

Sport and Recreation Victoria, Victorian Soccer Federation, Amateur Soccer Federation of Victoria and Local Government Authorities

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND
VICTORIAN SOCCER RESOURCE STUDY**

.....
**Final Report
November 1999**
.....

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1 Introduction

Sport and Recreation Victoria, Victorian Soccer Federation and Amateur Soccer Federation of Victoria in conjunction with local government authorities commissioned a study on issues related to soccer development and facilities primarily within the Melbourne Metropolitan Region.

The impetus to conducting the study was a recognition by Local Government, Victorian Soccer Federation, Amateur Soccer Federation of Victoria and Sport and Recreation Victoria that soccer has an important role in the provision of sport and in providing opportunities for broader social interaction for the community. Soccer transcends to some degree many of the existing gender, age, ability and cultural barriers that are often embedded in the other participatory sports such as football and cricket.

The study was triggered as a result of the increasing pressure applied on local Councils by soccer clubs to erect perimeter and pitch fencing on municipal or Crown land, resulting in the alienation of public open space. This pressure from clubs was largely a result of the then Victorian Soccer Federation ground criteria.

In May 1996, the Yarra City Council invited a number of metropolitan Councils to attend a Municipal Working Group meeting to discuss the issue of fencing of soccer grounds with the aim to explore the position of participating Council's policies or responses to date. As a result of that meeting, the Metropolitan Local Government Forum was formed.

The role of the Metropolitan Local Government Forum was to engage the Victorian Soccer Federation and Sport and Recreation Victoria in formal discussions in relation to the fencing of soccer grounds. Ongoing discussions with the Victorian Soccer Federation indicated that in addition to the issue of fencing soccer grounds a range of other issues existed including fixturing (seasonal creep), club operating costs, relegation and promotion and the lack of sufficient suitable facilities to meet the demand for soccer in the community.

2 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to develop a framework that includes guidelines and strategies for Local and State Government, Victorian Soccer Federation and Amateur Soccer Federation of Victoria. This framework will lead to more affordable and accessible soccer opportunities for a diverse range of needs and age groups including males and females, whilst recognising the financial and social environment that local government must operate within.

It is anticipated that the study will be adopted by Sport and Recreation Victoria, Local Government Authorities, Victorian Soccer Federation and the Amateur Soccer Federation of Victoria as a "blueprint" or "working document" for the future development of soccer.

3 Outcomes of the Study

The key expected outcomes of the study included:

- The identification and analysis of the range of resources deployed by Local Government in the provision of soccer facilities and soccer development.

- The identification and analysis of issues affecting soccer as recognised by Local and State Government, Victorian Soccer Federation and Victorian Amateur Soccer Federation in relation to the management and operation of the sport.
- The identification and analysis of the real demand for soccer as recognised by Local and State Government, Victorian Soccer Federation, Amateur Soccer Federation of Victoria, Soccer Australia and the Australian Sports Commission.
- The identification and development of strategies and recommendation, which can be endorsed by Local and State Government, Victorian Soccer Federation and Amateur Soccer Federation of Victoria for the future growth and development of the sport.

4 Principles and Objectives

As part of the project, the following two principles have been established by the Steering Committee to guide the future development growth and participation of soccer.

4.1 PRINCIPLE ONE

People of both genders, and all ability levels should be encouraged and able to participate in soccer activities.

To guide the above principle, the following objectives have been established:

- To increase the number of local playing opportunities for males, females, juniors and veterans to play soccer.
- To ensure the best possible use of existing facilities and provide for the future growth of soccer.
- To improve funding opportunities for the future development and provision of soccer facilities.
- A range of competitions will be offered targeted to specific groups and types of players including adults and juniors, males and females, and elite and social players.
- Players will have the opportunity to remain a member of a club and play the sport at different levels depending upon the aspiration and ability of the individual player.
- To encourage and enable people to participate in soccer, not only as players but referees, coaches and administrators.

4.2 PRINCIPLE TWO

People of both genders should have the opportunity to achieve excellence in soccer participation.

To guide the above principle, the following objectives have been established:

- To develop programs that enable interested individuals to achieve excellence as players, coaches, administrators and referees.
- Develop a regulated system of promotion and relegation that apply to all competitions providing an opportunity for clubs to progress from lower leagues through to elite competitions.

- Develop a more coordinated, streamlined administration of the sport to avoid duplication and minimise the administrative requirements on clubs.
- To develop a Centre of excellence for the training and development of elite players.

5 Summary of Key Issues / Recommendations

The following table provides a summary of the key issues and recommendations identified as part of the extensive market research and consultation undertaken as part of this project.

The table has been developed to clearly identify the organisations responsible for the implementation of the findings of the report and recommendations. In some instances where there may be joint responsibilities, the information has been duplicated.

Soccer Associations

TOPIC	KEY ISSUES	REFERENCE	RECOMMENDATIONS
Club Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sporting trends indicate that sporting clubs with only one or two teams have a greater challenge in generating sufficient income to cover their expenses. As a means of assisting their long-term viability and sustainability, soccer clubs should be encouraged to participate as/or within larger community based sporting organisations. • Currently clubs do not provide the opportunity for players to participate in a range of competitions. Regulations should be changed to allow clubs to enter teams in different competition levels. • There is a need to develop multi team clubs that cater for teams competing in elite, community and social competitions as well as junior and women's leagues. This may include clubs which have teams competing in, say, Premier League, Provisional League and Social Leagues as well as juniors and women's. 	Section 6.4 Page 52 – 54	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That the club structure as detailed in Section 6.4 be acknowledged and accepted. • That the VSF review the current competition structure for the men's league into three distinct groups of elite, community and social competitions. • That the VSF review the junior competition in line with the strategy identified in 6.4.3. • That the VSF review the women's competition in line with the strategy identified in 6.4.5.
Competition Structure / Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Currently an orderly system of promotion and relegation occurs within VSF competitions between Premier League and Provisional League. However, given the continued growth of soccer in the Melbourne metropolitan area, it is likely that clubs will continue to be established in new growth areas and over time wish to develop teams in the divisions from social through to community and elite leagues. • It is suggested that the VSF in association with its affiliated soccer associations, including the ASFV and Country Leagues, establish an agreed set of criteria which all clubs must meet to prior to entering Provisional League. The criteria should be based on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Financial performance – Facilities available – Administrative and management track record – On and off field behaviour of players, officials and spectators. 	Section 6.4 Page 52 Section 6.4.7 Pages 54 – 55	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That the administration structure be reviewed to enable a club registered with a VSF affiliated association to be eligible to enter teams in all competitions conducted under the auspices of the VSF. • That the Soccer Associations require all clubs to meet the following criteria before annual registration into the competition is accepted. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Payment of all insurances. – Payment of outstanding debts. – Negotiated payment plan for outstanding debts. – Participation in sports administration programs. • That the Soccer Associations require all clubs to meet an agreed set of criteria prior to entering the VSF competitions.
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a lack of resources within Soccer Associations to enable the ongoing communication between clubs, Local Government and the Associations. • There is a need to improve the communication channels between some Local Government Authorities and soccer clubs/associations. • A number of clubs who use school based sporting facilities expressed concern over the communication, high fees and inconsistency in ground hire charges applied by schools. 	Section 6.6.9 Pages 64 - 65	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That Sport and Recreation Victoria instigate bi-annual meetings with Soccer Associations and Local Government. • That the VSF and ASFV with Local Government, where appropriate, develop a joint submission to Sport and Recreation Victoria for the funding of a Project Officer to implement key strategies as outlined in the report. • That the Soccer Associations instigate discussions with the Education Department in relation to the potential development of generic guidelines for the use of school sporting facilities by community sporting clubs and the development of a recommended fee schedule.

TOPIC	KEY ISSUES	REFERENCE	RECOMMENDATIONS
<p>Season Length</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A number of Local Government Authorities expressed concern over the seasonal creep that has been occurring with sporting clubs, including the soccer competitions over the past 10 years. • The club auspiced cup events, which are fixtured separately to the home and away matches, are the main reason causing an increase to the seasonal length. In particular, the ASFV cup events which are scheduled at the end of each winter season. • The cup events are normally co-ordinated by the individual club and are scheduled as a fund/revenue raising activity. Many of the clubs' financial position is reliant upon receiving funds through such events. • The VSF indicated they are conscious of the need to regulate the length of the season to meet council's needs for maintenance and to facilitate sharing of facilities with a summer sporting code. To assist this process, the VSF has reduced the size of all senior men's leagues to 12 teams, commencing in the Year 2000, and the majority of junior leagues to 10 teams. 	<p>Section 6.6.7 Pages 62 – 64</p> <p>Section 6.6.4 Page 61</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That the home and away summer and winter sporting season dates as follows be accepted as the guidelines for seasonal dates: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Summer Season: 1st weekend October to last weekend February. – Winter Season: 1st weekend April to last weekend August. • That all club organised cup events and "make up games" be scheduled within the home and away seasonal dates to reduce seasonal creep. • That Association auspiced cup events held outside of the winter season dates detailed above be scheduled at facilities with 12 month tenancy arrangements or by negotiated agreement with the appropriate Local Government Authority.
<p>Facility Provision</p> <p>Facility Requirements</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The VSF soccer facility requirements were identified as a major problem to Local Government. Over the past two years, some of the criteria has been relaxed which has taken some of the pressure off Councils and the clubs. There is, however, a need to continue to review these facility requirements. Facilities provided should directly reflect the level of play and the core facility requirements to participate in the sport. It should be recognised however that Local Government will continue to have limited resources to address the range of competing needs and demands of the various sporting and recreational groups. 	<p>Section 6.5 Pages 56 - 59</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That Soccer Association include Local Government Authorities and Sport and Recreation Victoria in any future review of soccer facility guidelines.

TOPIC	KEY ISSUES	REFERENCE	RECOMMENDATIONS
Facility Hierarchy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Soccer has traditionally been arranged on a home and away basis with all clubs having a home ground or sharing a facility. It is expected this will continue for elite and community level competitions and where possible for veterans, social and junior competitions. However, there are instances where it may be more appropriate to conduct competitions on a multi pitch complex with all games played at the same time, for example with veterans, and some juniors and women's leagues. 	Section 6.5.2 Page 57	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> That a hierarchy of soccer complexes which includes the three categories of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Single club – small complex Single club – large complex Regional complex Be further examined as a model for addressing the current and future soccer facility requirements. That the five level Soccer Grade Classification and the associated facility guidelines as detailed below be accepted. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grade A: Premier League Grade B: State League Division One Grade C: State League Division Two, Three and Four and Provisional League Division One Grade D: Provisional League Division Two and Three and Amateur League Division One, Two and Three Grade E: Junior competitions
<i>Facility Hierarchy (continued)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is proposed that soccer grounds be classified into five grades A, B, C, D and E, each with essential and preferred features. A copy of the essential and preferred facility requirements are detailed in Appendix H in the main report. The proposed hierarchy recognises the standard of facilities required for the different levels of soccer to participate in the sport. In some instances, there may be an opportunity for existing single occupancy grounds to be converted to shared use grounds. Where independent management is instituted, the host club may receive a discounted fee for its investment in relation to floodlights and or pavilion development. If on the other hand the host club continues to manage the facility on behalf of Council, payment of the ground rental will reflect Council's investment and the club's investment in the facility. 	Section 6.5.2 Page 57	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> That Soccer Associations, Sport and Recreation Victoria and Local Government use the hierarchy model to establish priority areas for future soccer facility developments.
Maximisation of Facility Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Soccer Associations need to identify opportunities for improved fixturing that allows optimum use of existing facilities. This should include improved communication between the VSF and ASFV to maximise the use of scarce resources, specifically the sharing of facilities. The use of synthetic surfaces such as hockey pitches should also be investigated as an opportunity for accessing additional training facilities. 	Section 6.6.11 Pages 65, 66 & 68	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> That the Soccer Associations review the opportunities to share grounds to ensure scarce facility resources are maximised. That the Soccer Associations investigate the opportunities for training on synthetic surfaces as a means of increasing access to training facilities. That the Soccer Associations review the match times to reduce the conflict of male and female use of soccer facilities.

TOPIC	KEY ISSUES	REFERENCE	RECOMMENDATIONS
Maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The market research findings identified that the maintenance and quality of soccer pitches across the Melbourne Metropolitan area varied from one Local Government Authority to another. A number of clubs indicated that the provision of quality soccer pitches was a second priority for Local Government to the more traditional sports of Australia Rules Football and Cricket and, therefore, the facilities provided were often of a poorer quality and condition. Due to soccer being played along the surface, the need for an even quality surface is a high priority for soccer clubs. A number of clubs indicated that Parks and Gardens staff did not have an understanding of the needs of soccer or the skills to maintain a soccer pitch. 	Section 6.6.3 Pages 60 - 61	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> That Soccer Associations, in conjunction with Parks and Leisure Australia and with the assistance of horticultural/turf maintenance advice develop guidelines for the preparation and maintenance of soccer pitches. That Local Government Authorities include the agreed maintenance guidelines in any future specifications for the maintenance of sporting reserves.

TOPIC	KEY ISSUES	REFERENCE	RECOMMENDATIONS
Club Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A number of Local Government Authorities are concerned about the professionalism and efficient management of soccer clubs, particularly at the higher level competitions. Clubs competing in State and Premier Leagues are utilising high quality sporting facilities and resources and are responsible for significant budgets and financial resources. The club management structure should, therefore, be reflective of this responsibility and accountable for the maintenance and management of these facilities and the financial viability of the club. 	Section 6.6.1 Page 59	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> That Sport and Recreation Victoria extend the existing VIP Sports Administration Program and co-ordinate and fund education/training sessions for sporting clubs/associations prior to each sporting season. The education/training sessions should incorporate as a base the following topics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial management, planning and budgeting. Club promotion. Sponsorship. Understanding Local Government processes/ practices. Maintenance of sporting facilities. Legal obligations/insurances. Occupational health and safety. Conducting events/crowd management. That Soccer Clubs encourage committee members and other relevant people to participate in the education/training programs coordinated by Sport and Recreation Victoria.
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The communication between clubs and Local Government Authorities vary from club to club and Council to Council. To ensure the smooth co-ordination of the sport however, there is a need to improve the communication channels. 	Section 6.6.9 Pages 64 - 65	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> That clubs ensure that they keep Soccer Associations informed of discussions and negotiations with Local Government Authorities.
Ground Maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The market research findings identified that the maintenance and quality of soccer pitches across the Melbourne Metropolitan area varied from one Local Government Authority to another. A number of clubs indicated that the provision of quality soccer pitches was a second priority for Local Government to the more traditional sports of Australian Rules Football and Cricket and, therefore, the facilities provided were often of a poorer quality and condition. Due to soccer being played along the surface, the need for an even quality surface is a high priority for soccer clubs. A number of clubs indicated that Parks and Gardens staff did not have an understanding of the needs of soccer or the skills to maintain a soccer pitch. Over the past few years, Councils have begun to take greater control over the usage of soccer pitches. Generally, Councils do not allow additional "make-up" games to be played due to the damage caused by increased wear and tear. 	Section 6.6.3 Pages 60 - 61	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> That Soccer Associations, in conjunction with Parks and Leisure Australia and with the assistance of horticultural/turf maintenance advice develop guidelines for the preparation and maintenance of soccer pitches. That Local Government Authorities include the agreed maintenance guidelines in any future specifications for the maintenance of sporting reserves. That Soccer Clubs are informed of the maintenance guideline developed for soccer facility maintenance.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The major problems for women is the lack of dual gender facilities This includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – lack of showering facilities or open showers only (ie no cubicles) – change-rooms often are shared with men's teams and due to programming of fixtures creating problems of access. – women's toilets are often inappropriately located in relation to the change rooms. – physio rooms are often located off change rooms which can be a problem if change rooms are being used by males. 	<p>Section 6.6.13 Pages 67 - 68</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That Local Government Authorities ground allocation process, require soccer clubs to identify male, female and junior soccer teams. • That Soccer Clubs and Soccer Associations liaise with Local Government Authorities to identify the process that prioritises facility upgrades to meet the needs of dual gender use.
<p>Cultural Issues</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A number of soccer clubs have been established around cultural community groups. This has caused some tensions between both spectators and competitors. • The cultural base of some soccer clubs has also impacted on the ability of clubs to share facilities. 	<p>Section 6.6.15 Pages 68 - 69</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That the Soccer Clubs and Associations identify and implement strategies to ensure that cultural tensions in soccer are reduced and do not negatively impact on the participation, growth and image of soccer.

