walking and jogging opportunities, as shown by the high use of some walking paths especially on weekends, and at weekday lunchtimes and after work in commercial districts in St Leonards and industrial areas.

Specific needs and requests for attractive and safe walking and jogging routes are:

- linkages within and between existing reserves.
- extensions to existing walking routes, particularly along foreshores.
- paths around the perimeter of sporting fields.
- maintenance of existing walking tracks.
- seating along paths and level walking paths in parks and natural settings for people with disabilities and older adults.
- safe footpaths and good lighting in residential areas.
- boardwalk access to wetlands.
- promotion of walking routes, including on-site signage and maps.

More bicycle routes and facilities

The cycleway network in Willoughby is not comprehensive. Bicycle links are improving, but there is a need for more safe on- and off-road suburban routes, and off-road recreational paths and links between open spaces, community facilities, transport nodes and other areas of interest. Ancillary facilities, such as bike storage, are also required to cater for cycling.

There is considerable demand to improve cycling access to foreshores from surrounding areas.

Shared walkways / cycleways

The general needs for walking and cycling routes outlined above also apply to shared pathways.

Rollerblading is increasingly popular among children and young people, but there is a lack of suitable smooth, sealed, wide paths in Willoughby for this activity.

Demand has also been expressed for continuous pedestrian and cycle links to and between foreshore reserves and waterways.

5.2.6 Current initiatives

Walking

Willoughby Council either is or plans to:

- continue the walking track development program.
- complete the Artarmon to Middle Harbour walking track.
- extend the walking track in H.D. Robb Reserve.
- ongoing works to walking tracks in bushland according to Reserve Action Plans.
- install interpretive signage on bush tracks in the harbourside bush reserves.
- complete a safety audit for all tracks.
- construct new footpaths in urban areas.
- undertake condition audits of footpath kerbs and guttering.

- ❒ conduct bushwalks for young children, school students, and people from a non-English speaking background (ongoing).
- ❒ acquire foreshore land at the northern escarpment in Castlecrag for a walking track.

Cycling

Willoughby Council either is or plans to:

- ❒ implement 27 new bike routes in stages according to priorities in the Willoughby Bike Plan.
- ❒ install additional bike racks around Willoughby LGA, especially at Council facilities.

5.2.7 Opportunities

Walking tracks

- ❒ Update the Walking Trails Development Program to show current and proposed walking tracks.
- ❒ Extend and fill in the 'missing links' in the network of walking tracks.
- ❒ Implement proposals for walking tracks in the Sharing Sydney Harbour Access Plan.
- ❒ Implement specific routes:
    - Lane Cove National Park – Chatswood - Northern Beaches.
    - Ferndale Park and Chatswood Golf Course to the Lane Cove River.
    - Castle Cove to Willoughby.
    - Lindfield railway station to Artarmon railway station via Middle Harbour.
- ❒ Upgrade and maintain existing walking tracks.
- ❒ Secure funding for regional walking tracks.
- ❒ Continue the Footpath Linkages Program in urban areas throughout the City.
- ❒ Continue street tree planting programs.
- ❒ Construct boardwalks in appropriate locations.
- ❒ Provide walking tracks on a continual path of travel for older people, people with a disability, and young families.
- ❒ Improve information associated with walking tracks.
- ❒ Install walking and directional signage in the area.

Cycling facilities

- ❒ Implement the 27 potential new bike routes throughout the City identified in the Willoughby Bike Plan. High priority routes are the ABC and TAFE, Chatswood CBD Access, Gore Hill Freeway to Lane Cove via Artarmon Industrial Area, Artarmon to St Leonards via Herbert Street, Artarmon Station to Lane Cove, St Leonards to Merrenburn Avenue.

- Complete regional cycleway projects identified in *Action for Bikes: Bikeplan 2010*, including Chatswood-Gladesville, Chatswood-Gordon, Lane Cove-Chatswood, and the Chatswood-Turramurra Rail Trail. These works would be undertaken by the RTA if they proceed.
- Construct a cycleway along the railway line from Chelmsford Avenue to Nelson Street (RTA proposal).
- Improve the cycleway network through redevelopment of sites including the Chatswood Interchange redevelopment, Chatswood Civic Place project, redevelopment of Willoughby Paddocks and the former ABC site, the Royal North Shore Hospital Master Plan, and the Gore Hill Parklands.
- Secure RTA funding for linking local cycleways to the regional network.
- Provide additional facilities for bicycle parking and storage in parks and reserves.
- Provide bike storage at Chatswood railway station. Bike storage has already been provided at Artarmon (east and west) and St Leonards stations under the Secure Bike Locker Program that is managed by Bicycle NSW on behalf of the Ministry of Transport.
- Encourage developers of residential apartments and commercial developments to incorporate secure bike parking.
- Seek funding for bike parking at transport interchanges from the NSW Government's Parking Space Levy Fund.
- Improve information associated with cycling routes.

5.2.8 Constraints

- Private ownership of land.
- Cost of construction of tracks and footpaths.
- Availability of State government funding.
- Availability of land for continuous linkages.
- Steep topography.
- Limited or no pedestrian access to Middle Harbour foreshores at high tide.
- Traffic volumes on roads.
- Safety of cyclists on roads.