Local Government

TOPIC	KEY ISSUES	REFERENCE	RECOMMENDATIONS
Policy Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The consultation process with Local Government Authorities identified that the provision of policies in relation to open space and facility development varied from Council to Council. There is a need for Local Government Authorities to consider the issues identified within this report when developing policy positions. As a base, this should include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maximum use of grounds Capital facility improvements/development including requirements for males and females Cultural/ethnic issues 	Section 6.6.11 Pages 65 – 67	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> That Local Government Authorities be encouraged to develop policies that consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maximum use of grounds Capital facility improvements/development including requirements for males and females Cultural/ethnic issues
Facility Provision Facility Hierarchy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A major concern to Local Government is that the facility requirements were developed without consultation with Councils. As Local Government is the major owner/manager of the sporting fields, it is appropriate that the facility criteria be developed in collaboration with the Councils and Sport and Recreation due to their funding role. Soccer has traditionally been arranged on a home and away basis with all clubs having a home ground or sharing a facility. It is expected this will continue for elite and community level competitions and where possible for veterans, social and junior competitions. However, there are instances where it may be more appropriate to conduct competitions on a multi pitch complex with all games played at the same time, for example with veterans, and some juniors and women's leagues. It is proposed that soccer grounds be classified into five grades A, B, C, D and E, each with essential and preferred features. A copy of the essential and preferred facility requirements are detailed in Appendix H. The proposed hierarchy detailed above recognises the standard of facilities required for the different levels of soccer to participate in the sport. 	Section 6.5 Pages 56 – 59	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> That Local Government Authorities seek to maintain ongoing communication and involvement in the review and development of soccer facility guidelines. That the five level Soccer Grade Classification and the associated facility guidelines as detailed below be accepted. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grade A: Premier League Grade B: State League Division One Grade C: State League Division Two, Three and Four and Provisional League Division One Grade D: Provisional League Division Two and Three and Amateur League Division One, Two and Three Grade E: Junior competitions That a hierarchy of soccer complex which includes the three categories of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Single club – small complex. Single club – large complex. Regional complex Be further examined as a model for addressing the current and future soccer facility requirements. That Sport and Recreation Victoria, Soccer Associations and Local Government, use the hierarchy model to establish priority areas for future soccer facility developments. That funding for future soccer facility developments from Sport and Recreation Victoria be in line with the priority areas identified by the working group.

TOPIC	KEY ISSUES	REFERENCE	RECOMMENDATIONS
Maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The market research findings identified that the maintenance and quality of soccer pitches across the Melbourne Metropolitan area varied from one Local Government Authority to another. A number of clubs indicated that the provision of quality soccer pitches was a second priority for Local Government to the more traditional sports of Australia Rules Football and Cricket and, therefore, the facilities provided were often of a poorer quality and condition. The recent tendering out of Open Space Maintenance as a result of the Compulsory Competitive Tendering process, has resulted in a variation in pitch maintenance. A number of clubs indicated that the ability to create a relationship with a contracted grounds curator was extremely difficult. Due to soccer being played along the surface, the need for an even quality surface is a high priority for soccer clubs. A number of clubs indicated that Parks and Gardens staff did not have an understanding of the needs of soccer or the skills to maintain a soccer pitch. 	Section 6.6.3 Pages 60 – 61	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> That Soccer Associations, in conjunction with Parks and Leisure Australia and with the assistance of horticultural/turf maintenance advice develop guidelines for the preparation and maintenance of soccer pitches. That Local Government Authorities include the agreed maintenance guidelines in any future specifications for the maintenance of sporting reserves.
Other Facility Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The study findings identified Local Government areas with high soccer participation rates. There is a need for Sport & Recreation Victoria, Soccer Associations and Local Government to strategically plan the future development of soccer Facilities for all levels of participation in line with the identified gaps in facility provision. The provision of training lights on sporting grounds is usually the responsibility of the individual clubs. The need for training lights to improve access to the facilities and reduce the wear and tear on the soccer pitches is recognised by both Local Government and the soccer clubs. Due to the limited resources available, joint funding support is required by Local Government, Clubs and Sport and Recreation Victoria to enable these facilities to be provided. Access to appropriate support facilities and social rooms is an issue sporting clubs continually raise with Local Government. The soccer clubs indicated that they require access to these facilities as a means of raising revenue and creating a club atmosphere. The issue for Local Government, however, is the allocation of scarce funding resources across a range of facility requirements. Access to facilities for pre-season training is extremely difficult. Local Government authorities require access to the facilities between the seasons to undertake the necessary maintenance works. To assist with addressing this issue the sporting codes sharing the facility ie soccer and cricket need to improve their communication and liaise on a regular basis to enable access to the facilities at both ends of the season. 	Section 6.6.11 Pages 65 – 67	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> That Sport and Recreation Victoria and Local Government identify funding opportunities for the future development of soccer facilities. That Local Government Authorities and Sport and Recreation Victoria recognise the importance of flood lighting of facilities. That Local Government Authorities be encouraged to create a funding formula that recognises the need for support amenities including clubrooms and social facilities. That the Soccer Associations review the opportunities to share grounds to ensure scarce facility resources are maximised.

TOPIC	KEY ISSUES	REFERENCE	RECOMMENDATIONS
<i>Other Facility Issues (continued)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A number of clubs share grounds on a home and away basis. Consideration of ground sharing arrangements must include a realistic assessment of the number of matches and training hours on the grounds. This assessment should be identified within the maintenance guidelines established for the preparation and maintenance of soccer pitches. A large number of soccer clubs share the grounds with cricket clubs. The turf cricket pitch and the matting cricket pitch can be an area of safety concern on wet days as the pitch area can become slippery and muddy and the dirt on top of a matting pitch can move due to the plastic covering the pitch. 	Section 6.6.11 Pages 65 – 67	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> That the guidelines established for the maintenance of soccer pitches include an assessment of the maximum level of training and matches on a ground. That the guidelines established for the maintenance of soccer pitches identify the safety issues in relation to playing over turf or matting cricket pitches.
Financial Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A number of soccer clubs have indicated to Local Government that once they have paid the registration fees to the VSF they do not have sufficient funds to pay Council the facility hire fees. The Councils are often seen as being the last organisation to require payment. The majority of Local Government Authorities have reviewed the fees and charges structure and policies for the hiring of sporting reserves over the past five years. A number of Councils have based their fee structure on a percentage of maintenance cost recovery system. Local Government Authorities will however, reserve the right to levy their own fees which may and will vary from Council to Council. Soccer clubs need to demonstrate their commitment to ensuring the viability of the clubs and a willingness to work with Local Government Authorities in providing quality soccer facilities. 	Section 6.6.5 Page 62 Section 6.4.7 Pages 54 - 55	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> That the Soccer Associations require all clubs to meet the following criteria before annual registration into the competition is accepted: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Payment of all insurances Payment of outstanding debts Negotiated payment plan for outstanding debts Participation in sports administration programs <p>These criteria should be jointly accepted by both Local Government authorities and the soccer associations.</p>
Season Length	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A number of Local Government Authorities expressed concern over the seasonal creep that has been occurring with sporting clubs, including the soccer competitions over the past 10 years. The occurrence of “seasonal creep” of soccer competition results in the following concerns to Local Government: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> The shared nature of sporting reserves results in the summer sporting code having limited access for pre-season training. The Parks and Gardens Department has difficulty accessing the facility for required maintenance between seasons. The increased usage of the reserves results in additional wear and tear and in return the need for increased maintenance 	Section 6.6.7 Pages 62 - 64	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> That the home and away summer and winter sporting season dates as follows be accepted as the guidelines for seasonal dates: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Summer Season: 1st weekend October to last weekend February. Winter Season: 1st weekend April to last weekend August. That all club organised cup events and “make up games” be scheduled within the home and away seasonal dates to reduce seasonal creep. That Association auspiced cup events be scheduled at facilities with 12 month tenancy arrangements or by negotiated agreement with the appropriate Local Government Authority.

TOPIC	KEY ISSUES	REFERENCE	RECOMMENDATIONS
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ensure that there is a clear buffer between the seasons to enable any required maintenance to be carried out and to allow access to the facilities for some pre-season training and final series, the following home and away seasonal dates are suggested. It should be noted that these dates provide a guide as there may be some flexibility with clubs negotiating individual arrangements with Local Government Authorities. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Summer Season: 1st weekend October to last weekend February. Winter Season: 1st weekend April to last weekend August. 		
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a need to improve the communication channels between some Local Government Authorities and Soccer Clubs/Associations. There is a lack of resources within Soccer Associations to enable the ongoing communication between clubs, Local Government and the Associations. Improved communication would ensure that both parties had a greater understanding of each other's needs, requirements and constraints. The communication between clubs and Local Government Authorities vary from club to club and Council to Council. To ensure the smooth co-ordination of the sport however, there is a need to improve the communication channels. 	Section 6.6.9 Pages 64 – 65	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> That Local Government encourage Sport and Recreation Victoria to establish bi-annual meetings between State Government, Local Government and Soccer Associations. That the VSF and ASFV with Local Government support where appropriate develop a joint submission to Sport and Recreation Victoria for the funding of a Project Officer to implement key strategies as outlined in the report.
Female Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Over the past five years, significant growth has been experienced in women's soccer participation. Anecdotal evidence both nationally and internationally suggests that this growth will continue over the next ten years. The main problem, however, impacting on female participation is the lack of appropriate support amenities to cater for the dual gender participation in the sport. The major problems in terms of facilities for women's soccer clubs are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> lack of showering facilities or open shower (ie no cubicles) change-rooms often are shared with men's teams and due to programming of fixtures creating problems of access. women's toilets are often inappropriately located in relation to the change rooms. physio rooms are often located off change rooms which can be a problem if change rooms are currently being used by males. 	Section 6.6.13 Pages 67 – 68	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> That Local Government Authorities ground allocation processes require soccer clubs to identify male, female and junior soccer teams. That Soccer Clubs and Soccer Associations liaise with Local Government Authorities to identify the process that prioritises facility upgrades to meet the needs of dual gender use. That Sport and Recreation Victoria and Local Government Authorities identify funding opportunities to assist with the upgrade of facilities to meet the needs of dual gender use.

Sport and Recreation Victoria

TOPIC	KEY ISSUES	REFERENCE	RECOMMENDATIONS
<p>Facility Provision</p> <p>Participation in Soccer</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Consultant Team has reviewed the soccer growth trends and it is evident that soccer has built a very strong and still expanding junior and student participation base. Junior participation and female growth should continue to influence the sports overall increasing participation, as juniors move into senior competition over the next five to ten years. This growth, however, will be significantly affected by the availability of and access to soccer facilities. Without the provision of facilities, the growth rate will stagnate. This will have the two main potential impacts: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> People wishing to play soccer but cannot, will either find an alternate sport and be lost to the game, or not participate in sporting activities, or Soccer grounds will continue to be over-used, having a long-term impact on the maintenance and longevity of a valuable community asset. The study findings identified Local Government areas with high soccer participation rates. There is a need for Sport & Recreation Victoria, Soccer Associations and Local Government to strategically plan the future development of soccer Facilities for all levels of participation in line with the identified gaps in facility provision. The use of synthetic surfaces such as hockey pitches should also be investigated as an opportunity for accessing additional training facilities. 	<p>Section 6.5 Pages 56 - 59</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> That Sport and Recreation Victoria, Soccer Associations and Local Government, use the hierarchy model to establish priority areas for future soccer facility developments. That the five level Soccer Grade Classification and the associated facility guidelines as detailed below be accepted. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grade A: Premier League Grade B: State League Division One Grade C: State League Division Two, Three and Four and Provisional League Division One Grade D: Provisional League Division Two and Three and Amateur League Division One, Two and Three Grade E: Junior competitions That funding for future soccer facility developments from Sport and Recreation Victoria be in line with the priority areas identified by the working group. That the Soccer Associations investigate the opportunities for training on synthetic surfaces as a means of increasing access to training facilities.
<p>Facility Funding</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The consultation process identified the need for a number of facilities to be upgraded or redeveloped to cater for dual gender use. It was further identified that the provision of training lights assists with reducing the wear and tear on the grounds and therefore the ongoing maintenance of the facilities. 	<p>Section 6.5 and 6.6.13 Pages 56, 67 & 68</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> That Sport and Recreation Victoria and Local Government identify funding opportunities for the future development of soccer facilities. That Sport and Recreation Victoria and Local Government Authorities identify funding opportunities to assist with the upgrade of facilities to meet the needs of dual gender use. That Local Government Authorities and Sport and Recreation Victoria recognise the importance of flood lighting for facilities.

TOPIC	KEY ISSUES	REFERENCE	RECOMMENDATIONS
Administ ration Manage ment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a need to improve the current management structures and accountability of the current soccer club administrators responsible for elite soccer facilities. This should include improving the skill base of the Executive Committee in relation to financial management, facility management and maintenance. • There is a need for the VSF, Sport and Recreation Victoria and Local Government representatives to review and extend the VIP program to develop a specialist education/training program for club administrators at higher competition sporting levels. The requirements of the Incorporation Act should also provide a base for the development of this program. • The education/training program should provide sporting club administrators with a skill base for the effective management and operation of elite sporting facilities. • The education/training program should include topics such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Financial management, planning and budgeting – Club promotion – Sponsorship – Understanding Local Government processes/practices – Maintenance of sporting facilities (pitch/buildings) – Staffing – Legal obligations/requirements – Occupational Health and Safety – Conducting events/crowd management 	Section 6.6.1 Pages 59 - 60	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That Sport and Recreation Victoria extend the existing VIP Sports Administration Program and co-ordinate and fund education/training sessions for sporting clubs/associations prior to each sporting season. The education/training sessions should incorporate as a base the following topics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Financial management, planning and budgeting. – Club promotion. – Sponsorship. – Understanding Local Government processes/ practices. – Maintenance of sporting facilities. – Legal obligations/insurances. – Occupational health and safety. – Conducting events/crowd management.
Commu nication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The development by the Yarra City Council of the Metropolitan Local Government Forum, which included Local Government representatives, and the subsequent Soccer Working Group including Sport and Recreation Victoria, the VSF and the ASFV has operated successfully in investigating the current issues in relation to the provision and operation of soccer facilities. • The Consultant Team recommended that the Soccer Working Group continue as an ongoing liaison group between the State Soccer Associations, State Government and Local Government as a means of ensuring ongoing and effective communication. • To increase the effective sharing of scarce facility resources between different sporting codes, an opportunity exists for State Sporting Associations to meet on a regular basis. Sport and Recreation Victoria, as the State Co-ordinating Body, could play a role in developing a series of liaison groups with associated and relevant sporting codes. • The study process identified some internal tensions between the VSF and the ASFV. 	Section 6.6.9 Pages 64 - 65	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That Sport and Recreation Victoria instigate bi-annual meetings with Soccer Associations and Local Government. • That the VSF and ASFV develop a joint submission to Sport and Recreation Victoria for the funding of a Project Officer to implement key strategies as outlined in the report. • That Sport and Recreation Victoria instigate bi-annual meetings with appropriate State Sports Associations to discuss issues in relation to the sharing of structured sporting fields. • That Sport and Recreation Victoria assist and enhance the dialogue between the VSF and the ASFV to assist the progress and development of soccer. • That Sport and Recreation Victoria support the Soccer Associations in investigating the best long term coordination of soccer in Victoria.

1 Introduction

Sport and Recreation Victoria, Victorian Soccer Federation and Amateur Soccer Federation of Victoria in conjunction with local government authorities commissioned a study on issues related to soccer development and facilities primarily within the Melbourne Metropolitan Region.

The impetus to conducting the study was a recognition by Local Government, Victorian Soccer Federation, Amateur Soccer Federation of Victoria and Sport and Recreation Victoria that soccer has an important role in the provision of sport and in providing opportunities for broader social interaction for the community. Soccer transcends to some degree many of the existing gender, age, ability and cultural barriers that are often embedded in the other participatory sports such as football and cricket.

The study was triggered as a result of the increasing pressure applied on local Councils by soccer clubs to erect perimeter and pitch fencing on municipal or Crown land, resulting in the alienation of public open space. This pressure from clubs was largely a result of the then Victorian Soccer Federation ground criteria.

In May 1996, the Yarra City Council invited a number of metropolitan Councils to attend a Municipal Working Group meeting to discuss the issue of fencing of soccer grounds with the aim to explore the position of participating Council's policies or responses to date. As a result of that meeting, the Metropolitan Local Government Forum was formed.

The role of the Metropolitan Local Government Forum was to engage the Victorian Soccer Federation and Sport and Recreation Victoria in formal discussions in relation to the fencing of soccer grounds. Ongoing discussions with the Victorian Soccer Federation indicated that in addition to the issue of fencing soccer grounds a range of other issues existed including fixturing (seasonal creep), club operating costs, relegation and promotion and the lack of sufficient suitable facilities to meet the demand for soccer in the community.

1.1 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study is to develop a framework that includes guidelines and strategies for Local and State Government, Victorian Soccer Federation and Amateur Soccer Federation of Victoria. This framework will lead to more affordable and accessible soccer opportunities for a diverse range of needs and age groups including males and females, whilst recognising the financial and social environment that local government must operate within.

It is anticipated that the study will be adopted by Sport and Recreation Victoria, Local Government Authorities, Victorian Soccer Federation and the Amateur Soccer Federation of Victoria as a "blueprint" or "working document" for the future development of soccer.

1.2 OUTCOMES OF THE STUDY

The key expected outcomes of the study include:

- The identification and analysis of the range of resources deployed by Local Government in the provision of soccer facilities and soccer development.
- The identification and analysis of issues affecting soccer as recognised by Local and State Government, Victorian Soccer Federation and Victorian Amateur Soccer Federation in relation to the management and operation of the sport.
- The identification and analysis of the real demand for soccer as recognised by Local and State Government, Victorian Soccer Federation, Amateur Soccer Federation of Victoria, Soccer Australia and the Australian Sports Commission.

- The identification and development of “Best Practice” models which can be endorsed by Local and State Government, Victorian Soccer Federation and Amateur Soccer Federation of Victoria for the future growth and development of the sport.

The study process identified limited “best practice” models that could be used as a basis for the future growth and development of the sport. Therefore, the study methodology was modified to identify a range of strategic directions and associated recommendations.

1.3 PROJECT METHODOLOGY

Michael King and Associates Pty Ltd, Leisure and Tourism Planners were appointed to undertake the study in May 1999. The Consultant Team has completed the following methodology and tasks in the two inter-related phases detailed below:

STAGE	TASK
Background Research	Task 1: Project Clarification
	Task 2: Review of Previous Research
	Task 3: Demographic Area Analysis
	Task 4: Soccer Clubs/Association Focus Groups
	Task 5: Key informant Interviews
	Task 6: Survey of Local Government Authorities
	Task 7: State Sport Trends
	Task 8: Summary of Demand
Strategic Direction and Model Development	Task 1: SWOT Analysis
	Task 2: Identification of Best Practice Options
	Task 3: Steering Committee Workshop
	Task 4: Draft Final report
	Task 5: Review of Draft Report
	Task 6: Presentation of Final Report

2 Sport and Recreation Trends

This section summarises a broad range of National and State Recreation and sport trends.

2.1 NATIONAL SPORTS TRENDS

Information summarised from the recent Sport and Recreation Ministers' Council Sport and Recreation trends in Australia highlights the following trends.

2.1.1 PARTICIPATION TRENDS

Australia's reputation as a sporting nation is highlighted by the participation in sport of nearly one third (32%) of the adult population. It is estimated almost 4.7 million people participated, either as players, non-players or both, during the year ended March 1997, an increase of 165,000 since the last records taken in March 1993.

Over 4.1 million Australian directly played sport with (55%) of these people (2.3 million) under the age of 35 years old. In contrast, non-players tended to be older, with (59%) (974,000) aged 35 years and over.

The most popular organised sport or physical activity in which adult Australians participated in 1996/1997 were:

	Main Sport and Physical Recreation Activity	Persons 000s	Persons % of Population
1.	Aerobics	565.2	4.1
2.	Golf	450.2	3.2
3.	Tennis	382.0	2.7
4.	Netball	325.7	2.3
5.	Lawn Bowls	272.0	2.0
6.	Swimming	256.9	1.8
7.	Basketball	249.5	1.8
8.	Cricket Outdoor	186.0	1.3
9.	Martial Arts	165.2	1.2
10.	Tenpin Bowling	160.6	1.2

Children's participation trends differ to that of the adult participation trends. The most popular sports with children were swimming (331,900), basketball (235,500) netball (233,700) and soccer (228,800).

Over (61%) of 5 to 14 years old played sport, excluding sport played during schools hours. This is almost double the participation rate of Australians 15 years of age and over. These rates are summarised in the following table:

Age Group (Years)	Number '000	Participation rate %
5-8	513.5	48.7
9-11	532.7	70.4
12-14	542.2	68.8
TOTAL	1588.4	61.1

2.1.2 NATIONAL OUTLAYS ON SPORT AND RECREATION

Commonwealth, State and Local Governments were estimated to outlay \$2,100M on sport and recreation during 1993-94. This resulted in total spending on sport and recreation by both governments and households of over \$8 Billion dollars.

By 1995-96, Governments contribution to the sector had risen to just under \$2,400M. Recent surveys highlight that in recent years, Local Government has provided about half of all government funding on sport and recreation, with the State Governments contributing approximately 40% and the Commonwealth 10%.

2.2 STATE RECREATION TRENDS

The following information summarises known Victorian sport and recreation industry trends that influence peoples' participation. The information is summarised from Sport and Recreation Victoria's Business of Sport Report 1998 and contains results from the 1996 State Supplementary Survey ABS Leisure Participation Victoria.

2.2.1 GLOBAL FACTORS

Current trends that affect the sport and recreation industry are being driven by several wider trends in Australian society being:

- A gradual ageing of the population as life expectancy increases, birthrates stay low and the baby boomers grow older.
- De-synchronisation and fluctuation in the times when people take their leisure, as demands on people's time continues to increase and work practices change.
- Increased variety of leisure options.
- Constraints on government spending together with a new degree of entrepreneurship in the Australian economy.

2.2.2 PARTICIPATION TRENDS

Studies clearly show Victorians are active people. The range of pursuits that they undertake is very high including over 100 activities ranging from Australian Rules Football to Trugo. Their activities, likes and dislikes shape the range of products and services that the industry provides and stimulate its development and innovation.

An examination of Victorians' sport and recreation participation activity shows that:

- The percentage of Victorians taking part in sport and recreation, in terms of activities organised by a club or association, is slightly above the national average.
- When participation in unstructured activity is added to organised activity, 77 per cent of adult Victorians take part in sport and recreation.
- Younger Victorians are more likely to participate than older Victorians.
- Victorians' most popular team sports (which younger Victorians favour) are netball, Australian Rules football, and basketball.
- The most popular physical activities are walking for exercise, swimming and golf (which are most popular with older Victorians).

- The top twenty most popular sport and recreation activities in Victoria in 1996 were:

	Main Sport and Physical Recreation Activity	Persons 000s	Persons % of Population
1.	Walking for exercise	1,508.6	43.0
2.	Swimming	487.2	13.9
3.	Golf	321.9	9.2
4.	Fishing	312.8	8.9
5.	Cycling/Mountain biking	299.2	8.5
6.	Aerobics or aquaerobics	274.2	7.8
7.	Tennis	245.7	7.0
8.	Jogging/power walking	235.4	6.7
9.	Bushwalking/hiking	206.1	5.9
10.	Weightlifting/bodybuilding	188.4	5.4
11.	Billiards, snooker, pool	165.0	4.7
12.	Basketball	144.9	4.1
13.	Australian Rules Football	137.0	3.9
14.	Netball	128.0	3.7
15.	Cricket (outdoor)	101.7	2.9
16.	Lawn Bowls	71.8	2.0
17.	Soccer	64.5	1.8
18.	Squash	39.1	1.1
19.	Ice-sports/ice-hockey	34.4	1.0
20.	Volleyball	30.4	0.9

Source: ABS Leisure Participation Victoria (1996 State Supplementary Survey)

The change in most popular sports can be seen by comparing the number of Victorian adults playing specific sports in 1996 and 1989. These trends are detailed in the table below.

TOP SPORTS 1989	000s	%	TOP SPORTS 1996	000s	%
Golf	364	11.0	Golf	322	9.2
Tennis	338	10.2	Tennis	246	7.0
Netball	159	4.8	Billiards/snooker	165	4.7
Basketball	140	4.2	Basketball	145	4.1
Aussie Rules	131	4.0	Aussie Rules	137	3.9
Billiards/snooker	125	3.8	Netball	128	3.7
Cricket (outdoor)	108	3.3	Cricket (outdoor)	102	2.9
Lawn Bowls	83	2.5	Lawn Bowls	72	2.0
Soccer	57	1.7	Soccer	65	1.9

Source: ABS Sports Participation Victoria, 1989 and Leisure Participation Victoria (1996 State Supplementary Survey).

Note: Percentage figures represent the percentage of the adult population, defined as 15 years and over.

They indicate an increase in numbers of adults participating in Basketball (+5,000), Aussie Rules (+6,000), Billiards/Snooker (+40,000) and Soccer (+8,000). Decreases were recorded in most other sports with the main ones being Tennis (-92,000), Netball (-57,000), Golf (-42,000) and Cricket (-6,000).

2.2.2.1 Participation in Sport and Recreation by Age Group

Young people are the main participants in activities that generally require organised teams to operate successfully, such as Australian Rules football, netball and basketball. In comparison, the most popular activities for older people, such as swimming and golf, can be undertaken without formal involvement in an organisation.

These trends are summarised by age group for organised and not organised involvement:

Age Group	All Through Clubs, etc.	Some through Clubs, etc.	None through Clubs, etc.
15 to 24 years	9%	34%	43%
25 to 34 years	4%	23%	55%
35 to 44 years	5%	21%	52%
45 to 54 years	4%	17%	54%
55 to 64 years	6%	13%	51%
65 and over	5%	12%	45%
All ages	6%	21%	50%

Source: ABS, Leisure Participation Victoria (1996 State Supplementary Survey)

- The percentage of Victorians participating in sport and recreation tends to fall with increasing age, with 87 per cent of those in the age group between 15 and 24 participating at least once in the year to October 1996, compared to 62 per cent of those over 65 years of age. It is interesting to note that 67 per cent of those aged between 15 and 34 participated more than once a week, as did 56 per cent of those over 35.
- The most popular activities by age group were:

AGE GROUPS											
15 - 24		25 - 34		35 - 44		45 - 54		55 - 64		65+	
Walking	27%	Walking	40%	Walking	46%	Walking	51%	Walking	50%	Walking	43%
Swimming	17%	Swimming	19%	Swimming	18%	Golf	13%	Golf	10%	Swimming	14%
Aerobics	14%	Cycling	12%	Cycling	12%	Fishing	12%	Swimming	9%	Golf	9%
Weights	12%	Aerobics	12%	Fishing	10%	Swimming	11%	Fishing	9%	Fishing	9%
Cycling	12%	Jogging	12%	Golf	9%	Tennis	9%	Tennis	5%	Cycling	9%

2.2.3 RECREATION PARTICIPATION COMPARED WITH OTHER LEISURE ACTIVITIES

Participation in the sport and recreation industry at (77%) is higher than any other leisure industry sector including cultural activity (58%), gambling activity (73%) and visiting an outdoor recreation area (66%).

2.2.4 HEALTH SAVINGS FROM SPORT AND RECREATION PARTICIPATIONS

An analysis of the relationship between moderate physical activity and costs to the community in terms of health expenditure and reduced production was performed for the Commonwealth Government Department of Arts, Sport, Environment and Territories in 1988. It is estimated that for every 10 per cent of the population exercising regularly and moderately:

- \$104M is saved annually from National expenditure on cardiovascular problems.
- \$1.5M per day is saved by reducing spinal problems.
- Allowing for the annual costs of injury resulting from physical activity (estimated at \$28M) a net benefit to the economy of \$590M results per year (equivalent to around \$800M in today's terms).

This could be transcribed that the percentage of the population who are exercising to a medium or high level are saving the community money through a reduced health cost.

2.3 LEISURE INDUSTRY TRENDS

The Study's key findings combined with the consultants' teams previous leisure research experience, current industry trends and latest research findings indicate the following trends may impact upon the Study area.

- There is a slow reduction in participation in competitive and traditional sports, with people becoming increasingly unwilling to commit themselves to play 'for a whole season' or available to play and train a number of days a week.
- Due to daily time constraints, people are cutting back their leisure and recreation activities and are more demanding about those which remain. To remain viable, the quality of facilities and services will have to continually improve.
- There will be a greater demand in the future for indoor facilities (available all year/every day) and higher quality outdoor playing surfaces.
- With increased age longevity and larger numbers of fit, healthy older people, the demand for exercise, and for conveniently located facilities is expected to increase.
- Because of their reliance on young players, many sports will grow more slowly than the adult population as a whole.
- Sports activities with high projected growth rates across Australia include golf (20%), Bowls/Ten-Pin Bowling (18%), Fishing (13%), Jogging and Running (11%).
- With new technologies and commercial interests investing in leisure, a wide range of activities, particularly those targeting teenagers, will continue to undergo cyclic popularity.
- With ongoing Government economic constraints and limited capital and operational budgets, many new sports facilities may have to be joint venture arrangements between private and public sectors and sports clubs.
- Sports clubs dependent on voluntary labour and support will be required to provide greater incentives and better management to attract volunteers.
- The costs to sports clubs of equipping, insuring and managing players and administering games is expected to continue to increase.
- The reduction in commitment to curriculum based school sports in state schools, the amalgamation of schools and the sale of school properties will have impacts on the local availability of school sports facilities while also discouraging public sector investment in new facilities at these sites.
- Contracting of facility management has greatly improved industry services and management systems. Management is now regarded more accountable to the owner and user of the facility.
- Due to restricted rate and other revenue bases, local Councils, may have to encourage greater private investment in leisure facilities and services. This may be achieved by a mix of rate concessions, payback loans, management rights in return for investment, provision of land and planning concessions.
- Facility provision is changing from single-purpose to multi-purpose. A great deal of infrastructure expenditure is now being directed to the development of larger public and private complexes providing aquatic, health, fitness and indoor sports facilities because of the higher utilisation which can be achieved. There is less emphasis on the development of traditional single purpose outdoor sports facilities.
- More flexible designs are being created and there is a growing expectation that facilities will need to be renovated/upgraded on a periodic basis. There is a realisation that facilities have a "**customer interest life-span**" which is much less than the facility life-span.
- There is a growing emphasis in the public sector on managing facilities to be more sensitive to the needs of customers and more accountable in the areas of service quality and cost.

- The planning process for new facilities has improved significantly with the conduct of effective feasibility studies being the norm. These studies have generally included management/marketing/financial plans with demand projections based on sophisticated survey data.
- There has been considerable improvement in the management of leisure facilities, with increased expectations of managers to produce better financial outcomes and generate higher attendances. Public sector facility managers now need higher skill levels, face broader roles, need access to better training and professional networks and improved financial reporting systems.
- As competition increases there will be an increased emphasis on programming and target marketing based on adopting consumer driven strategies and performance evaluation techniques. This indicates a greater resourcing of local area planning, knowing who are your customers and how to attract them.

3 Review of Previous Research

The following provides a summary of the key issues and recommendations identified from Local Government Authorities review of soccer facilities.

- (i) **Name:** Premier Soccer Feasibility Study for the City of Hobsons Bay
Author: Jeavons and Jeavons - Recreation and Tourism Planners
Date: April 1998

Hobsons Bay City Council commissioned a report in April 1998 to assess the community need and economic viability for the provision of a premier soccer facility within the municipality.

The project reviewed several options for meeting the needs of state and higher levels of competition soccer. During the course of investigations the focus changed to reviewing Council's aims in relation to sport and soccer generally, and to the need to address major concerns about current facilities for local soccer.

The study concluded that whilst there would be economic benefits in the long term from constructing a major stadia in the City it would have little benefit to local soccer, and that it was not feasible at the present time.

The need to address local soccer issues, such as the viability of clubs, local participation and the nature and standard of current facilities, is seen as a higher priority. The lack of funds likely to be available for the development of major facilities and the lack of available and suitable Council land suggest that Council's role in such a development should be one of facilitation only.

The key issues for the future vision and provision for local soccer were:

- Local soccer demand should be met before Council funds any regional facilities. Six key sites should be dedicated to soccer, each with three or more pitches and a modern, purpose-built pavilion catering for both males and females and built with a standard of fixtures and finishes equivalent to domestic quality. Core components of the pavilion would be provided by Council. Extra club facilities would need major contributions from the tenant clubs. Bar and social function areas would be the tenant clubs responsibility. Two of these six sites should have the capacity to expand without significant impact on adjacent uses.
- Tight occupancy agreements should be drawn up prior to the occupation of any new facilities, requiring clubs to actively promote the sport and attract membership from the broader community. These agreements would indicate that Premier League facilities would be available to those clubs playing at that level only and, if relegated, that they would need to relocate.
- The key sites for development should include Paisley Park, JT Gray Reserve, HC Kim Reserve, Loft Reserve and Laverton Park.

Clubs

- The development of larger clubs should be encouraged, preferably so that they might field a minimum of four teams. These clubs would be offered tenancy to the new core facilities provided by Council. All facilities would be shared. Smaller clubs could hire available shared facilities.

Participation

- A target of 1300 soccer players in the municipality should be the target before Council funds regional facilities.
- Council should encourage a good depth in soccer competition in Hobsons Bay by providing one pitch and suitable local facilities to support at least one local Premier League side in the City.

Provision for Premier League Soccer

- Council should upgrade the soccer facilities in Paisley Park into one of the local facilities dedicated to soccer.
- One high quality pitch should be developed on the east of the existing pavilion to support the playing of Premier League games and other VSF sanctioned events. The associated pitches should be drained, renovated and lit to a higher standard to support this facility becoming one of six sites in Hobsons Bay dedicated to soccer. Undercover seating would need to be provided to serve the main pitch. The pavilion would need to be modified to provide for the sports administration, and a spectator social area which could be hired by visiting teams. Club facilities would need to be rationalised to provide for up to two tenant clubs.

A Vision For a National League Soccer

“Council should facilitate a National League Soccer Team developing in Hobsons Bay with a stadium on private land, north/east of Mason Street, Newport, within five years.

Council could assist through project managing a concerted campaign to gain commitment from stakeholders, funding agencies and sponsors and to provide necessary planning assistance, promotion and communication networks to make the project a reality.”

- (ii) **Name:** City of Whittlesea
Soccer Facilities Evaluation
Author: Whittlesea City Council
Date: September 1997

In January 1997, the Council initiated an evaluation of the provision of soccer facilities in Whittlesea. The objectives of the evaluation were as follows:

- To develop an inventory of soccer clubs and facilities in the municipality.
- To identify the implications of the municipality's demographic characteristics and future growth projections for the future provision of soccer facilities.
- To identify plans/trends in the development of soccer in Melbourne and the implications these plans/trends may have on the provision of soccer pitches in the municipality.
- To identify facility planning, development and management issues (including matters relating to fees and charges) in relation to the provision of existing and future soccer facilities/clubs.
- To develop a soccer strategy for the City of Whittlesea which addresses the key issues and provides a clear direction for Council with regard to the present and future provision of soccer facilities.