5.3 Sport

5.3.1 Scope

Sporting facilities addressed in this section include:

- outdoor grassed / turfed sports fields (cricket, soccer, rugby union and league, touch football, AFL, baseball, softball, hockey, athletics).
- outdoor synthetic sports fields.
- outdoor sports courts (tennis, netball, basketball, bocce, multi-purpose courts).
- indoor sports halls and courts (basketball, volleyball, indoor soccer, badminton, handball, indoor hockey, table tennis, squash, gymnastics).
- specialised public and/or commercial sporting facilities, including golf courses and golf driving ranges, lawn bowling greens, croquet lawns, and health and fitness centres.

Water-based sport and recreation are addressed in Section 5.4 Access to Water. Swimming is addressed in Section 5.5 Swimming Facilities.

5.3.2 Planning context

The national Standing Committee on Recreation and Sport (SCORS) has undertaken an investigation into the shortage of sporting fields and ways that could be addressed.

Similarly, Game Plan 2012 (refer to Section 2) identified that increased participation in sport and recreation have placed pressure on the sustainability and adequacy of sportsgrounds and sporting facilities. The Standing Committee on Public Works Inquiry into Sportsground Management in NSW (2006) made recommendations to address overuse and identified shortages of sportsgrounds in local Council areas. The Committee recognised that the adequate supply and maintenance of sportsgrounds makes an important contribution to community health and social cohesion. Better local, state and federal government planning and co-ordination, combined with consultation with sporting organisation are needed to increase available opportunities for sporting participation and recreational activity.

At a regional level, the Northern Sydney Regional Recreation Opportunities and Demand study in 2005 identified that needs for sporting facilities across the region were:

- additional sub-regional and district scale field sports facilities.
- larger regional-scale quality field sports facilities.
- improved quality and usability of some regional and district scale sports facilities.
- additional and improved outdoor sports courts.
- additional indoor sport facilities and upgrading of existing facilities.

Along with other Northern Sydney Councils, Willoughby City Council have been concerned for some time about the shortage of sporting facilities to meet needs.

A demand analysis for indoor recreation facilities (CD Recreation Services, 2003) found that demand was likely to support construction of a new indoor two -court sport and recreation facility at Chatswood High School. Council and the school are pursuing this initiative (see below).

In 2004, an internal briefing paper 'Sport(fields) in the City' was prepared for discussion at a Councillors workshop, mainly in response to increased demand for access to sportsfields in Willoughby for soccer. An Action Plan for grassed playing fields for football codes followed on from the discussion paper. Opportunities identified in the Action Plan to improve the provision of sporting fields in Willoughby that are still relevant are set out below.

5.3.3 'Report card'

Table 5.3 Report card for sport in Willoughby

Recommendation of Recreation Plan or Open Space Plan	Completed?	If yes, how completed?	If no, reason for not completing action	New action required?
More sporting opportunities	No		Insufficient land available	Yes. An Action Plan for every sport code existing in the city is needed as well as other identified sports.
Analyse use of Council's sporting fields as part of an ongoing rationalisation.	Yes	All fields are in high demand especially winter, given the bookings and regular demands by soccer for more playing sites.	-	Yes. Regional audit with NSROC Councils has occurred, but results are not yet completed.
Prepare feasibility study for a multi-purpose sports stadium.	Yes	Done by CD Recreation Services in 2003 for joint venture Council with Chatswood High School. Funds from Council and the school are still being negotiated.	-	Yes. Pursue locations in joint ventures to get more indoor courts.
New multi-purpose indoor sports stadium for indoor sports e.g. basketball	Yes	Indoor courts at Chatswood High School planned. Indoor courts also planned for ex-ABC site at St Leonards.	-	Yes Pursue locations in joint ventures to get more indoor courts e.g. industrial areas, schools, church land.
Synthetic hockey field	No	-	Hockey needs a short pile 'wet' field, which doesn't mix with other sports on a synthetic surface.	Yes. Pursue synthetic sports-fields in 3 locations across the City at Chatswood High School, Naremburn No. 1 and Northbridge Oval.
Assess outdoor lawn bowling requirements.	Yes	Study done in 1997	-	Yes Review being done now. Alternate recreation uses for bowling greens to be investigated.

Table 5.3 Report card for sport in Willoughby (cont.)

Recommendation of Recreation Plan or Open Space Plan	Completed?	If yes, how completed?	If no, reason for not completing action	New action required?
Upgrade pavilions at Thomson Park and Artarmon Reserve.	Yes and no	Plans have been drawn up for a pavilion upgrade at Artarmon Reserve.	No plans were done for a pavilion upgrade at Thomson Park.	Yes. Upgrade all sport pavilions to include sport store, water tanks, natural light, kiosk, low maintenance finishes.
Use outdoor public asphalt courts for basketball, tennis, rollerblading, skateboarding etc.	Yes	All outdoor courts are in use for ball sports, wet weather training, and skating etc.	-	Yes. Action Plan needed to identify more suitable sites for outdoor courts.
More public tennis courts	Yes	More courts have replaced bowling greens at West Chatswood and East Roseville.	-	Yes. Need to do an audit of all tennis courts. Investigate other recreation uses for courts, and if some courts could be lit and covered for all weather use.
Investigate the use of tennis courts by casual players.	No	-	No resources available for audit.	Yes. See comment above. There is an opportunity for some tennis courts to become multi-sports courts for netball, basketball , volleyball, badminton, etc.
Support sports development programs with Department of Sport and Recreation	yes	Department of Sport and Recreation book our fields and courts for school vacation sport programs.	-	No
Sports development courses	no	-	Not a council role- usually done by each sport code	No
Improved maintenance of sportsgrounds and secondary services (bins, bubblers, seating, toilets).	yes	Included in yearly maintenance program.	-	No
Investigate the public use of school facilities for organised sport.	yes	Council uses and maintains fields at Mowbray Public School, Willoughby Girls High School and Chatswood High School. There are limited opportunities for use of other fields on school grounds.	-	Yes. Continue to explore joint ventures with schools for sport and recreation facilities.

5.3.4 Current provision

Sporting facilities in Willoughby are provided by:

- Council (most outdoor and some indoor sporting facilities).
- Private operators (gyms, squash courts).
- Public and private schools (sporting fields, indoor sports courts, tennis / netball courts). Council and the 3 public schools with sporting fields have an agreement where Council hires the fields outside school hours in return for funding field maintenance. The community has limited or no access to private school facilities.
- registered clubs (bowling greens, golf courses).

A wide range of sporting facilities are available in Willoughby:

- Council maintains 18 ovals for sport, including athletics, Australian Rules, cricket, hockey, rugby league, rugby union, soccer, touch football, and Ultimate Frisbee.
- Cricket wickets on Council and school fields. Turf wickets at Chatswood Oval, Beauchamp Park, Castle Cove Park and Willoughby Park. Synthetic cricket wickets throughout the City at Bales Park (2), Naremburn Park (2), Artarmon Reserve (1), Chatswood High School (1), Willoughby Park (1), Thomson Park (1), O.H. Reid Memorial Park (1), Northbridge Park (1), Mowbray Public School (1), Gore Hill Park (1).
- Cricket practice nets: Chatswood Oval (4), Artarmon Reserve (4), Chatswood High School (3), Mowbray Public School (2), Northbridge Park (2), Willoughby Park (2), Naremburn Park (1), Thomson Park (1).
- Soccer is played on 16 fields. In addition, a new synthetic off-field training surface for futsal has been provided at Northbridge Oval.
- Rugby union is played at Chatswood Oval (regional ground), Beauchamp Park.
- AFL / Ultimate Frisbee field at Gore Hill Oval.
- Regional track and field facilities at Chatswood Rotary Athletics Field.
- Baseball diamond at Bicentennial Reserve.
- Three golf courses: Northbridge Golf Club – 18 holes, Chatswood Golf Club – 18 holes, Castle Cove Country Club – 9 holes.
- 66 public tennis courts at 16 locations throughout the City, including school courts open to the public at Mowbray Public School and Willoughby Girls High School. Court surfaces include lawn (2 courts), synthetic grass (53), hardcourt (9), and synthetic clay (2).
- Netball courts: 13 sealed lit courts at Bicentennial Reserve; and 1 court at Willoughby Girls High School.
- Basketball / netball courts: 4 sealed lit netball / basketball courts at Bicentennial Reserve, and Naremburn Park (2 courts), Chatswood High School (2), Gore Hill Oval (1), Beauchamp Park (1).
- Full-sized basketball courts at Thomson Park, and on the roof of the Chatswood Youth Centre.
- Indoor sports courts at Willoughby Leisure Centre: 2 basketball-netball / 3 volleyball / 8 badminton courts. Other activities played include indoor soccer and badminton.
- Indoor sports hall at Willoughby Park Centre used for gymnastics and table tennis.

- 2 squash centres: North Shore Squash Centre at Lane Cove, and Willoughby Squash (including multi-use courts).
- 4 lawn bowling clubs: Artarmon (2 greens), Chatswood (2 greens), Northbridge (2 greens), Willoughby Park (2 greens).
- Bocce courts at Willoughby Park, Bales Park and Naremburn Park.
- 3 croquet lawns at Chatswood Croquet Club.
- Gyms and fitness centres: Fitness First in Chatswood, St Leonards and Willoughby.

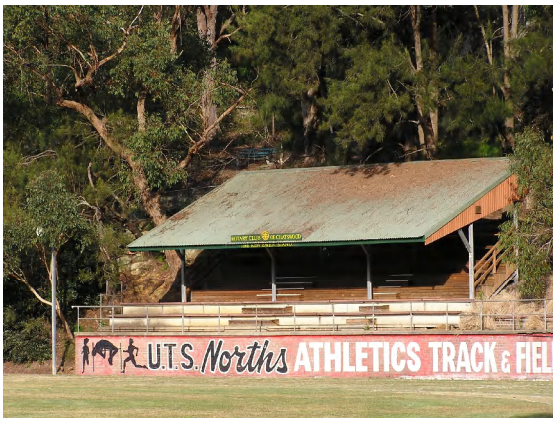
Beauchamp Park Oval

Chatswood Golf Course

Northbridge Bowling Club

Bicentennial Park netball courts

Bicentennial Park baseball diamond



Chatswood Rotary Athletics Field

5.3.5 Participation, demand and needs

Participation in Willoughby

Willoughby-based and North-Shore based sporting groups report that numbers of participants are increasing. Sports in which participation is increasing include Australian Rules, athletics, cricket, netball, rugby union and soccer. Cricket and soccer associations are considering capping the number of members because of the lack of sporting fields on which to play. Sports in which local participation is declining include lawn bowls and tennis.