The key findings and major issues identified through the evaluation are detailed below:

- Population growth in the Epping, Mill Park and South Morang area will create a demand for additional soccer facilities.
- The growing popularity of women's and junior soccer will create a demand for additional soccer facilities and a need to alter changerooms to make them suitable for women.
- Thomastown Zebras does not have access to a sufficient number of playing pitches and uses grounds outside of the municipality for some of its junior teams.
- Serious residential amenity problems are occurring as a result of Thomastown Zebras' use of Partridge Street Reserve.
- The facilities at Partridge Street Reserve are not of the standard required for premier league competition.
- The conditions of the ground surfaces at a number of reserves require improvement.
- The pavilions at HR Uren Reserve and Thomas Street Reserve require redesign and extension.
- Soccer has become an all year round sport which creates the potential for conflict between soccer clubs and cricket clubs that share facilities.
- The Council has been unable to satisfy the ground allocation requests of two local clubs.
- The existing soccer facilities are all heavily utilised with the exception of Thomas Street Reserve.
- There are a number of venues in the municipality that could be used for soccer if improvements such as the erection of goal posts, floodlights and pavilions were undertaken.
- There is scope for some soccer venues to be shared and football/cricket venues to be used for soccer.
- There are a number of issues in relation to Council's reserve capital development and management policy such as the fees and charges for soccer pitches, Council's contribution towards floodlighting, the erection of perimeter fencing and the tenure of occupancy that require review.

Major Issues

The major issues arising from these key findings were as follows:

- The need for Council to reach a policy position on whether it believes it should be Council's aim to meet all the playing field requirements of its local clubs.
- The imminent need to develop more soccer pitches to cater for the growth areas of South Morang, Epping and Mill Park.
- The need to address Thomastown Zebra's requirements for access to more playing pitches.
- The need to adopt a position on the sharing of Council grounds and the development of facilities on school land.
- The need to resolve the residential amenity problems at Partridge Street Reserve.

- The need to improve the pavilions at HR Uren and Thomas Street Reserves.
- The need to review the clauses of the Council's reserve management and development policy that relate to fees, perimeter fences and contributions to lights.
- The need to address the ground allocation requirements of the Whittlesea United and Singh Sabha Soccer Clubs.

Recommendations

The key recommendations of the study were as follows:

1. That it be Council's long term goal to meet all the facility demands of its locally based soccer clubs.
2. That further research be conducted on the number of non-resident soccer players who compete for Whittlesea based clubs and the number of resident players who compete for non-local clubs.
3. That Council give consideration to developing the potential soccer venues listed in Section 4 of this report and prior to establishing any new local soccer venues.
4. That Meadowglen Reserve be nominated as the preferred venue for women's soccer.
5. That discussions to be held with Meadowglen Athletics Stadium Committee of Management about the potential of using the stadium pavilion for women's soccer.
6. That discussions be held with Thomastown Zebras and Mill Park Soccer Clubs about their interest in using the Reserve for women's soccer.
7. That the interest of the Victorian Women's Soccer Federation in establishing its headquarters at the Meadowglen Stadium be further investigated.
8. That Council investigate the feasibility of developing the potential soccer venues listed in Section 8 of this report as facilities for junior soccer.
9. That Council develop a policy on the sharing of active sporting reserves.
10. That a discussion paper be prepared on the merits of Council contributing to the development of sports facilities on school land.
11. That Council examine the merits of introducing a grading system as part of its review of Council's reserve development and management policy and that a decision on the upgrading of any soccer pitches be deferred until this review is completed.
12. That a final decision on the renovation of the pavilions at HR Uren and Thomas Street Reserves be made after the review of the capital development policy and classification system are completed.
13. That the issues raised in this report relating to the reserve management and capital development policy be considered during the review of the policy that will be conducted after the three major sporting studies are completed.
14. That the financial implications of implementing the recommendations of the review be considered as part of the review of the capital development policy and Council's five year budget planning framework.

(iii) **Name:** City of Casey
Soccer Strategy
Author: Casey City Council
Date: 1998

The City of Casey completed a Soccer Strategy in 1998 to provide guidelines and a future direction for the provision of soccer facilities within the Municipality.

A summary of the key issues identified by the strategy are detailed below:

- Soccer is experiencing one of the greatest growth rates of any sport within Victoria.
- Councils and Clubs across Victoria are finding it difficult to provide facilities due to the increase in participants. Clubs are often transferring from other municipalities as ground space becomes more scarce. Ground shortages and a lack of facilities are symptoms of this extra growth.
- Soccer has become a trans-seasonal sport played all year round. This creates problems for Councils in allocating space and reduces the opportunities to develop multi-use grounds.
- Councils within developed urban areas are unable to provide new grounds within each suburb for active sport. There is pressure on these Councils to balance the needs of active sports clubs and the need to provide informal open space for residents.
- The Victorian Soccer Federation is willing to work with Councils across Victoria to reduce problems facing them, in particular the issues associated with barrier fencing and facilities development.
- The present level of ground provision and facilities such as change areas and car parking are inadequate for the growth in soccer, particularly in the Endeavour Hills area.
- As a club grows and becomes more successful, more permanent and purpose built facilities are required. Often the existing reserve used by the club is inadequate in size, buildings are inappropriate and car parking can become difficult.
- In some circumstances, clubs are required to establish facilities that create impressions of private use on public land through the establishment of fencing or races. In the long term, the club may drop to lower grades, leaving a high grade facility used by a lower league team, while other teams new to higher league competition require the high grade facility at a ground that may not be developed to that standard. Without intervention, all grounds could potentially be developed as dedicated grounds as each club rises through various levels of competition.

4 Market Research and Consultation

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This section summarises the projects key findings and issues in relation to the operation and facility provision identified by State Soccer Associations, Soccer Clubs and Local Government authorities. The key issues have been identified through the following processes.

- Key Informant Interviews
- Soccer Club/Association Focus Groups
- Local Government representatives Focus Group
- Focus Group with other relevant State Sporting Association
- Local Government Soccer Survey

4.1.1 KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

- (i) **Geoff Miles**
Chief Executive Officer
Victorian Soccer Federation Incorporated

The main area of growth in soccer participation is at the junior level, with significant increases in numbers over the last two years. The introduction of the Goal Kick program has facilitated this growth and has also introduced new facilities for junior participation for boys and girls. The VSF teacher education program, PASS, has resulted in an increase in the knowledge of teachers about soccer and has stimulated the growth in school soccer.

Whilst the demand for the game appears to be at very high levels, the majority of junior clubs are unable to accommodate the increased number of juniors who are keen to play in regular club competition, due to a lack of sufficient grounds for training and matches.

Due to this lack of facilities, junior clubs have been restricting the number of junior participants at their clubs. The introduction of a structured competition with junior age groups for girls has also stimulated growth in women's soccer, and the recent amalgamation of Women's Soccer Victoria and the VSF, has provided a basis for significant future growth in women's soccer participation.

Many clubs have reported increased demand for veterans' competition and the clubs are experiencing difficulty in meeting the demand for training and match facilities to accommodate women's teams and veterans' teams, in addition to their senior and junior teams.

In 1999 the junior leagues committee re-established fixed kick-off times for junior league matches to assist the organisation of referees and to allow parents, players and clubs to plan their weekends. In previous years, flexible kick-off times for junior fixtures, whilst assisting in some instances with ground usage, produced significant confusion for referees, parents and clubs on a regular basis.

The winter timing of the majority of VSF leagues including the juniors will continue to pose difficulties with ground conditions, if the heavy scheduling at club level continues, due to the lack of sufficient grounds.

The Victorian Soccer Federation does not have a state facility to provide access for training and development programs for elite and non-elite players and state squads. Sport and

**Sport and Recreation Victoria, Victorian Soccer Federation,
Amateur Soccer Federation Victoria and Local Government Authorities**

Local Government and Victorian Soccer Resource Study

●.....● *Michael King And Associates Pty Ltd*

Recreation Victoria have recently agreed to conduct a feasibility study for the development of a state soccer facility.

Such a facility would ideally include basic accommodation to allow country participants to attend training and development programs. The NSW Soccer Federation operates a facility at Parkleigh which includes match grounds and accommodation.

A number of clubs who play in the highest Victorian league below the National Soccer League, the Premier League, are playing at facilities that are not appropriate for this level of competition, and which provide inadequate facilities for players and spectators.

A number of clubs ground-share on a home and away basis, and the VSF understands that the future consideration of ground sharing may assist the provision of appropriate facilities for the different levels of soccer participation in Victoria. Consideration of ground sharing arrangements must include a realistic assessment of the number of matches and training hours that are possible on the grounds, and should allow for the varied financial contribution of clubs to current facilities.

The VSF is conscious of the need to regulate the length of season to meet council needs for maintenance and to facilitate sharing of facilities. The VSF has reduced the size of all senior men's leagues to 12 teams commencing in the year 2000, and the majority of junior leagues comprise 10 teams.

In 1999 the VSF commission endorsed a recommendation from the Provisional League Management Committee to consider applications each year for entry to the Provisional League from clubs in affiliated leagues including the Amateur Soccer Federation and country associations. This is a change to the previous practice whereby 2 positions in the Provisional League were automatically provided to the top two amateur soccer league clubs, before any other applications were considered, and without considering the re-inclusion of the bottom clubs in the Provisional League.

In making this decision, the VSF wishes to consider existing clubs, and also to provide a fair opportunity for other clubs participating in metropolitan or country leagues to be considered, taking into account a number of criteria which does not only include performance on the field.

The VSF will review all existing regulations relating to facilities following the tabling of the results of this facility study, in light of the needs and expectations of Local Government.

**(ii) John Kelly
General Manager
Amateur Soccer Federation of Victoria**

Key Points Raised in the Interview were:

- The relationship between VSF and ASFV has not been very good. Whilst retaining affiliation with, the ASFV wish to maintain its independence from, the VSF.
- VSF policy is to increase the quality of teams by reducing the number of teams, whereas the ASFV's policy is to give everybody an opportunity to play soccer, with a minimum number of restrictions.
- Amateur soccer is played on Sundays with 13 divisions of 12 teams. Clubs with one team only play at 10.00 am whereas clubs with first and reserve teams play in the afternoon, at 1.00 pm and 3.00 pm.
- Automatic promotion/relegation between the VSF and ASFV does not occur, although a number of clubs have moved from the ASFV to the VSF. Historically, clubs promoted from the ASFV have progressed through the Provisional League in the first few years. It is believed that the standard of soccer played in the ASFV Division One is approximately the same as that in the Provisional League Division One.

- The ASFV has no restrictions or conditions on the standard of soccer grounds, although clubs are required to have change rooms to play in Division One.
- There are ongoing problems with the maintenance of soccer grounds by Local Government. The ASFV believe that football grounds are generally maintained in a better condition than soccer grounds. Some Council grounds are dangerous, with examples of referees cancelling matches due to the dangerous condition of the pitch.
- Councils want greater control over use of grounds. For example, in previous years if a club's game was postponed due to ground conditions, it was possible for the ASFV to ring another club and organise for a game to be played at its ground. Generally, Councils now do not allow these extra games as the additional wear and tear may damage the pitches. Councils expect all games to be authorised in advance, which may be impractical as often games need to be relocated on the Friday or Saturday preceding the game.
- Some clubs have problems gaining access to grounds for pre season competitions, and in some instances dedicated soccer grounds are not available for pre season matches despite not being used for other sports in the pre season competition period (mid February to end of March). Specific examples could not be identified.
- The ASFV currently has 2,561 registered players.
- Late allocation of grounds, by Councils, to amateur soccer clubs creates difficulties when advising clubs of venues. In some instances the ASFV does not know which grounds have been allocated until almost the start of the season.

4.2 SOCCER CLUBS/ASSOCIATIONS FOCUS GROUPS

A series of six focus groups were held with soccer club representatives of the different leagues within both the Victorian Soccer Federation and the Amateur Soccer Federation of Victoria to identify key issues, demand and need in relation to soccer facility provision. The key findings from the focus groups have been summarised below.

4.2.1 PREMIER LEAGUE VSF FOCUS GROUP

- Two major constraints on soccer clubs striving to be promoted to Premier League are finance and lack of adequate facilities.
- Two recently promoted clubs have problems with grounds. One club, Westvale, do not have a ground which meets Premier League requirements. Initially they shared Green Gully's home ground for six games, and now have an arrangement to use Melbourne Knights National Soccer League ground. Westvale were unable to negotiate an ongoing arrangement with Green Gully even though their home games are played on a Monday night, and therefore do not conflict with Green Gully's home matches.
- Altona East have made improvements to their ground and given permission to play home games. The ground does not meet Premier League conditions but the club has undertaken to continually upgrade to an agreed program, so that it eventually meets Premier League standards.
- It was generally agreed that Premier League clubs could share grounds for competition matches, if they have separate junior/training grounds for their other teams. An important condition for this arrangement to work, is independent management of the ground.

- Some clubs have invested significant funds into the upgrading of their grounds to meet Premier League playing conditions. If these clubs are forced to share their grounds, they should be compensated for their investment.

- Whilst most grounds used by Victorian Soccer Federation clubs are owned by Council, a number of grounds are privately owned.
- If clubs are to share grounds for Premier League matches they must be of a high standard, such as the Epping Stadium and Green Gully ground.
- Crowds at Premier League matches average between 350 and 500, with the range between a minimum of 200 and maximum of 1,200.
- Premier League clubs essentially play a nine month season, including pre season training.
- Premier League clubs have the right to nominate times for their home games. Consequently, clubs play on Friday nights, Saturday afternoons, Sunday afternoons and evenings and Monday evenings.
- There is a general perception that Local Government does not follow through on promised actions on grounds, and that football clubs receive better treatment, in terms of maintenance and development of grounds, than do soccer clubs.
- Whilst rental arrangements vary between Councils most clubs pay between \$6,000 and \$7,000 per annum for the use of their grounds.
- Since the introduction of contracted maintenance by local government, the quality of ground maintenance has declined.
- Many clubs undertake minor maintenance of soccer grounds. However, some Councils prohibit clubs from undertaking any maintenance of their grounds. One club was fined \$450 for rolling a ground to bring it up to playing standard.

4.2.2 STATE LEAGUE VSF FOCUS GROUP

- At the end of the 1999 season there is to be a rationalisation of the State Soccer League. From second division to fourth division the league will be split into the South/East region and the North/West region. Both regions will include 12 teams. Division one however will remain the same but will be decreased to 12 teams.
- Division one is not being zoned as it creates a stepping stone into Premier and/or National Leagues.
- The zoning system for division 2,3 and 4 has been created due to concern expressed by players in relation to the distances they have to travel to compete.
- Soccer has always been seen as second to Australian Rules Football. It has taken many years for Soccer Clubs to gain access to good quality facilities.
- There appears to be a philosophy that the Australian Rules grounds should get priority in relation to maintenance and any redevelopment works.
- The fencing around State league Soccer pitches is essential in maintaining the quality of the soccer pitch surface.
- Most Council Parks and Gardens areas do not understand the maintenance requirements for soccer pitches. It is imperative that at the higher levels of soccer the surface is level as the game is played predominantly along the ground and not in the air as is the case for Australian Rules Football.
- The recent tendering of Councils park maintenance area has resulted in increased problems. Prior to tendering a Club could create a relationship with the caretaker, however this is not so easy with contracted staff.

- The quality of the grounds allocated for soccer use is often poor. Approximately three quarters of the facilities used by State League are in need of some form of redevelopment. The good quality facilities are those where the clubs are involved in the maintenance of the grounds.
- Sharing facilities with cricket can be an area of concern. During wet days the cricket turf area can become extremely slippery and muddy. There is some soccer clubs however that do not have to share the facilities with cricket clubs.
- There is a difficulty however accessing grounds during the summer season even if an alternate sporting code does not use them.
- There has been an explosion in participation at the junior levels. For example the Knox Soccer Club has 3 senior teams and 17 Junior teams. The 20 teams are training on two soccer pitches and 18 of the teams are competing on the two soccer pitches. The club has to restrict membership due to an inability to meet the needs.
- A rift is occurring between some senior and junior teams, as they are unable to play on the same area and develop a club environment and atmosphere.
- The provision of training lights is usually the responsibility of the individual clubs. This can become a problem if the council relocates the club to an alternate ground and the lights are not compensated for.
- Women's soccer is the another area of participation that has grown rapidly. The current facilities however are totally inadequate, as they do not include separate male and female change facilities or sufficient numbers of toilets
- The provision of support facilities at some grounds is adequate however there are also grounds that do not include support facilities. The facilities used by first and second division are usually good however access to quality change room facilities, sufficient car parking and social facilities at third and fourth division facilities is usually poor.
- The State League representatives support the concept of developing a number of quality regional facilities across metropolitan Melbourne. It was identified that it would be important to consider the management arrangement and practical issues such as access to social facilities and canteen responsibilities for the model to be successful.
- The model should include training at the clubs home ground and competition only at the regional facility.
- The management model for a shared facility must be independent. The model would not work if one club were the home or dominant club.
- The State League Committee has reviewed the season length. As of the 2000 season the home and away games and the cup events will all be scheduled into the formal winter season dates.
- Access to facilities for pre-season training is often difficult, as Councils want time to maintain the grounds. This issue is usually negotiated with the ground staff and Council.
- If clubs had greater access to facilities with lights special events and cup events could be held mid week. These events are important fund raising functions to assist with the operational costs of the clubs.
- Communication between clubs and Local Government authorities vary from Council to Council. It is the responsibility of the individual clubs to develop a relationship with the Councils.
- The State League Committee is trying to encourage clubs to share facilities as a means of accommodating the growth particularly in junior and women's soccer.