Trends in participation in sport

The recent trends in participation in sport in Australia are changing as a result of a range of factors such as population changes, work arrangements, technology, social preferences and safety concerns. In summary, sporting trends include:

- a swing from traditional outdoor team sports to individual fitness and social sport.
- substantial growth in indoor sport and recreation.
- "fast-food" sports – those that require turning up and playing for a short time.
- participation in 'whole-of-life' sports for all ages, such as tennis.
- decreasing involvement by young people (adolescents and young adults) in active recreation activities, and an associated increase in indoor 'passive' activities such as computer use and watching television, videos and DVDs.
- a measurable decline in participation in sport by young women, but increasing participation by women and girls in traditional male sports such as Australian Rules, soccer, rugby union and rugby league.

Participation in sport is higher among men than women.

The most popular sports played by NSW children aged 5 to 14 years (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006) were:

- outdoor soccer (20%)
- netball (9%)
- rugby league (8%)
- tennis (6.5%)
- outdoor cricket (5%)
- basketball (4%)
- athletics (3%)
- gymnastics (3%)
- Australian Rules (2%)
- hockey (2%).

In 2006 NSW adults participated most in the following sports:

- aerobics / fitness (19%)
- golf (7.5%)
- tennis (7.5%)
- soccer – outdoor (6%)
- touch football (4%)
- netball (3%)
- cricket – outdoor (3%)
- weight training (3%)
- basketball (2.5%)
- lawn bowls (2%)
- rugby league (2%)
- rugby union (1%).

Sports in which participation has increased since 2001 are aerobics / fitness, outdoor soccer, touch football, and weigh training.

Sporting needs of various age groups

The rate of participation in sport generally declines with age. General patterns of needs for sporting facilities by various age groups in the community were obtained from the results of research into recreation participation, and from various open space and recreation strategy plans prepared for local government areas throughout Australia. These results are summarised below.

Age	Sporting activity	Sporting facility needs
0-14 *infants children adolescents*	Informal active sports and organised sports associated with schools and clubs.	Formal playing fields and areas for informal sport. Fullest possible range of other sporting facilities, barbecues, etc.
15-19 *adolescents*	High rate of participation in informal and organised active sports.	Provision of formal playing fields and areas for informal sport. Wide range of recreational opportunity.
20-24 *young adults*	Involvement in informal and organised sports continues, but much less so than earlier age groups.	Provision of formal playing fields and areas for informal sporting facilities.
25-29 *adults*	Participation in active sports continues but at slightly less than 20-24 age group. Higher fertility rates, so family activities are important.	Provision of formal playing fields and areas for informal sporting facilities. Versatile areas that provide for a wide range of recreational opportunity.
30-39 *adults*	Participation in active team sports becoming less important, but increased participation in social sports – golf, tennis.	Provision of demand facilities e.g. tennis, golf.
40-49 50-59 *mature adults*	Watching sport becoming equally or more important than participation (except golf tennis etc. and now bowls).	Provision of local parks and demand facilities - tennis, bowls, golf.
60+ *aged adults*	Very little participation in active sports, except for Masters sports and bowls etc.	Provision for demand facilities especially bowls.

Sporting needs of women and girls

Research shows that there has been very little change over the past ten years in the participation of women and girls in all aspects of sport, and that women remain under-represented at all levels in sporting activities except netball. Data on the participation of women in sport over this period also indicate a major shift away from participation in organised sport towards participation in informal activities. Increasing participation by women and girls in soccer is an exception to this trend.

NSW research has found that 58% of women aged 18 years and over were considered inadequately active, compared to 40% of men. Factors that result in lower participation rate of women and girls in physical activity include public safety concerns, harassment, lack of skills, lack of information about what is available, and lack of access to appropriate, accessible, affordable and acceptable facilities and services.

Sports courts and golf courses particularly cater for the sporting activities that are most favoured by women.

There is a general need to facilitate access to sport, recreation and physical activity for women and girls.

School sport at Northbridge Oval

Willoughby Council regularly liaise with sporting groups, and conduct a sports survey after each season.

Expressed needs for sport in Willoughby are for:

- more sporting fields in winter, especially for night training and weekend competition games for soccer which is experiencing significant growth. Australian Rules and Ultimate Frisbee have also requested additional fields. Enquiries for use of fields in winter exceeds the number of fields available. Some fields are used in excess of 25 hours a week, which leads to deterioration of the grass and creates an unsafe playing surface.

- more sporting fields in summer for junior cricket, and to cater for increasing demand by cricket for Twenty-20 games on Friday evenings in summer.
- a synthetic hockey field and all weather synthetic surfaces.
- more indoor sports courts. The courts at Willoughby Leisure Centre are used to capacity especially on Fridays and weekends. Sporting clubs are increasingly wanting to use indoor facilities for training.
- dedicated space in the Willoughby Leisure Centre for aerobics and fitness classes that is separate from the indoor sport courts.
- space in appropriate sporting complexes and parks for personal training and 'boot camps', which are increasing in demand.
- space for rollerblade hockey.

5.3.6 Current initiatives

Willoughby City Council are currently:

- reviewing lawn bowling facilities and considering alternate recreation uses.
- promoting off-field training to reduce wear and tear on sporting fields, such as using bitumen sports courts.

In the next 5 years to 2013, Willoughby Council intends to:

- upgrade and replace floodlighting to meet Australian Standards for training and competition at various sportsfields.
- upgrade cricket practice wickets at various cricket fields.
- upgrade synthetic cricket wickets.
- improve buildings and amenities associated with sporting fields.
- upgrade drainage and the surface of fields at all high use sportsfields.
- install lights at the baseball diamond at Bicentennial Reserve.
- investigate suitable training fields on the first fairway at Northbridge Golf Course.
- install a synthetic centre and goalmouths for AFL at Gore Hill Oval.
- prepare a community facilities/ recreation master plan for Northbridge Park / Golf Course
- upgrade netball courts at Bicentennial Reserve.
- construct a sports court in Castle Cove Park.
- pursue a joint venture for a two-court gymnasium at Chatswood High School.
- facilitate indoor sports courts on the former ABC site in St Leonards.
- undertake an audit of all tennis courts and review alternate/ compatible recreation uses for courts.