4.2.3 PROVISIONAL LEAGUE VSF FOCUS GROUP

- The Provisional League competition is seen as the stepping stone into the State Premier and National League Competitions.
- Clubs within the provisional league find it difficult to gain cooperation from Local Government Authorities. Soccer is viewed as an ethnic sport and therefore not given the same priority as Australian Rules Football.
- A number of the clubs have experienced difficulty accessing facilities where training and competition facilities are located at the same venue.
- Most soccer clubs have to share the facilities with cricket clubs. The turf wicket can be extremely slippery and muddy during wet weather and the plastic on top of matting or synthetic wickets can move which can cause the area to be unsafe.
- It is difficult accessing soccer grounds for pre-season training. There are some soccer clubs that have access to grounds all year.
- Over the past 7 to 10 years there has been an enormous growth in women's soccer. The change room facilities however have not been designed to cater for females. The main problem is an inadequate number of female toilets and showers.
- A number of clubs in the Provisional League do not have facilities that meet the requirements of the Victorian Soccer Federation. This may be a problem in the future if the clubs are promoted to State League. The current VSF facility requirement is seen as reasonable.
- In some Council areas the change rooms are very old and do not provide separate facilities for umpires.
- There is a mixed feeling in relation to the quality and care of maintenance of soccer facilities across the different Council areas. With the tendering out of Parks services the maintenance quality has reduced in some areas and increased in other areas.
- The Parks Services area in a number of Council areas do not understand the needs in relation to the preparation and maintenance of soccer pitches.
- There are a number of problems related to sharing facilities with either soccer clubs or alternate sporting codes. These include:
 - Difficulty accessing facility when required
 - Payment of utilities
 - Maintenance costs
- The provision of training lights should be considered a standard facility requirement. Access to facilities with training lights enables mid week competition and a spread of training across the pitch, ensuring a more even spread of wear and tear.
- Most Clubs have access to facilities on a 6-month ground allocation. This restricts clubs willingness to contribute capital funds to the facility, as the tenure is insecure.
- Most Councils have developed their fees and charges schedule around a cost recovery formula. The percentage of contribution varies from Council to Council. For some clubs the hire costs are prohibitive and are affecting their ability to remain viable.

4.2.4 WOMEN'S LEAGUE VSF FOCUS GROUP

- 56 senior teams play in the Women's League in six divisions. The lower divisions are divided geographically on a north/west and south/east basis.

- Twenty junior teams play in Under 18, Under 16 and Under 14 competitions. Girls in the Under 12 and younger age groups play in mixed gender teams in the boys competition.
- The number of women's teams has increased in the last five years especially in the junior ranks, for example in 1998 there were only 10 junior teams compared with the current 20.
- Until 1998 women's soccer was independent from the VSF. It has now been integrated within the VSF which has eased the administrative workload on volunteers running the competition as this is done by administrative staff in the VSF.
- Affiliation fees for the VSF are lower than previously when the Women's League was a separate body. Teams pay an affiliation fee of \$200 per season plus fees for insurance, player registration and transfers.
- A benefit of operating under the VSF is that State Teams and Development Squads become part of the VSF Squads.
- Most women's soccer clubs are part of a male/female club with very few solely women's clubs. It was felt that there were better long-term prospects if women's soccer was affiliated with a men's club.
- Whilst some clubs treat women's teams as equals at others women are given much lower status
- The major problems in terms of facilities for women's soccer clubs are:
 - lack of showering facilities or open shower (ie no cubicles)
 - change-rooms often are shared with men's teams and due to programming of fixtures creating problems of access.
 - Women's toilets are often inappropriately located in relation to the change rooms.
 - physio rooms are often located off change rooms which can be a problem if change rooms are currently being used by males.
- When (male) Premier League matches are played, other teams cannot use the change rooms. This creates difficulties when one set of change rooms caters for three or four pitches.
- Improved design or better fixture scheduling can resolve most problems relating to facilities for women's soccer.
- Women's soccer teams tend to be allocated the lowest quality pitches. The main problems occur on training nights when senior and junior men's teams and women's teams are competing for the same floodlit areas and change rooms.
- One problem confronting Women's Soccer is the attitude of officials and referees.

4.2.5 JUNIOR LEAGUE VSF FOCUS GROUP

- The Junior League coordinate junior soccer competitions at a school level and local level. Within the Primary School and Secondary School system there are approximately 3000 participants. Every secondary school and primary school participates in the school soccer program.
- Once the soccer program moves to competition levels Local Government facilities are relied on, as the school facilities are not appropriate.
- Within regional Victoria there are approximately 10,000 junior participating in soccer. This has grown from 6000 in 1997.
- Soccer is treated as the "poor cousin" to Australian Rules football. Quality soccer facilities have occurred due to members fund raising to develop the facilities and the soccer programs. The

development of Goal Kick in country areas has been the cause of significant growth in junior soccer.

- Accessing facilities in regional areas is usually not a problem, however accessing facilities with appropriate support facilities such as change rooms and kiosks can be of concern.
- In metropolitan areas the Councils appear to be supporting junior clubs as they see the benefit to the general community.
- There has been substantial growth in junior female participation over the last five years. The facilities however are not suitable for females and required redevelopment to provide the necessary facilities.
- Growth in participation numbers has been experienced by most junior clubs across Melbourne metropolitan areas. The main growth has occurred with the development of new clubs rather than growth in established clubs.
- Over the past three years between 10 to 12 new clubs have been developed. This growth in new clubs is putting a strain on facility availability.
- The relationship between Junior and senior clubs vary from club to club. The lower level senior clubs nurture the junior clubs more than the higher level senior clubs. In some cases the juniors are seen as second priority to the senior clubs, however a lot of the junior clubs are financially supporting the senior clubs
- The VSF have recently moved to a fixed "kick off" time to ensure a uniformity across the competition. This has caused some problem in relation to availability of grounds.
- The junior league has established South/East and North/West regions. Within each region there are divisions A, B and C.
- The main growth in junior participation is occurring South/East. The facilities in the North/West are a poorer quality and older as most of the clubs are well established. A number of juniors are being turned away in this region due to the inability of the clubs to cater for their needs.
- A number of Councillors of ethnic backgrounds are now being elected to Local Government. This has benefited soccer and the funding provided to the development of facilities.
- The junior League would like to develop one home base in the country and one in metropolitan Melbourne for junior competition. The facility should include the following features:
 - Between 3 to 4 pitches junior size
 - Facility for Roo ball
 - Academy room – with ability for juniors to train and stay over for weekend training academy
 - No fencing
 - Appropriate Change rooms
- Main issues limiting junior participation:
 - Lack of facilities
 - Cost of participation
 - Lack of Coaching
- The key strategies that are being put into place by the Junior League Committee include:
 - Development of facilities
 - Development of programs to allow children to access soccer
 - Coaching development
 - School participation
 - Financial accessibility
- The main growth area for junior Soccer is:
 - Albury/Wodonga
 - Shepparton
 - Bendigo
 - Berwick

– Dandenong

4.2.6 AMATEUR SOCCER CLUBS/ASSOCIATIONS FOCUS GROUP

- Conflict exists between the Amateur Soccer Federation of Victoria (ASFV) and the Victorian Soccer Federation (VSF), which needs to be resolved.
- The major issue which has created conflict between the VSF and ASFV is promotion and relegation between the Provision League and the Amateur League. A long standing arrangement whereby clubs were automatically promoted and relegated between the two leagues was not honoured by the VSF at the end of the 1998 season. Approximately 10 clubs were incorporated into the Provisional League with the VSF selecting clubs from all three amateur divisions, rather than selecting the clubs based on competition results.
- Whilst the ASFV recognises that clubs have the right to select the leagues in which they participate, they believe the VSF should have advised the ASFV that vacancies existed, and the process and selection criteria to be used in identifying which clubs would be offered places in the Provisional League.
- One of the main reasons clubs affiliate with the ASFV is the much lower affiliation fees, compared with the VSF. While this is a major attraction to smaller clubs, the ASFV has not attempted to market itself to smaller clubs in Melbourne.
- Some clubs have difficulty dealing with individual Councils. For example, at Boroondara City Council, the Council spends more money on traditional sports, such as football and cricket rather than soccer. An example was quoted of the Stradbroke Park where the turf was diseased, consequently Council renovated the football/cricket oval and remedied the problem, however the soccer ground was not treated by Council and the pitch remains a bare dirt area. Boroondara is contrasted with Yarra City Council which has treated soccer clubs very well and has two very good facilities which are possibly superior to football club facilities in the Council area.
- Carrum Soccer Club is an example of a club based on private land fully owned by the club. The club has developed the ground but is unable or ineligible to receive grants from Council and/or State Government.
- Amateur clubs frequently use schools for their home games. However, some schools are unwilling to open up their facilities (toilets and change rooms) for soccer clubs on weekends. Obviously this creates difficulties for soccer clubs.
- The ASFV believe that the VSF should not be the only body recognised by Government as speaking on behalf of the soccer community.
- Amateur clubs have been unable to establish junior teams, as they are not able to enter VSF competitions unless they pay a high affiliation fee. There are a number of amateur clubs who would like to establish junior clubs but are unwilling or unable to pay the high costs associated with VSF affiliation.

4.3 LOCAL GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVES FOCUS GROUP

A focus group with representatives from Local Government authorities was held on Wednesday 30 June 1999. The purpose of the focus group was to identify the key issues and demands that are impacting on Local Governments provision of soccer facilities. The following Local Government areas were represented at the meeting:

- Banyule City Council
- Bayside City Council
- Casey City Council
- Darebin City Council
- Hobsons Bay City Council
- Hume City Council

- Kingston City Council
- Maribyrnong City Council
- Moreland City Council
- Stonnington City Council
- Yarra City Council

4.3.1 SOCCER FACILITY DEMAND AND GROWTH

A summary of the key issues identified at the meeting is detailed below:

(i) Banyule City Council

Within the Banyule City Council area there are a large number of ethnic based soccer clubs.

The largest demand for facilities in the Banyule area is from junior soccer clubs. The area has also experienced growth in female participation.

Within the area there are 6 soccer facilities. Four of the clubs includes two teams only and no juniors.

Over the past two years 3 soccer grounds, which include 5 soccer pitches, have been developed.

(ii) Bayside City Council

There has been a large growth in junior participation in the Bayside area. The growth has occurred within existing clubs not as a result of new clubs.

The clubs are wanting all junior teams to be located at the same facility and are reluctant to fragment the teams.

Over the past 12 months there has been three requests for additional soccer facilities within the area.

(iii) Casey City Council

Growth in soccer participation in the Casey area has occurred at both the senior and junior levels. The main growth has occurred in the Endeavour Hills area where large proportions of residents are from European backgrounds.

Over the past two years there has been four new soccer clubs established in the area.

(iv) Darebin City Council

A Darebin sports study recently completed identified soccer as a growth sport in the area. The study identified the growth in soccer and a decline in Australian Rules Football participation.

The main areas of soccer growth identified were in the junior and women's levels. One established soccer club with eight junior teams indicated that they had demand for an additional 60 junior players which they could not accommodate.

(v) Hobsons Bay City Council

A review of soccer participation in the Hobsons Bay area indicates that it is below that of the national participation levels.

Some growth in junior participation has been experienced within two clubs.

There have been two approaches over the past 12 months for additional soccer facilities. The requests have been to accommodate male teams between the ages of 16 to 30 years.

One soccer club recently moved to an alternate facility outside of Hobsons Bay. A Wyndham based soccer club accesses facilities in the area.

(vi) Hume City Council

There has been a large demand for the provision of soccer facilities in the Hume area. Over the past seven years approximately 15 new teams have been established.

The majority of clubs in the Hume City Council area are part of the Amateur league which include only one or two teams.

(vii) Kingston City Council

The growth in senior soccer participation in the Kingston area has remained stable over the past 3 years. One senior club recently disbanded due to lack of numbers.

The growth in soccer has occurred at a junior level. Some junior clubs survive as a separate entity to a senior club.

A number of the senior clubs have indicated that they wish to develop junior soccer however in most cases this has not occurred.

No new grounds have been developed in the Kingston area over the past three years and there are not proposed facility developments in the future.

(viii) Maribyrnong City Council

Within the Maribyrnong area the majority of soccer clubs are male teams between the ages of 15 to 30 years. The clubs are affiliated with the amateur soccer league and include between one and two teams only

There are also three VSF teams with a strong junior base but limited growth.

There is need to identify ways of being smarter about the way limited resources are used and allocated.

(ix) Moreland City Council

Over the past 12 months there have been facility requests from three soccer clubs. The requests have been from one women's' team, one veteran team and one school based team.

There is a number of small soccer clubs with one or two teams that want to develop home base facilities in Moreland. The City of Moreland however does not have the grounds to accommodate the needs.

An attempt has been made to link new teams/clubs with existing clubs however this has not been successful.

Small growth has also been experienced in Australian Rules Football however soccer is the only sport requesting additional grounds.

(x) Stonnington City Council

There are currently three soccer clubs using facilities in the Stonnington area. One of the clubs use the facilities for training purposes only.

The Stonnington City Soccer Club re introduced Junior teams into the club for the 1999.

There has not been a large demand for new or additional soccer facilities within the City of Stonnington. The three current facilities appear to satisfy the need.

(xi) Yarra City Council

Over the past two years there has been an increase in junior participation within existing clubs in the Yarra area. Two of the clubs have indicated that their junior numbers have doubled over the past 12 months.

The demand for new or additional soccer facilities has come from people residing in the high rise housing commission flats. Residents living in this area are from a range of cultural backgrounds most, of which have high soccer participation. The Yarra City Council has found it difficult to accommodate the requests.

4.3.2 FACILITY AND OPERATIONAL ISSUES

A summary of the key issues identified at the meeting is detailed below.

(i) Facility Provision and Requirements

The VSF soccer facility requirements were a major problem to Local Government, however the criteria has been relaxed over the past two years which has taken some of the pressure off both Councils and the clubs.

There is still a need however to review the facility requirements. The facility requirement should directly reflect the level of play and the core requirement to play the sport.

One of the major concerns for Local Government is that facility requirements were established without local government having any input into the document. As Local Government is the main owner of the sporting fields they should be involved with any facility requirements established for the areas.

The issue of fencing grounds is still a major issue in relation to the alienation of open space. The need for fenced ground also requires review.

There are limited sporting facility resources available therefore the challenge to Local Government and the clubs is how can the resources be used "smarter" to optimise the use of the facilities and what other facilities ie training lights.

There is a need to maintain the flexibility and multi-use of local government sporting facilities, therefore any criteria of facility requirements that limit this opportunity should not be accepted.

There is a problem of clubs putting money into facilities and then believing they have some sense of ownership and control over the facility. There is often a lack of understanding in relation to who owns the facility if clubs contribute to the development.

(ii) Management

There is a major issue with the professionalism and efficient management of soccer clubs particularly at the higher levels. If high quality facilities are being provided to these clubs, the clubs must be responsible and accountable for the maintenance and management of the facilities. The VSF have a role in working through the issues of professional administration of the clubs and facilities. Some of the premier league clubs are responsible for finances that are equivalent to small businesses.

(iii) Maintenance

Some parks and gardens departments do not understand the maintenance requirement of soccer facilities. Traditionally councils have provided Australian Rules Football and cricket grounds and soccer has taken second place.

(iv) Support Facility Requirements

The issue of lack of support facilities such as appropriate change rooms, spectator seating, training lights and car parking are common to all sporting clubs. Across metropolitan Melbourne access to training lights and good quality clubroom/change facilities is an issue.

In relation to the provision of clubroom facilities for soccer clubs the Amateurs are usually allocated the older facilities. A number of facilities are old and run down however there are no funds available for the necessary upgrades.

The provision of training lights is now desirable for the ongoing maintenance and quality of the sporting surface however the funds to provide such facilities are often limited. Most Councils have a policy of clubs contributing to the provision of training lights. Sport and Recreation Victoria also provide some funds through the minor facility grants program.

Some Councils however are shifting their thinking and providing training lights as a standard facility to help with the longevity and maintenance of the ground

The current changeroom facilities do not cater for the needs of female soccer players. The change areas, toilets and showers are not sufficient for female use.

With the introduction of the new food handling regulations the majority of kiosk/kitchen facilities in sporting facilities do not comply with the regulations.

Access to social rooms is an issue sporting clubs continual raise with Local Government. The Clubs indicate they require such facilities as the means of raising revenue. The issue for Local Government however is the allocation of scarce funding resources and understanding what the priority is ie pitch or social facilities.

A number of clubs develop "make shift" social facilities by building bars etc in the change room areas.

(v) Sharing of Facilities

Due to the cultural base of some soccer clubs there is some concern that new soccer clubs are encroaching on the catchment areas of established clubs. This therefore restricts the clubs willingness to share facilities.

Some clubs are investigating the options of merging with other clubs to improve the financial position of the clubs. The opportunity for clubs to share facilities will increase over time due to generation changes and the reduced significance of the cultural background as the base.

(vi) Fees and Charges

A number of soccer clubs have indicated to Local Government that once they have paid the registration fees to the VSF they do not have sufficient funds to pay Council the facility hire fees. The Councils are often seen as being the last organisation to require payment.