5.3.7 Opportunities

- Carry out an audit of land suitable for sport in Willoughby.
- Use the results of the Northern Sydney regional audit of sporting fields in strategic planning for sporting facilities in Willoughby.

- Review the Willoughby Local Environmental Plan and Section 94 Contributions Plan to include incentives to incorporate sport and recreation facilities into new developments in the CBD and in industrial, commercial and retail areas.
- Continue to explore joint partnership opportunities for provision and use of sporting facilities with public and private schools in the City.
- Reduce wear and tear on existing fields and expand times of use of sporting fields by reconfiguring field layouts; providing junior and small-sided games fields; extending junior fields to become full-sized fields; better irrigation through water harvesting and drainage; constructing off-field practice walls for goal kicking; training on the perimeter of the field; training in other places such as gyms, at exercise stations and on lit sealed courts; using more durable grass cultivars, by installing synthetic turf in high use areas, by floodlighting fields to competition standard for use on Friday and Saturday nights, and by allowing Sunday use of those sportsfields without floodlights.
- Pursue funding for synthetic sportsfields at Chatswood High School, Naremburn Oval and Northbridge Oval.
- Develop a policy governing the use of sportsgrounds for training and competition use in evenings and on weekends.
- Use sports courts for training in wet weather.
- Review needs for equipment storage and upgraded pavilions.
- Improve outdoor sporting facilities with associated facilities such as more ball practice walls and lighting.
- Consider using rooftops in carparks, industrial areas and sites such as the former ABC site for sporting facilities such as sports courts.
- Investigate using existing multi-level carparks in retail and industrial areas for sports training and activities such as roller hockey in off-peak hours.
- Pursue joint ventures with land/ building owners to use suitable rooftops or car parks for sporting activities.
- Review alternative sporting and recreational uses of under-used sporting facilities, including some lawn bowling clubs, tennis complexes and golf courses.

Junior soccer field at Northbridge Bowling Club, Warners Park

- Facilitate the multi-purpose use of tennis courts, for outdoor and indoor sports such as netball, mini-netball, basketball, volleyball and badminton.
- Convert unused bowling greens to facilities for other sports, such as in Warners Park where a bowling green is used as a junior soccer field.
- Pursue joint ventures with adjoining Councils for regional sporting facilities.
- Apply for grants to assist with funding facilities from the Australian Sports Foundation, NSW Government (Capital Assistance Grants, Regional Sports Facilities Program), Department of Gaming and Racing (Community Development and Support Expenditure Scheme), and peak sporting bodies (for example Tennis Australia's National Court Rebate Scheme).
- Utilise suitable land for sports training, such as RTA land under the Gore Hill Freeway.

5.3.8 Constraints

- Lack of and significant cost to purchase appropriate additional land.
- Proximity to residents.

5.4 Access to water

5.4.1 Scope

The waterways of Middle Harbour and the Lane Cove River are significant recreation settings in Willoughby. Activities that take place on these waterways include sailing, boating, canoeing, kayaking, swimming and fishing.

Water-based recreation areas also include foreshore reserves that accommodate the infrastructure for use of waterways (such as boat ramps, jetties and sailing club buildings), and that also that provide associated informal recreation opportunities.

Owners and managers of waterways and public foreshores in Willoughby are NSW Waterways, Department of Lands, and Willoughby Council.

5.4.2 Planning context

The Sharing Sydney Harbour Access Plan (SSHAP) prepared by the Department of Planning is the key strategic and operational plan guiding provision of water-based recreation opportunities in Willoughby. The aim of the SSHAP is to maximise access to and recreational enjoyment of the Sydney Harbour waterways and foreshores. Projects funded under the Sharing Sydney Harbour Access Program are primarily water and land-based (pedestrian and cycle) access to Sydney Harbour and its tributaries.

5.4.3 'Report card'

Table 5.4 Report card for access to water in Willoughby

Recommendation of Recreation Plan or Open Space Plan	Completed?	If yes, how completed?	If no, reason for not completing action	New action required?
Public wharf facilities	No	-	Specific project site was not chosen.	Yes. Access to water is outlined in the 'Sharing Sydney Harbour Access Plan' and its proposals for Willoughby LGA.
Construct jetties	Yes	Jetty constructed on Lane Cove River at Rotary Athletics Field.	-	Yes. Access to water is outlined in the 'Sharing Sydney Harbour Access Plan' and its proposals for Willoughby LGA.
Greater access to the harbour at: ❒ Castlecrag ❒ Northbridge.	Ongoing	-	-	Yes. Access to water is outlined in the 'Sharing Sydney Harbour Access Plan' and its proposals for Willoughby LGA.

5.4.4 Current provision

There are 20 kilometres of harbour foreshore in Willoughby LGA along Middle Harbour and the Lane Cove River.