The amateur clubs often have the most difficulty in paying Council fees as they are usually only one or two team clubs with limited options for fund raising.

The VSF also have a fine system that puts pressure on the financial resources of the clubs.

There is a perception by some of the junior clubs that they are subsidising the senior players. This tension between the senior and junior clubs is building and may be a problem if the junior clubs decide to split from the senior clubs.

(vii) Season Length

The length of the soccer season and seasonal creep has been a major problem for Local Government Authorities. Cricket clubs use the majority of soccer grounds during the summer season, however soccer clubs are continually requesting extended use of facilities.

To address the issue of access to venues for the cup events Council may be able to identify alternate facilities that could be used for such events.

There are a number of requests for use of soccer grounds beyond the end of the winter season to enable clubs to conduct or compete in cup events. The clubs indicate that such events are essential as revenue raisers.

There is also a requirement that teams who miss a game due to poor weather conditions are required to make up the game. This can be a problem in increasing the length of the season.

(viii) Promotion / Relegation system

The system of promotion and relegation can cause problems in relation to facility developments. This occurs mainly at the higher levels of competition.

There is a danger of clubs fuelling their dream to be promoted up to the higher leagues and then expecting Council to fund the facility development requirements.

(ix) Zoning

There is a trend emerging where clubs are concerned about the requirement to travel to participate in soccer competition. Local Government is keen to see additional junior zones be created.

(x) Communication

There is a need for the peak sporting bodies to work together and communicate more effectively. For example increased discussions between the Victorian Cricket Association and the Victorian Soccer Federation may assist with addressing some operational concerns more effectively.

(xi) Programming

There are a number of junior clubs who are reluctant to take on Goal Kick, as they are unable to meet demand once they children wish to enter the competition at a junior level.

4.4 OTHER RELEVANT STATE SPORTING ASSOCIATIONS FOCUS GROUP

A focus group with representatives from nominated State Sports Associations was held on Monday 19 July 1999. The purpose of the focus group was to identify the key issues that were impacting on sporting codes that had some relationship ie sharing of facilities, with soccer clubs. The following Sporting Associations were represented at the meeting.

- Victorian Touch Association Incorporated
- Victorian Rugby Union Incorporated
- Victorian Cricket Association
- Victorian Women's Cricket Association
- Victorian Soccer Federation
- Department of Education
- Sport and Recreation Victoria

The key issues identified by each of the represented Sporting Associations at the focus group session are detailed below:

(i) Victorian Touch Association Incorporated

The sport of Touch is considered as a developing sport in Victoria. The Association is starting to develop the sport in schools through modified programs and school clinics.

There is approximately 5500 registered Touch players in Victoria. This includes 16 affiliates 8 of which are metropolitan based, and 8 which are regionally based. The sport is currently experiencing an annual growth rate of between 15% to 20%.

The Touch season operates through both the summer and winter season. The main competition times are after hour's weeknights, however there is some weekend competition occurring.

The Association is aware of the need to share facilities. The clubs are required to share the facilities with cricket in the summer and soccer or rugby during the winter.

The Association has experienced some problems in the past with sharing facilities with alternate users. The main problem relates to alternate sporting codes believing they have some ownership over the facilities and using the grounds during times allocated to Touch. These problems however have been resolved through discussions with the appropriate local authority.

The Touch clubs do not rely on the use of any club or changeroom facilities, however if the facilities are available the clubs will make use of them.

The Touch Association would like to have a facility that is dedicated to Touch. This facility could be shared with an alternate sporting code.

(ii) Victorian Rugby Union Incorporated

There are twenty-three clubs affiliated with Victorian Rugby Union. Of these eighteen are metropolitan based and five are regional based.

There are approximately 4150 registered Rugby players in Victoria. The following indicates the player categories:

- Seniors 2000 players
- Juniors 1000 players
- Schools 1000 players
- Women 150 players

The sport is experiencing growth across Australia, with the main growth in Victoria occurring at the school and women's levels. Over the past two years the women's teams have grown from 0 to 6 teams.

The condition of the playing surface and access to facilities with lights for training are the main problems facing Rugby Union.

Approximately 40% of clubs are required to share facilities with an alternate sport. Cricket is the main sporting code that shares grounds with Rugby.

(iii) Victorian Cricket Association

There are currently 95 Cricket Associations affiliated with the Victorian Cricket Association. Of these 19 of the Associations are metropolitan based. Within the Associations there are approximately 100,000 registered players.

Over the past 3 years there has been a further 10,000 children participating in non-competitive cricket clinics and programs.

The VCA has recently completed a restructure of the Cricket Associations. The number of Associations is to be reduced in metropolitan areas from 19 to 8. The Associations boundaries will be based on the Local Government boundaries.

The VCA invests approximately \$250,000 per year into Cricket facilities and programs. Over the past few years the priority has been in the areas of women's and masters cricket.

Junior cricket has also commenced as twilight games on a Friday evening and masters; cricket is being played on a Sunday.

The VCA has employed a consultant to work with Local Government on issues relating to cricket. A Local Government forum has recently been established to investigate the future direction and provision of Cricket.

Participation in cricket is growing and the need for facilities is only going to expand in the future.

Access to grounds for pre-season training and the quality of the playing surface are the main problems currently facing cricket.

(iv) Victorian Women's Cricket Association

There are currently 50 women's cricket clubs which include 75 teams and 2000 players registered with the Victorian Women's Cricket Association.

The main area of growth has been in the school girl competition, with a 65% increase in participation over the past 12 months.

The senior women's competition is mainly metropolitan based. Most women's teams are a part of men's club and use the grounds when they are not in use by the men. The main competition day is Sunday afternoon with limited competition occurring on a Saturday.

(v) Victorian Soccer Federation

The main issues of concern to the Victorian Soccer Federation include:

- Lack of soccer pitches
- Junior growth and inability to meet demand
- Quality of playing surface including overuse concerns and poor maintenance.
- Inappropriate facility provision to cater for needs of women ie change room facilities.
- Access for pre-season training
- Inadequate lighting
- Sharing of grounds
- Fencing of open space
- Season length recognising the need to share facilities.

(vi) Department of Education

School sporting facilities are currently used by a number of soccer clubs across Victoria. There are a number of successful models where community sporting clubs are using school facilities.

There are a number of sections within the Department of Education that impact on the provision of school sporting facilities for community sport. The department is primarily involved with the development of lease or licence agreements.

Due to the schools becoming self-governing organisations, the decision on use of the facilities is the responsibility of the individual schools. This includes usage times, fees and charges and maintenance responsibilities. Some schools are worried about the security problems associated with allowing access to sporting facilities. The Education Department can only encourage schools to open up their facilities.

There are a number of Council areas that have not maximised the school sporting resources that are available in a local area

In 1998 a Joint Memorandum of Understanding between the Department of Education and Sport and Recreation Victoria was developed in relation to sharing and maintaining school sporting facilities.

The Victorian Soccer Federation and the Education Department have developed a close relationship in relation to soccer clubs using school facilities.

(vii) Sport and Recreation Victoria

The needs of elite soccer are well catered for at the MCG, Docklands and Olympic Park.

The VSF are currently talking with the Sport and Recreation Victoria about the development of a State training venue. The SRV has recently approved the funds for the development of a feasibility study for a State facility.

The State Government funding for Capital works projects has recently been split into wet and dry facilities. A separate fund has been established for Aquatic projects, which has freed up the \$4 million for dry facilities. There is also a further \$3 million in the minor facilities program.

4.5 LOCAL GOVERNMENT SURVEY TRENDS

To assist with assessing key issues and demand for soccer facilities across Victoria a survey was sent to the 78 metropolitan and regional Local Government Authorities across the State during the month of June 1999 . The following provides a summary of the key issues and trends identified from the surveys.

- Of the 78 Local Government soccer surveys sent out, a total of 53 surveys (68%) were completed and returned.
- Of the completed surveys 22 (41.5%) were from metropolitan Councils and 31 (58.5%) were from regional Councils.

4.5.1 REGIONAL LOCAL GOVERNMENT AUTHORITIES

(i) Soccer Facility Provision

- Within regional Victoria 18 Council areas provide Soccer facilities with a total of 94 soccer pitches.
- The majority of soccer facilities are owned by Local Government Authorities with a number of facilities being owned by Educational Institutions. The following list indicates the ownership arrangements:

- Local Government	-	64 pitches
- Education Institutions	-	17 pitches
- Private/Social Club	-	3 pitches
- Crown Land	-	1 pitch

- There are a total of 2 regional soccer facilities classified as Class A and B facilities. These facilities are located in the City of Greater Geelong and Mornington Peninsula Shire Council.

- The number of Class C, D and Junior only regional soccer pitches are detailed as follows:
 - Class C facilities – 18 pitches
 - Class D facilities – 19 pitches
 - Junior only facilities – 13 pitches

(ii) Regional Policies and Procedures

- Of the 31 Regional Councils who completed the survey, the following indicates the provision of policies and procedures in relation to management and operation of sporting reserves:
 - Provision of an Open Space Policy – 11 Councils.
 - Provision of Policy in relation to the fencing of sporting facilities – 1 Council.
 - Provision of a Ground Allocation Policy – 15 Councils.
- There are a range of tenancy arrangements between Councils and soccer clubs with seasonal allocation being the predominant model. The following details the different tenancy arrangements currently in place:
 - Seasonal allocation - 13 Councils
 - Lease/Licence - 5 Councils
 - Service Agreement - 1 Council
 - Instrument of Delegation - 1 Council
- Two Regional Councils are responsible for the allocation of school sporting facilities soccer clubs.

(iii) Current and Future Soccer Facility Improvements

- A total of five Regional Councils have developed new or transformed existing sporting reserves into soccer pitches over the past five years.
- A total of seven senior soccer pitches, one junior soccer pitch and one training soccer facility have been developed or transformed by Regional Councils.
- Surfcoast Shire is the only Regional Council that indicated future plans for the development of new soccer facilities. No Regional Councils have future plans to convert existing sporting facilities into soccer facilities.
- The main issues/problems Regional Councils are facing in relation to the operation and provision of soccer facilities include:
 - Over-use of soccer pitches
 - Communication between soccer associations and clubs
 - Increase in player numbers
 - Lack of available open space to develop new soccer facilities
 - Promotion/relegation system
 - Requirement for training facilities
 - Number of soccer clubs and their viability
 - Funding to construct soccer facilities
 - Fencing of soccer pitches/player races
 - VSF facility requirements/criteria
 - Cultural/ethnicity issues
 - Reluctance of some soccer clubs to share facilities
 - Concern over clubs maintaining and cleaning facilities
 - Overdue payment of fees
 - Growth in number of soccer clubs
 - Length of soccer season/overlap of season

- A summary of the Regional Local Government Soccer Survey is provided in **Appendix A.**

4.5.2 METROPOLITAN LOCAL GOVERNMENT AUTHORITIES

(i) Soccer Facility Provision

- Within Metropolitan Victoria, all 22 Council areas who responded to the survey, provide soccer facilities which translates to a total of 305 soccer pitches.
- The majority of soccer facilities are owned by Local Government Authorities. The following details the ownership of metropolitan based soccer facilities:
 - Local Government - 258 pitches
 - Education Institutions - 33 pitches
 - Private/Social Clubs - 10 pitches
 - Parks Victoria - 4 pitches
- There are a total of 16 Metropolitan soccer facilities classified as Class A and B facilities. (See **Appendix B** for list of Metropolitan A and B Class soccer facilities.)
- The number of Class C, D and Junior only Metropolitan soccer pitches are detailed below:
 - Class C facilities - 69 pitches
 - Class D facilities - 33 pitches
 - Junior only facilities - 30 pitches

(ii) Metropolitan Policies and Procedures

- Of the 22 Metropolitan Councils that completed the survey, the following indicates the provision of policies and procedures in relation to management and operation of sporting reserves:
 - Provision of an Open Space Policy – 17 Councils
 - Provision of Policy in relation to the fencing of sporting facilities – 8 Councils
 - Provision of Ground Allocation Policy – 21 Councils
- The main form of tenancy arrangement between Metropolitan Councils and soccer clubs is seasonal allocations. The following provides the different tenancy arrangements currently in place:
 - Seasonal allocations - 18 facilities
 - Lease - 9 facilities
 - Licence - 3 facilities
- Four Metropolitan Councils are responsible for the allocation of school sporting facilities to soccer clubs. This equates to 16 soccer pitches.

(iii) Current and Future Soccer Facility Improvements

- A total of 11 Metropolitan Councils have developed new or transformed existing sporting reserves into soccer pitches over the past five years.
- The development of new or transformation of existing sporting reserves into soccer facilities has resulted in the provision of 30 new soccer pitches over the last five years.
- The following Metropolitan councils have indicated future plans for the development of new soccer facilities over the next five years:
 - Banyule City Council - 1 facility
 - Brimbank city Council - Unknown number
 - Casey City Council - 2 facilities
 - Hobsons Bay City council - 2 pitches
 - Moonee Valley City Council - 1 facility

- Moreland City Council - 1 facility upgrade
- Nillumbik City Council - Unknown number or location
- Yarra City Council - 1 facility upgrade

- The main issues/problems Metropolitan Councils are facing in relation to the operation and provision of soccer facilities include:
 - Length of soccer season/overlap of seasons
 - VSF/ASFV facility requirements/criteria
 - Fencing of soccer pitches/player races
 - Communication between Soccer Association and Councils (lack of)
 - Increase in player numbers
 - Growth in number of soccer clubs
 - Lack of available open space to develop new soccer facilities
 - Over-use of soccer pitches
 - Requirement for training facilities
 - Number of soccer clubs and their viability
 - Promotion/relegation system
 - Cultural/ethnicity issues
 - Sharing facilities

- A summary of the Metropolitan Local Government Soccer Survey is provided in **Appendix B**.

The VSF is managed by a Commission, comprising seven elected Commissioners including the Chairperson. There are currently seven Associations/Leagues that are affiliated with the VSF. All regional associations come under the umbrella of the Victorian Country Soccer Association.

The following provides an estimated breakdown of the teams and players in the Victorian Soccer Federation Leagues and seven affiliated Associations based on 1997/98 registration data.

- **Victorian Soccer Federation**

– Premier League	28 teams	
– State League	112 teams	
– Provisional League	120 teams	
– Women’s League	52 teams	
– Thirds/Veterans League	42 teams	7,328 players
– Male Juniors	- 460 teams)	6,974 players
– Female Juniors	- 21 teams)	
– Sub-Juniors	- 431 teams	4,219 players
– Goal Kick players	- -	1,590 players

- **Amateur Soccer Federation of Victoria**

– 156 teams		2,695 players
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- **Soccer Referees’ Victoria Incorporated**

– 399 registered participants.		
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- **Victorian Country Soccer Association**

– Ballarat and District Soccer Association	53 teams	695 players
– Bendigo Amateur Soccer League	86 teams	1,398 players
– La Trobe Valley Soccer League	60 teams	854 players
– North-Eastern Soccer League	33 teams	330 players
– Sunraysia Soccer Association	27 teams	274 players
– Western Victorian Soccer Association	17 teams	238 players

The State affiliated association review indicates that the total estimated number of teams and players affiliated with the VSF are approximately:

- 1,704 teams
- 26,100 players

There are a further 399 Referees that are also affiliated with the VSF.

5.2.2 STATE COMPETITION

There are three main soccer competitions currently operating across Victoria. The Victorian Soccer Federation and the Amateur Soccer Federation of Victoria co-ordinate the two main Melbourne Metropolitan competitions, while the Victorian Country Soccer Association co-ordinates the regional competition.

The Amateur Soccer competition includes thirteen divisions of twelve teams. The competition is socially based and is played on Sunday morning and afternoon. The majority of clubs registered with the Amateurs comprising one or two teams.

The Victorian Soccer Federation Competition is based on five leagues. The following provides a summary of the team numbers to be implemented as of the 2000 Soccer Season.

- Premier League - Firsts x 12 teams
- Reserves x 12 teams
- State League - 5 Divisions x 12 teams
- Provisional League - 5 Divisions x 12 teams
- Women's Leagues - 4 Divisions
- Juniors - 130 clubs

The **chart on the following page** provides an indication of the VSF 1999 competition schedule.

5.2.3 ELITE ATHLETE PROGRAMS

The Victorian Soccer Federation is involved with the Victorian Institute of Sport Soccer Program in the fostering and development of elite soccer players. The program is currently based at one of the Albert Park soccer grounds. In the year 2000 the Victorian Institute of Sport will develop an affiliation with the Women's League to enable female soccer participation at the VIS levels.

The VSF is involved with the Victorian Primary Schools Sports Association in the development and training of the State Junior teams. The VSF, to a lesser extent, is also involved with the Secondary Schools Sports Association.

As part of the player career path program, the VSF has established a number of Development Squads and Centres of Excellence. The aim of these programs is to provide training and skill development for those players moving into State, Premier and National Leagues. The Centres of Excellence have been developed around regional areas. The State Development Squads undertake training at the Albert Park Soccer grounds and participate in country training camps.

5.2.4 SCHOOLS COMPETITIONS

The Junior League Committee of the VSF includes a representative from the primary schools soccer competition. The VSF works with the primary and secondary school competition for the development of the sport.

Detailed reliable participation statistics were unable to be obtained for this Study, however, the Co-ordinator of the Program estimates that there are approximately 3,000 students participating in the Schools Competition.