Facilities for water-based activities in or on the border of Willoughby are:

- **swing moorings** on Sailors Bay, Long Bay and Roseville Bay.
- **marinas** on Middle Harbour (Roseville Bridge), Castlecrag, and on Sailors Bay near Northbridge Baths and at Clive Park.
- **jetty and canoe launching pontoon** on the Lane Cove River at Mowbray Park / Rotary Athletics Field.
- **sailing clubs**: North Arm Sailing Club and Northbridge Sailing Club in Clive Park.
- **boat ramp** at Tunks Park, Cammeray (in North Sydney local government area).
- **soft beach access** to Middle Harbour at North Arm Reserve, Clive Park, and at Echo Point (in Ku-ring-gai local government area).
- **waterfront parks**, including Clive Park and Fig Tree Point at Northbridge.

A kayak hire business operates at Northbridge Baths. Canoe tours operate on Middle Harbour.

Clive Park

Middle Harbour at Castlecrag

5.4.5 Participation, demand and needs

1% of NSW adults participated in canoeing and kayaking in 2006, which represented an increase in participation since 2001. Adult males and those aged 15 to 24 years participated most in canoeing and kayaking.

Participation by NSW adults in sailing has declined in recent years from 1.2% in 2001 to 0.4% in 2006. Adult males and those aged 35 to 54 years participated most in sailing.

5.4.6 Current initiatives

Proposals for water-based recreation facilities are:

- adding a pontoon to the jetty at Mowbray Park / Rotary Athletics Field.
- additional access points on foreshore land at Castlecrag.

5.4.7 Opportunities

- Apply for funding from the Sharing Sydney Harbour Access Program for wharves, jetties and pontoons; soft access for landing small boats; boat ramps; public domain improvements; new public waterfront parks; walking tracks; and on- and off-road cycleways.
- Apply for funding from NSW Maritime under the Better Boating Program. NSW Maritime will provide up to 100% funding to Councils and other agencies to build new boat ramps incorporating well-designed public facilities such as car/trailer parking, wash-down areas, fish cleaning facilities and landscaping at suitable sites in Sydney Harbour. Funding is also available for major upgrades of existing boat ramps, and additional facilities such as pontoons and wharves at appropriate boat ramp sites.
- A kayaking base on Council-owned land on the northern foreshore of Castlecrag.
- Respond to appropriate requests for watercraft hire operations.

5.4.8 Constraints

Constraints to establishing additional opportunities to access water in Willoughby include:

- steep topography, especially in the east of the City, precludes or discourages access to water.
- limited access by vehicles (parking) to foreshore reserves.
- encroachment of private development on foreshore land, reducing public access and limiting linkages.
- private ownership of foreshore land.

5.5 Swimming facilities

5.5.1 Scope

This section deals with facilities and settings for swimming, including outdoor and indoor aquatic centres, and tidal pools.

5.5.2 Planning context

There is no legislation or industry-wide guidelines for swimming facilities.

5.5.3 'Report card'

Table 5.5 Report card for swimming facilities in Willoughby

Recommendation of Recreation Plan or Open Space Plan	Completed?	If yes, how completed?	If no, reason for not completing action	New action required?
Prepare a feasibility study for a 50 metre swimming pool.	No	-	No resources available to undertake study.	Yes An audit of existing 50 metre pools in the region is needed to assess true need.
Prepare a feasibility study for an 8-lane x 25 metre indoor heated pool in the Chatswood CBD.	Yes	Pool and gym were built by Fitness First in the Regency building in, Chatswood.	-	Yes Investigate opportunities for more indoor pools within new developments in the Council area.
Indoor / outdoor swimming pool with associated leisure facilities and outdoor play space near Chatswood CBD.	Yes and No	See above	No outdoor pool built.	No
More / extend swimming opportunities	Yes	Pools built in Fitness First gyms in Chatswood, St Leonards and Willoughby; pool proposed in the former ABC site.	-	Yes See above

5.5.4 Current provision

Outdoor pools

Northbridge Baths Aquatic and Fitness Centre comprises a 50 metre 8-lane tidal swimming pool and adjoining diving pool in Sailors Bay. The baths cater for activities including swimming and swimming classes, outdoor fitness classes, and water polo.

Northbridge Baths

There are no outdoor 50 metre Olympic pools in Willoughby. However, outdoor Olympic 50 metre pools are located in suburbs around Willoughby at Lane Cove, North Sydney and West Pymble.

Indoor pools

Indoor heated swimming pools are located at:

- Willoughby Leisure Centre: 25 metre 8 lane pool set at 27-28^{o}C, with a turbo pool, teaching pool, children's fun pool with beach entry, toddler pool, spa and sauna.
- Fitness First at Chatswood, St Leonards and Willoughby.
- Carlile Swim School at Castle Cove: 17 metre pool.

Portable waterslides (inflatables) are used at Willoughby Leisure Centre

50 metre indoor swimming pools are located outside Willoughby at Ryde Aquatic Centre and Warringah Aquatic Centre.

A 25 metre indoor pool is at Lane Cove. A new 25 metre 8-lane indoor heated pool is being constructed at West Pymble.

5.5.5 Participation, demand and needs

Swimming is the fourth most popular exercise, recreation or sporting activity of NSW children in 2006, with 17% of children participating. Boys and girls participate in swimming at a similar rate. Since 2000 the rate of participation of Australian children in swimming has increased from 14% to 17%.

Among NSW adults, swimming is the third most popular sport and physical activity and is most popular among females in their 20s and 30s. However since 2001, participation in swimming by NSW adults has decreased from 19% to 15% in 2006.

Aquarobics is increasing in popularity among NSW adults, especially among women aged 65 years and over.