VSF 1999 CHART

The VSF has concentrated on developing junior participation and skill acquisitions within schools over the past two years. The Goal Kick Program and the PASS Teacher Education Program has resulted in an increase in the knowledge of teachers about soccer and has stimulated the growth in school soccer. In 1997/98, there were approximately 775 players involved in the Goal Kick Program, this figure increased to 1,205 players in 1998/99, a growth of approximately (55%).

5.2.5 STATE OFFICES

The Victorian Soccer Federation operates from Soccer House, premises located in Dorcas Street, South Melbourne.

The Amateur Soccer Federation of Victoria, operates from leased premises in Balaclava Road, Caulfield.

5.3 SOCCER PARTICIPATION TRENDS

The following provides a summary of the current soccer participation trends over the past six years for the Victorian Soccer Federation and the Amateur Soccer Federation of Victoria.

The following tables detail the total registered players for each of the categories over the past six years:

(i) Junior League/Sub-Junior/goal Kick Participation

Table 5.1 details the registered players in the VSF Junior League, Sub-Junior and Goal Kick program.

TABLE 5.1
JUNIOR SOCCER PARTICIPATION 1994/95 - 1998/99

CATEGORY	Y E A R				
	1994/95	1995/96	1996/97	1997/98	1998/99
Goal Kick	-	-	-	775	1,590
Under 7	1,484	1,484	1,109	807	1,017
Under 8	938	943	691	815	928
Under 9	1,091	1,026	967	920	1,075
Under 10	1,163	1,138	1,069	1,020	1,199
Under 11	1,255	1,068	1,102	1,243	1,375
Under 12	1,115	1,130	966	1,169	1,255
Under 13	1,028	979	1,069	1,053	1,222
Under 14	1,014	955	980	955	1,183
Under 15	942	840	834	948	1,044
Under 16	606	647	595	660	895
Under 17	553	585	581	522	514
Under 18	461	512	444	420	410
TOTAL	11,650	11,307	10,407	11,307	13,707

Note: As of 1999 the women's Soccer Federation amalgamated with the VSF. The 1998/99 figure therefore includes junior

The review of Junior Soccer participation indicates:

- Over the five year period from 1994/95, junior soccer participation has grown by approximately 2,057 players (17.6%).
- Participation in Goal Kick which is the school based modified rules program, has increased by 815 participants (105%), over the last 12 months.
- The non-competitive sub-junior section, which includes Under 7's to Under 10's has decreased from 4,676 players in 1994/95 to 4,219 players in 1998/99, a decrease of 457 players (9.7%).

- Anecdotal evidence further suggests that there is further demand for junior participation, however, due to the lack of facilities, particularly in the northern region, juniors are being turned away. Discussions indicate that the lack of facilities is also resulting in junior players being culled at the older age groups.
- The graphs detailed in **Appendix C** indicate the growth trends in junior soccer participation.

(ii) Senior Leagues Participation

Table 5.2 details the registered players in the VSF Senior Competition:

**TABLE 5.2
SENIOR SOCCER PARTICIPATION 1994/95 TO 1998/99**

CATEGORY	Y E A R				
	1994/95	1995/96	1996/97	1997/98	1998/99
Senior-Amateurs	3,109	3,118	3,531	4,731	5,692
Senior Contract	2,251	2,215	1,075	804	712
TOTAL SENIORS	5,360	5,333	4,606	5,535	6,404

Note: As of 1999 the women's Soccer Federation amalgamated with the VSF. The 1998/99 figure therefore includes senior

The review of senior soccer participation over the past six years indicates:

- Total senior participation over the five year period has increased from approximately 5,360 players in 1994/95 to 6,404 players in 1998/99, an increase of 1,044 (19.4%).
- The largest growth has occurred in the amateur senior players. The growth in this category over the five year period was 2,583 players (83%).
- Senior contract players have decreased over the five year period from approximately 2,251 players in 1994/95 to 712 players in 1998/99, a decrease of 1,539 players (68%).
- The growth in senior players has occurred as a result of the introduction of senior women and some growth in the Thirds and Veterans participation.
- The graph detailed in **Appendix D** indicates the growth trends in senior soccer participation.

(iii) Amateur Soccer Federation of Victoria Participation Trends

Table 5.3 details the registered players in the ASFV for the period 1996 to 1999:

**TABLE 5.3
AMATEUR SOCCER FEDERATION OF VICTORIA
REGISTERED PLAYERS 1996 TO 1999**

CATEGORY	Y E A R			
	1996	1997	1998	1999
Registered Players	3,513	3,397	3,079	2,695

The review of participation trends for the Amateur Soccer Federation of Victoria indicates:

- Participation over the four year period has been in gradual decline.
- Registered players have decreased from approximately 3,513 in 1996 to approximately 2,695 in 1999, a decrease of 818 players (23%).

(iv) Women's Soccer League Participation

**TABLE 5.4
WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION RATES**

CATEGORY	Y E A R					
	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1998
Senior	535	774	820	951	896	880
Junior	-	-	-	-	176	352
VSF Junior	-	-	-	-	96	106
TOTAL	535	774	820	951	1,168	1,328

Note: Junior Competition commenced 1998.
Junior females competing in VSF competition only calculated since 1998.

The review of total registered players indicates:

- Female participation in soccer has increased by approximately 793 players (148%) over the six year period from 1994 to 1999.
- The introduction of junior female soccer in 1998 has also experienced significant growth over a 12 month period of approximately 176 players (100%).

(v) Total Metropolitan Melbourne Soccer Participation

Table 5.5 details the total registered players in the VSF and Amateur Competition in Metropolitan Melbourne over the four year period of 1996 to 1999:

**TABLE 5.5
TOTAL VSF AND ASFV PARTICIPATION 1996 TO 1999**

CATEGORY	Y E A R			
	1996	1997	1998	1999
Goal Kick – VSF	-	-	775	1,590
Sub-Juniors – VSF	4,591	3,836	3,562	4,219
Juniors – VSF	6,716	6,571	6,970	7,898
Seniors – VSF	5,333	4,606	5,535	6,404
SUB-TOTAL	16,640	15,013	16,842	20,111
Women's League	820	951	1,168	1,328
Seniors – ASFV	3,513	3,397	3,079	2,695
TOTAL	20,973	19,361	21,089	24,134

The review of total registered players with the VSF and ASFV indicates:

- Soccer participation has increased over the four year period from approximately 20,973 players in 1996 to approximately 24,134 players in 1999 an increase of 3,161 players (15%).
- Participation in the VSF competition has increased by 3,471 players (20.8%) over the four year period.
- The growth in female participation over the four year period (62%) has contributed to the growth in overall soccer participation.
- The main areas of growth for the VSF competition has been the increase of the Goal Kick program, and senior participation. The graph detailed in **Appendix E** details the total growth trend for the VSF participation.
- The Consultant Team has reviewed the growth trends and it is evident that the sport has built a very strong and still expanding junior and student participation base. Junior participation and female growth should continue to influence the sports overall increasing participation, as juniors move into senior competition over the next five to ten years. This growth, however, will be significantly affected by the availability of and access to soccer facilities. Without the provision of facilities, the growth rate will stagnate. This will have the two main potential impacts:

1. People wishing to play soccer but cannot, will either find an alternate sport and be lost to the game, or not participate in sporting activities, or
2. Soccer grounds will continue to be over-used, having a long-term impact on the maintenance and longevity of a valuable community asset.

5.4 SOCCER FACILITIES

Traditionally soccer facilities have been provided through Local Government's formal sporting reserves provision. With the increase in demand for soccer facilities across Metropolitan Melbourne over the past ten years, a number of Local Government Authorities have developed specialist soccer facilities or converted former Australian Rules football Reserves or other sporting reserve into soccer grounds.

The introduction by the Victorian Soccer Federation of facility requirements for the different levels of soccer competition, has placed significant pressure on clubs and Local Government Authorities. The requirement to fully fence grounds at Premier and State League, has caused great concern to Local Government Authorities and local residents, due to the issues associated with alienation of open space.

A number of school based facilities are also used by soccer clubs. A large number of Amateur Soccer Federation Clubs are located at school facilities. The Education Department actively encourages schools to open the facilities for community sporting use. Due to the new self-governing philosophy of State Schools however, the decision on usage, availability, maintenance and fees is the responsibility of the individual school.

Over the past five to ten years, there has been a number of privately developed soccer pitches. The majority of these facilities are located as part of an ethnic based social club.

Respondents to the Local Government Soccer Survey results completed, as part of this Study,, indicated the following facility ownership of soccer pitches across Regional Victoria and Metropolitan Melbourne.

(i) Melbourne Facilities

- | | |
|--------------------------|-------------|
| • Local Government | 258 pitches |
| • Education Institutions | 33 pitches |
| • Private/social clubs | 10 pitches |
| • Parks Victoria | 4 pitches |

(ii) Regional Victoria

- | | |
|--------------------------|------------|
| • Local Government | 64 pitches |
| • Education Institutions | 17 pitches |
| • Private/social club | 3 pitches |
| • Crown Land | 1 pitch |

Appendix F provides a list of the soccer facilities currently used in Metropolitan Melbourne by the Victorian Soccer Federation and the Amateur Soccer Federation of Victoria.

The Victorian Soccer Federation does not have a specialist standalone venue for its elite competition and training programs. Discussion with the Executive Officer for the VSF indicated that Sport and Recreation Victoria has recently approved the funding for a Feasibility Study in relation to the development of a State Soccer Facility.

5.5 RESIDENTIAL PROFILING OF METROPOLITAN PLAYERS

A review of the competition structure for the VSF indicates that, due to the promotion/relegation system the competition structure is not based on regions. Players are required to travel to a venue to compete at their level of competition.

Facility development has, therefore, not been related to player population distribution.

Conversely, discussions with the Amateur Soccer Federation of Victoria, indicates that, due to the social nature of the competition, the majority of players compete at grounds that are located within close proximity to their residence.

To gain an understanding of where most existing metropolitan soccer players, registered with the VSF and the ASFV live, the 1999 database of post codes has been mapped.

The ASFV database does not provide post code data for registered players. For the purpose of mapping, an assumption has been made that most players reside close to the ground at which they compete. Therefore the post code where the soccer pitch is located and the number of players using the facility has been mapped.

Due to the assumption made above paragraph, the data provided is unreliable and should not be used as a base for the development of strategy.

The maps have been divided into the following categories:

- Total registered VSF players
- VSF Premier League players
- VSF State League players
- Provisional League VSF players
- Junior League VSF players
- Registered players ASFV

These maps are detailed on the following seven pages. The detailed player post code database for VSF and ASFV registered players is listed in Appendix I.

The player post code database has been analysed to identify residential distribution across the Melbourne Metropolitan area. The results have been mapped using the following colour codes:

TABLE 5.6
VSF SOCCER METROPOLITAN PLAYER POST CODE MAPPING

MAP COLOUR CODE	DISTRIBUTION DENSITY	TOTAL POST CODES IN CATEGORY
White	15	0
Light Yellow	50	1-10
Light Blue	19	10 – 20
Light Green	19	20 – 30
Dark Blue	16	30 – 40
Dark Green	15	40 – 50
Dark Yellow	56	50 – 100
Red	63	Greater than 100

ASFV SOCCER METROPOLITAN PLAYER POST CODE MAPPING

MAP COLOUR CODE	DISTRIBUTION DENSITY	TOTAL POST CODES IN CATEGORY
White	205	0
Light Yellow	4	1-20
Light Blue	10	20 – 30
Dark Blue	6	30 – 40
Dark Green	7	40 – 50
Dark Yellow	18	50 – 100
Red	3	Greater than 100

MAP (x 7)

MAP (x 7)

MAP (x 7)

MAP (x 7)

MAP (x 7)

MAP (x 7)

MAP x7

6 Strategic Directions and Recommendations

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This section provides a SWOT Analysis, a review of facility models and a summary of the key operational issues that impact on the participation in soccer and provision of soccer facilities.

6.2 SWOT ANALYSIS

A SWOT Analysis assesses strengths and weaknesses of soccer in Victoria and summarises opportunities and threats which may impinge on soccer in Victoria, as well as constraints which affect future strategies.

Whilst the SWOT Analysis discusses specific issues relating to soccer, a series of issues relate to the provision of soccer facilities which are generic to all outdoor field sports and most Councils including:

- Provision of training lights
- Capital investment by clubs on facilities over which they have short term tenure
- Use of schools and school amenities (toilets and change rooms) on weekends
- Availability of grounds for pre-season training, particularly at facilities shared with summer sports (such as cricket).

6.2.1 STRENGTHS

- Victorian teams have performed successfully in the National Soccer League in recent years, with South Melbourne being Premiers for two consecutive years. South Melbourne will compete in the first World Club Championship in January 2000.
- Soccer is the third most popular team, field sport in Australia amongst adults, and the fourth most popular junior sport in Australia.
- Junior soccer has experienced growth in recent years, and is especially evident in the outer suburbs of Melbourne.
- Soccer provides a wide range of competitions for males and females, for juniors through to veterans level and from social through to elite competitions.
- Soccer is played both indoors and outdoors at a wide range of geographically dispersed venues throughout Victoria.
- Within the VSF a promotion and relegation system allows new clubs to move through the leagues as they improve, they are not confined to the lower divisions.
- The VSF has adequate administrative staff to ensure the smooth administration of the game.
- Many clubs have dedicated (single purpose) soccer facilities, which are not used by other sports, consequently, they are available twelve months of the year for soccer.
- Young people have a career path in soccer, subject to their ability, with the potential to play overseas and earn substantial salaries.

6.2.2 WEAKNESSES

- Soccer in Victoria has generally failed to attract Australian born and UK migrants as spectators to local games. Most spectators are from non-English speaking backgrounds.
- Overall, there are inadequate soccer facilities for all levels of competition, with many lower grade grounds having very poor quality playing surfaces, which detracts from the playing of the game, as it is generally played on the ground rather than in the air.
- Very few amenities at soccer grounds are designed for women.
- Clubs promoted to the higher levels of VSF competitions have difficulty meeting ground guidelines, restricting their ability to play in the Premier League and State League Division One.
- Soccer grounds are generally not compatible with cricket pitches, either turf wickets or covered synthetic pitches. Both types of wickets create difficulties for soccer players.
- VSF facility requirements are regarded as onerous for many clubs and local government authorities, consequently, in many instances, they are not met.
- Except in a few cases there is a lack of adequate or good quality soccer facilities in country Victoria. Soccer does not have a strong following in Country Victoria, except in a few regional centres which have a significant migrant population.
- The Provisional League Committee and the Junior League Committee of the VSF do not have a voting right to elect the VSF Commission. Affiliate associations also do not have voting rights on the Commission.
- Entering teams in the higher divisions is very costly, when costs such as affiliation fees to the VSF, registration and transfer fees and remuneration to players and coaches, are considered.
- There is no automatic promotion from the Amateur Leagues and Country Leagues to the VSF Provision League.
- Premier League teams are concentrated in the north-western part of Melbourne, hence choices are limited for people wishing to play elite soccer but not living close to these clubs.
- Soccer tends to have a relatively long season with a normal league competition, supplemented by pre-season and post season knockout cup competitions.
- Soccer does not have enough referees, consequently many games do not have officials.
- Many clubs have a poor working relationship with Local Government.
- The payment of players in some leagues impacts on the financial viability of the club.

6.2.3 OPPORTUNITIES

- Soccer, on some criteria, is the biggest sport in the world.
- A number of Australian born players compete in the best Leagues in Europe and have a high profile within these competitions.
- Sydney 2000 Olympics includes a soccer competition, with games to be held in Melbourne as well as Sydney and other states. The Olyroos are expected to be successful, following on with success of other Australian under age teams in world competitions.
- It is anticipated the National Soccer League will have fully professional teams within five to ten years.

- Interest in elite soccer in Melbourne has increased significantly in recent years, given the attendances at the MCG for the Australia v Iran World Cup Game and Australia v Manchester United game.
- It is possible to introduce an integrated league system catering for elite clubs down to social competition.
- Large, multi-team clubs can be established catering for elite level, social, veterans, junior and women's teams.
- Junior female soccer competitions may encourage young girls to commence playing soccer at an earlier age than currently occurs.
- Further zoning of leagues, particularly in social leagues and junior leagues, would reduce travel time and personal time commitment for matches.
- Multi-pitch soccer complexes with a large social clubhouse could cater for a large number of members.

6.2.4 THREATS

- Continued failure of the Socceroos to qualify for the World Cup Finals could result in the sport not being taken seriously by the general population.
- Internal conflict between the VSF and ASFV does not assist the future development and growth of the sport.
- Generally, soccer clubs have not demonstrated a willingness to share facilities.
- Ethnic tensions exist between clubs which occasionally are transferred from spectators onto the playing field, as a result, the public's image or perception of soccer is poor.
- National trends in participation in recreation and sport activities indicate a drift away from outdoor team sports, such as soccer, towards individual activities which are informally or casually based.
- Some Councils consider soccer to be a less important sport than Australian Rules football, which reflects resource allocation decisions.
- A trend in all sports is for spectator numbers to increase at elite level competition with demand for tickets often exceeding supply, whereas the number of spectators attending community or local level sport (up to Premier League in Victoria) is declining.

6.2.5 CONSTRAINTS

- Many soccer clubs have an ethnic community support base, rather than a geographical community base.
- Finance available at club level is limited, restricting the growth and development of facilities.
- Soccer cannot grow unless there is better utilisation of existing facilities or the development of additional facilities in growth corridor areas.