There were approximately 60,500 admissions to the Willoughby Leisure Centre pools in the last financial year 2007-08. Current participation trends for Willoughby Leisure centre pool users are:

- Learn to swim participants in the swim school = approx. 1200 visits per week.
- Casual adult swims = approx. 330 visits per week.
- Casual child swims = approx. 250 visits per week.
- Aquacise participants = approx. 200 visits per week.
- Casual pensioner swim = approx. 150 visits per week.

Trends in demand and provision of aquatic facilities are for year-round swimming in indoor, heated, 25 metre pools. Informal facilities such as spas and waterplay facilities are increasingly being provided and are popular with children and families.

Demand for swimming opportunities in Willoughby is qualitative, and further investigation into true needs should be undertaken. Requests have been received for:

- a 50 metre pool or additional learn-to-swim pool on the current Leisure Centre site.
- an all-weather 50 metre 8-lane pool in the LGA.
- an outdoor 50 metre pool.
- learn to swim pools.
- pools with warmer water over 30^{o}C for hydrotherapy / rehabilitation and aquaerobics to cater for an aging demographic.
- a water play / entertainment pool with features such as slides, fountains and spouts.
- additional water space for lap and casual swimming at Willoughby Leisure Centre.

5.5.6 Current initiatives

A 25 metre pool is proposed in the re-development of the former ABC site at St Leonards.

5.5.7 Opportunities

- Work with other northern Sydney Councils and NSROC to prepare a feasibility study to establish the regional supply of and demand for outdoor 50 metre swimming pools.
- Provide facilities for hydrotherapy associated with a 50 metre pool.
- Facilitate opportunities for indoor pools in new developments in Council's Section 94 contributions plan.
- Review the facilities available at the Willoughby Leisure Centre.
- Review use and facilities at Northbridge Baths, recognising temperature and water quality constraints.

5.5.8 Constraints

- High cost of constructing, upgrading, managing and maintaining aquatic facilities.
- Insufficient space for additional pool and water play facilities at Willoughby Leisure Centre.
- Availability of suitable land for swimming facilities and parking.
- Water quality and temperature in Middle Harbour and the Lane Cove River affects establishment of tidal pools and swimming from harbour or riverside beaches.

5.6 Interaction with nature

5.6.1 Scope

Natural open space areas in or adjoining Willoughby City include extensive non-urban resources controlled by State and local government. Such resources include National Parks, Middle Harbour and the Lane Cove River, estuarine mangrove and saltmarsh wetlands, harbour beaches, creek lines, and remnant bushland in or near urban areas.

This section focuses on urban and non-urban terrestrial natural areas. Water-oriented natural resources are covered in Section 5.4 'Access to Water'. Walking tracks in natural areas are discussed in Section 5.2 'Trails and routes'.

Natural (or environmental) open space is a significant form of open space in Willoughby City, being an integral part of the everyday experience of residents and visitors.

5.6.2 Planning context

State Environmental Planning Policy No. 19 – Urban Bushland aims to protect and preserve bushland in urban areas, because of its natural heritage value, aesthetic value, and value as a recreational, educational and scientific resource. SEPP 19 also sets out matters that a consent authority must consider when assessing development within areas zoned for urban bushland or in an adjoining area.

Council's Generic Urban Bushland Plan of Management provides the framework for natural area management in Willoughby. Specific Action Plans have been prepared for individual reserves. A committee with Council and community representatives assists in implementing the reserve action plans.

Council's ongoing e.restore program aims to restore and improve the natural environment in Willoughby. e.restore projects, funded by an environment levy, include tree planting and bush regeneration and rehabilitation.

5.6.3 'Report card'

Table 5.6 Report card for interaction with nature in Willoughby

Recommendation of Recreation Plan or Open Space Plan	Completed?	If yes, how completed?	If no, reason for not completing action	New action required?
Walking trails in bushland areas.	Ongoing	Trails constructed by Capital Works and Greenspace grants.	-	No
BushCare programs	Yes	Established and ongoing	-	No
Regenerate critical bushland corridors. Priorities include: ❒ Castlecrag foreshores. ❒ Northbridge foreshores. ❒ Castle Cove foreshores. ❒ Lane Cove River foreshores. ❒ West Chatswood valleys across the golf course.	Ongoing	Done through annual maintenance budget and e.restore program.	-	No

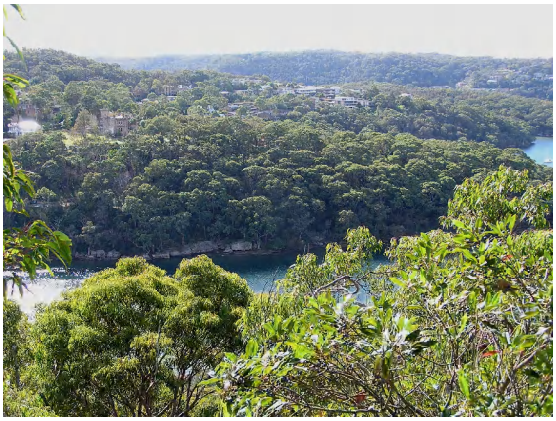
5.6.4 Current provision

Natural settings in or adjoining Willoughby City are:

- Lane Cove National Park, incorporating walking tracks, picnic facilities, children's play facilities and a camping area.
- Bushland adjoining Middle Harbour, including H.D. Robb Reserve, Explosives Reserve and North Arm Reserve at Castle Cove; and Harold Reid Reserve at Middle Cove.
- Bushland systems along rivers and creeks such as Flat Rock Gully at Naremburn and Mowbray Park at West Chatswood.
- Remnant bushland on land owned by Councils and the Crown.
- Mangroves and wetlands along the Lane Cove River.

There are 300 hectares of bushland in Willoughby City, which comprises 12% of the local government area.

Harold Reid Reserve



View to North Arm Reserve, Castle Cove

5.6.5 Participation, demand and needs

The natural environment is highly valued by the Willoughby community, because it provides relief from the urban environment, supports a diversity of flora and fauna, and broadens interest in and opportunities for outdoor recreation.

Broad participation

Bushwalking was participated in by 5% of adults in NSW in 2006. This activity is most popular among women aged 45 to 54 years.

Approximately 3,000 people participate in Council-run interpretive programs in bushland.

Needs

Increase/improve access to recreation opportunities in natural areas

In general, there is a need to increase and improve access to natural area recreation opportunities within and adjacent to residential areas.

There is also an expressed need for improved pedestrian, vehicle and public transport access to natural areas in Willoughby. Within the parks, there is a desire for more bushwalks, lookouts and rest stops.

There is a need for more interpretation of natural areas.

Demand for access to and recreational activities adjacent to wetlands and along creeks

Recreational demand is evident for walking along creeks and adjacent to wetlands, and for environmental education in wetlands.

Recognition of the need for 'quality' natural areas

It is increasingly being recognised that stormwater control, catchment management, and protection and regeneration of regionally significant bushland resources is vitally important for conservation and recreation.

Residents are becoming increasingly involved in bushland regeneration and rehabilitation. Close to 40 Bushcare volunteer groups are active in Willoughby.

Access for people with disabilities

Initiatives for access by people with disabilities to natural areas are in Council's Access Plan.

5.6.6 Current initiatives

Council is currently:

- implementing projects associated with the e.restore program.
- organising performances and activities along bushland walking tracks.
- linking foreshore reserves.
- linking the upper and lower catchment.
- completing regional walking linkages.
- implementing recommendations of the Urban Bushland Plan of Management and Reserve Action Plans.
- carrying out revegetation, walking track, interpretive signage, stormwater, creek restoration, wildlife management and habitat restoration and bush regeneration works according to Reserve Action Plans.
- consolidating existing volunteer groups and providing relevant training.
- implementing interpretive program with the local community.

In the next 5 years, Willoughby Council plans to:

- restore bushland in all bushland reserves, as required.
- extend the network of pathways in bushland reserves.
- restore pathways and reserves in the Griffin Reserves network in Castlecrag.
- rehabilitate watercourses including Scotts, Sugarloaf, Camp, Sailors Bay, Flat Rock, Blue Gum, Swaines and Coolaroo creeks.

5.6.7 Opportunities

- implement policies and actions to prevent further degradation of natural systems and alienation of natural areas.
- improve access to and use of natural areas for recreation. Less environmentally sensitive areas, such as some Council and Crown reserves, could be opened up for more intensive recreation use, while more sensitive areas can continue to be reserved primarily for conservation.
- acquire bushland zoned as regional open space at Castlecrag, Blue Gum Creek and Sailors Bay Creek through the Department of Planning.
- plant between roads and bushland reserves.
- better promotion of natural areas and associated facilities (such as scenic lookouts).
- consultation with the State Transit Authority and State Rail should be undertaken to explore ways of improving public transport services through bus links with railway stations to natural areas in Willoughby City.
- improve interpretation of natural and cultural heritage through implementing interpretive programs and initiatives contained in the Urban Bushland Plan of Management.
- enhance ecotourism and cultural tourism opportunities in Willoughby with better promotion, awareness and provision of tours and visitor facilities. Marketing of Aboriginal and European cultural heritage in natural areas is recognised as a key opportunity for tours.
- access to creeks and wetlands can be continued and improved by provision of boardwalks and pedestrian accessways in appropriate locations, and rehabilitation of creeks and wetlands through catchment management initiatives.
- recreational and educational activities in natural areas for other target groups.
- regeneration and revegetation of bushland and other natural areas may be funded from grants and environmental levies.
- continued support of Bushcare volunteers.

5.6.8 Constraints

Constraints to access to natural areas for recreational and other activities in Willoughby include:

- urban development resulting in fragmented natural areas and competing land uses.
- potential conflicts between visitation and the ecological sensitivity of natural areas.
- ownership of land by private landholders or State government agencies.
- high cost of acquiring land.
- lack of parking, sometimes requiring parking in residential streets.
- uncertain community interest in recreational and educational activities in natural areas.

6 CONCLUSION

Willoughby City Council has progressed in providing open space and recreation facilities and settings that were identified in its strategic open space and recreation plans prepared in the mid-1990s.

Since that time, characteristics of the community and their lifestyles have changed. Substantial residential development is also expected to increase the City's populations in coming years. These factors result in increasing demand for open space and recreation opportunities. Expressed demand for open space and recreation opportunities that need to be considered include facilities and spaces for young people, walking and cycling linkages, sports fields and indoor sports courts, swimming facilities (50 metre pools, small heated pools, and water play), and regional and district informal parks that cater for all ages.

Council is continuously working to satisfy those needs according to available resources. The next step in the open space and recreation planning process is to prepare Action Plans addressing the six themes to provide direction for Council to implement works to satisfy the community's recreation needs.

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