6.3 PRINCIPLES AND OBJECTIVES

The following two principles have been established by the Steering Committee to guide the future development growth and participation of soccer.

6.3.1 PRINCIPLE ONE

People of both genders, and all ability levels should be encouraged and able to participate in soccer activities.

To guide the above principle, the following objectives have been established:

- To increase the number of local playing opportunities for males, females, juniors and veterans to play soccer.
- To ensure the best possible use of existing facilities and provide for the future growth of soccer.
- To improve funding opportunities for the future development and provision of soccer facilities.
- A range of competitions will be offered targeted to specific groups and types of players including adults and juniors, males and females, and elite and social players.
- Players will have the opportunity to remain a member of a club and play the sport at different levels depending upon the aspiration and ability of the individual player.
- To encourage and enable people to participate in soccer, not only as players but referees, coaches and administrators.

6.3.2 PRINCIPLE TWO

People of both genders should have the opportunity to achieve excellence in soccer participation.

To guide the above principle, the following objectives have been established:

- To develop programs that enable interested individuals to achieve excellence as players, codes, administrators and referees.
- Develop a regulated system of promotion and relegation will apply to all competitions providing an opportunity for clubs to progress from lower leagues through to elite competitions.
- Develop a more coordinated, streamlined administration of the sport to avoid duplication and minimise the administrative requirements on clubs.
- To develop a Centre of excellence for the training and development of elite players.

6.3.3 RECOMMENDATION

RECOMMENDATION NO	RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSIBLE AUTHORITY
Recommendation One:	That the principles and objectives for the future direction and development of soccer as detailed in 6.3.1 and 6.3.2 be accepted.	LGA S&RV ASFV VSF

6.4 COMPETITION STRUCTURE REVIEW

All competitions will fit into one of the following categories:

- Men
- Juniors
- Women

6.4.1 MEN'S LEAGUES

Competitions can be classified into three distinct groups; elite, community and social competitions.

- **Elite Leagues**

These competitions will be conducted on a Statewide basis and refer to the existing National Soccer League, Premier League and State League Division One competitions.

- **Community Leagues**

Competitions will be conducted on a regional basis in metropolitan and country areas. Metropolitan competitions will be structured on a regional basis and refers to the north-west and south-east regions, State League Division Two and Three, and Provisional League Divisions One and Two.

- **Social Competition**

Social competitions can incorporate Veterans competitions and the existing Thirds and Amateur League competitions into a combined structure with matches played on a home and away basis or at regional venues, depending on the availability of soccer pitches. Whilst it is reasonable for the Veterans competition to be separate from other open competitions, all remaining competitions can be structured to allow clubs to compete on a Saturday or Sunday, and/or in leagues with a single team or a first team and reserve teams. Given the nature of social competitions, they should be structured on a localised regional basis to minimise travel time.

Currently an orderly system of promotion and relegation occurs within VSF competitions between Premier League and Provisional League. However, given the continued growth of the Melbourne Metropolitan area, it is likely that clubs will continue to be established in new growth areas and over time wish to develop teams from social through to community and elite leagues. Consequently, an opportunity should be provided for clubs to enter Provisional League.

It is suggested that the VSF in association with its affiliated soccer associations, including the ASFV and Country Leagues, establish an agreed set of criteria which all clubs must meet to enter Provisional League, based on:

- Financial performance
- Facilities available
- Administrative and management track record
- On and off field behaviour of players, officials and spectators.

Each year clubs competing in metropolitan social competitions and country competitions will be invited to nominate or enter Provisional League. Depending upon the number of nominations, play off competition be conducted between clubs which nominate and meet all VSF criteria and the bottom one or two teams in Provisional League Division Two north-west and south-east regions. The structure of the play off competitions will be determined by the VSF.

6.4.2 RECOMMENDATION

RECOMMENDATION NO	RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSIBLE AUTHORITY
Recommendation One:	That the VSF review the current competition structure for the men's league into three distinct groups of elite, community and social competitions.	VSF
Recommendation Two:	That Soccer Associations require all clubs to meet an agreed set of criteria prior to entering the VSF competitions.	VSF

6.4.3 JUNIOR COMPETITIONS

It is assumed that the older age junior leagues will be closely allied to clubs competing in the elite leagues. These competitions will be supplemented by junior under age competitions.

**Sport and Recreation Victoria, Victorian Soccer Federation,
Amateur Soccer Federation Victoria and Local Government Authorities**

Local Government and Victorian Soccer Resource Study

.....● *Michael King And Associates Pty Ltd*

Junior competitions for children aged under 12 and younger should be locally based, and where possible, matches played at regional venues with at least five pitches, to enable a league of ten teams to play at the same time. It is recognised this will not be possible on all occasions, consequently regular home and away games will also be played where clubs have appropriate facilities. The catchment of a local competition would depend upon the number of junior players within any locality. However, it is expected that 90% of junior players will need to travel no more than, say 10km, to their competition matches.

In the over 12 age group, competitions will be regionalised with the nature of the regions based upon the number of clubs or teams in each age group. It is expected there could be four to six regions in the metropolitan area.

6.4.4 RECOMMENDATION

RECOMMENDATION NO	RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSIBLE AUTHORITY
Recommendation One:	That the VSF review the junior competition in line with the strategy identified in 6.4.3.	VSF

6.4.5 WOMEN'S COMPETITION

An elite competition, the existing Premier League will remain a Statewide competition. However, it is expected that all other leagues and junior women's soccer will be played on a regional basis depending upon the number of teams that nominate to play. If there are insufficient teams for regional competitions it may be preferable to play matches at a central venue which has at least five soccer pitches available.

6.4.6 RECOMMENDATION

RECOMMENDATION NO	RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSIBLE AUTHORITY
Recommendation One:	That the VSF review the womens competition in line with the strategy identified in 6.4.5.	VSF

6.4.7 ADMINISTRATION

Whilst administration involves a wide range of activities, the focus of this discussion relates to the registration of clubs, teams and players.

A key underlying theme is to acknowledge that soccer associations want to maintain their independence and autonomy from the VSF whilst remaining an affiliated organisation. It is equally important to ensure that each association remains financially viable and have the ability and right to establish its own affiliation and registration fee structure.

Once a club is registered with an affiliated association it should then be eligible to enter teams in all competitions conducted under the auspice of the VSF. Thus a club directly affiliated with the VSF should be allowed to enter teams in the ASFV by paying the appropriate team affiliation fee. Similarly, a club registered and affiliated with the ASFV should be able to enter a team in a VSF competition, such as veteran's, junior's or women's competition and pay the appropriate team affiliation fee.

Clear rules need to be established for club registrations to enable a club to play in different competitions, thus a club registered in the elite or community competitions may be allowed to play in the social competitions as their registration fees tend to be higher than for social competitions. Conversely players registered to play for social clubs may be restricted to say three games before an additional affiliation fee is required if they wish to continue playing in the community or elite competitions. Administrative arrangements will need to be in place to enable players to move between teams within the same club and for affiliation fees to be proportioned appropriately between various leagues and associations.

Rules may also need to be introduced to control or monitor players' availability for lower grade games which are considered to be important, to avoid 'stacking' teams with better quality players.

Soccer clubs need to demonstrate their commitment to ensuring the viability of the clubs and a willingness to work with Local Government Authorities in providing quality soccer facilities. As a means of demonstrating this commitment entry into competition should be based on meeting a set of criteria which may include:

- Payment of all insurances.
- Payment of outstanding debts.
- Negotiated payment plan for outstanding debts.
- Participation in sports administration programs.

These criteria should be jointly accepted by both Local Government authorities and the soccer associations.

6.4.8 RECOMMENDATION

RECOMMENDATION NO	RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSIBLE AUTHORITY
Recommendation One:	That the administration structure be reviewed to enable a club registered with a VSF affiliated association to be eligible to enter teams in all competitions conducted under the auspices of the VSF.	Soccer Associations
Recommendation Two:	That the Soccer Associations require all clubs to meet the following criteria before annual registration into the competition is accepted: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Payment of all insurances • Payment of outstanding debts • Negotiated payment plan for outstanding debts • Participation in sports administration programs These criteria should be jointly accepted by both Local Government authorities and the soccer associations.	Soccer Associations

6.4.9 CLUB STRUCTURES

Sporting trends indicate that sporting clubs with only one or two teams have a greater challenge in generating sufficient income to cover their expenses. As a means of assisting the long-term viability and sustainability, soccer clubs should be encouraged to participate in large community based organisations.

Currently clubs do not provide the opportunity for players to participate in a range of competitions. Regulations should be changed to allow clubs to have the following structure:

- Single team club, which may compete in a social league competition.
- Two team clubs which are often a first team and reserves team playing in a community or social competition.
- Senior and junior teams playing in elite, community and/or social competitions.
- Multi-team clubs catering for teams competing in elite, community and social competitions as well as junior and women's leagues. This may include clubs which have teams competing in, say, Premier League, Provisional League and Social Leagues as well as junior's and women's.

Under this structure clubs can grow, as demand for teams, increases. The result is likely to be fewer clubs with a larger membership base offering more teams. It may be necessary to introduce a rule which prohibits a club from entering two teams in the same league/division.

The emphasis should be on allowing flexibility to enable clubs to cater for its membership and avoid the problems of clubs losing players as they age and/or have less time for regular training sessions.

6.4.10 RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION NO	RECOMMENDATIONS	RESPONSIBLE AUTHORITY
Recommendation One:	That the club structure as detailed in Section 6.4 be acknowledged and accepted	LGA S&RV ASFV VSF
Recommendation Two:	As a means of assisting their long-term viability and sustainability, soccer clubs should be encouraged to participate as/or within larger community based sporting organisations.	Soccer Clubs

6.5 FACILITIES PROVISION REVIEW

Soccer has traditionally been arranged on a home and away basis with all clubs having a home ground or sharing a facility. It is expected this will continue for elite and community level competitions and where possible for veterans, social and junior competitions. However, there are instances where it may be more appropriate to conduct competitions on a multi pitch complex with all games played at the same time, for example with veterans, and some juniors and women's leagues.

6.5.1 SOCCER GROUND GRADING CLASSIFICATION

It is proposed that soccer grounds be classified into five grades A, B, C, D and E, each with essential and preferred features. A copy of the essential and preferred facility requirements are detailed in **Appendix H**.

- **Essential features** are the minimum requirements for grounds to meet the classification.
- **Preferred features** are not required but should be provided where possible. Grounds with more preferred features are likely to attract more higher level games than those grounds with less number of preferred features.

This classification only refers to single soccer pitches or the main soccer pitch within a sports complex. It does not include multi pitch complexes.

It is proposed that each grade of ground either minimum level required for a specific level of competition as follows:

- Grade A: Premier League
- Grade B: State League Division One
- Grade C: State League Division Two, Three and Four and Provisional League Division One
- Grade D: Provisional League Division Two and Three and Amateur League Division One, Two and Three
- Grade E: Junior competitions

It is expected that Grade A and B shared occupancy grounds, will have most or all of the preferred features, in addition to the essential features.

Where Grade A and B grounds are shared, the preference is for independent management, either through Council or a management body. Where this occurs, clubs will need separate training/junior grounds as their home base, including possibly social facilities.

In some instances existing single occupancy grounds may be converted to shared use grounds. Where independent management is instituted, the host club may receive a discounted fee for its investment in the ground. If on the other hand the host club continues to manage the facility on behalf of Council, payment of the ground rental will reflect Council's investment and the club's investment in the facility.

It is proposed that this concept be implemented when new or converted facilities are being established. Where existing arrangements are in place, a negotiated agreement will be required which reflects the clubs previous tenure and contribution to the facilities.

6.5.2 HIERARCHY OF SOCCER COMPLEXES

In addressing the types of soccer complexes a number of constraints need to be recognised.

- Many existing facilities have little or no room for expansion and therefore cannot be redeveloped.
- Many grounds which are occupied by soccer clubs have been developed with funds from individual clubs, which must be acknowledged.
- Currently there are inadequate soccer grounds to cope with demand, consequently clubs may need to share facilities.

Three categories of soccer complexes are proposed.

- **Single Club - Small Complex**

These facilities will have one, two or three soccer pitches with a main pitch of varying classification from A through to D and training/junior/social pitches catering for a range of teams. It is likely the facility would be permanently used by one soccer club.

- **Single Club - Large Complex**

This facility will have up to five pitches plus clubrooms and change rooms. It is expected a host club would use the facility and have exclusive or sole use of one or two pitches. The remaining three or four pitches could be shared between the host club and other junior, women's or men's social teams which do not have a home base. It is expected that Local Government would be responsible for hiring all pitches on a seasonal basis.

- **Regional Complex**

A regional complex may have multi-pitches with a mix of junior and senior grounds or may be a single elite standard shared facility. Whilst it may be the home base of a club it would also be used for centralised matches for junior, women's or social competitions. It can be hired by young or new clubs for matches and/or training on a seasonal basis. Where possible these complexes should include a Grade A or B ground although the complex should not be under the control of a single club but remain under the control of local council.

Developing a metropolitan wide strategy for grounds could be undertaken in a four step process:

1. An audit of all pitches and complexes to classify in accordance with the six grades, and three categories of soccer complex.
2. Identify existing Grade A and B grounds and priority grounds to be upgraded with all the preferred features. In determining priorities for redevelopment, it should take account of the geographic distribution of grounds across the Melbourne metropolitan area, to ensure an even spread as well as ensuring reasonable availability by all clubs. In other words, it is likely there will be more Grade A and B grounds in the north and north-western suburbs than the remaining parts of Melbourne.
3. Identify existing complexes which have the potential to be regional complexes, with multi soccer pitches.
4. Establish management strategies for each complex which may be single occupancy, for example in the case of privately owned clubs or grounds with a long term lease with a club, or shared occupancy with either independent management or the principal club management structure.
5. Prepare a program of works to upgrade grounds to include essential features and where possible all the preferred features.

The proposed hierarchy and ground grading classification recognises that there is a different level of facility required to enable participation in soccer at the different levels of the competition.

The hierarchy further provides a model by which a municipality or region can maximise its resources and provide a range of different level soccer facilities to cater for the varying soccer needs in the community.

A soccer club that attains a certain level of competition will be able to access soccer facilities that meet the facility requirement of that competition.

The hierarchy also provides a base by which State and Local Government can establish priority areas for future soccer facility developments and funding.

6.5.3 FACILITY GAPS

The player residential distribution maps provided in Section 5.5 of this report also detail the Local Government Authority boundaries and identify the location of the VSF Premier League and State League – Division One soccer facilities.

Due to the intensity of sporting reserves across Metropolitan Melbourne, facilities used by the Provisional League and Junior facilities used by these groups have not been mapped as the maps would be unreadable.

A review of the State League and Premier League Registrations by postcode, indicates the following Local Government areas have the highest levels of registered players:

- Hobsons Bay
- Hume
- Melton
- Wyndham
- Brimbank
- Maribyrnong
- Moreland
- Darebin
- Whittlesea (northern section)
- Banyule (southern section)
- Yarra (southern section)
- Monash (eastern section)
- Knox (Western section)
- Kingston (northern section)
- Casey (northern section)
- Frankston

From a review of Premier and State League facilities, the areas that appear to have limited soccer facilities are:

- Melton
- Hume
- Maribyrnong
- Banyule
- Knox
- Frankston

6.5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION NO	RECOMMENDATIONS	RESPONSIBLE AUTHORITY
Recommendation One:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That the five level Soccer Grade Classification and the associated facility guidelines as detailed below be accepted. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Grade A: Premier League – Grade B: State League Division One – Grade C: State League Division Two, Three and Four and Provisional League Division One – Grade D: Provisional League Division Two and Three and Amateur League Division One, Two and Three – Grade E: Junior competitions 	LGA S&RV ASFV VSF
Recommendation Two:	<p>That a hierarchy of soccer complexes which includes the three categories of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single club – small complex. • Single club – large complex. • Regional complex <p>Be further examined as a model for addressing the current and future soccer facility requirements.</p>	VSF ASFV S&RV
Recommendation Three:	<p>That Sport and Recreation Victoria, Soccer Associations and Local Government, use the hierarchy model to establish priority areas for future soccer facility developments.</p>	S&RV LGA VSF ASFV
Recommendation Four:	<p>That funding for future soccer facility developments from Sport and Recreation Victoria be in line with the priority areas identified by the working group.</p>	S&RV
Recommendation Five:	<p>That Soccer Associations include Local Government Authorities and Sport and Recreation Victoria in any future review of soccer facility guidelines.</p>	Soccer Associations
Recommendation Six:	<p>That Local Government Authorities seek to maintain ongoing communication and involvement in the review and development of soccer facility guidelines.</p>	LGA

6.6 OPERATIONAL ISSUES REVIEW

The following operational issues have been identified from the various market research and consultation processes. The issues have been summarised under the headings of:

- Club Management Structures
- Maintenance
- Fees and Charges
- Season Length
- Communication
- Facility Provision/Facility Sharing
- Female Soccer
- Cultural Issues

6.6.1 CLUB MANAGEMENT STRUCTURES

(i) Key Issues

- A number of Local Government Authorities are concerned about the professionalism and efficient management of soccer clubs, particularly at the higher level competitions.
- Clubs competing in State and Premier Leagues are utilising high quality sporting facilities and resources and are responsible for significant budgets and financial resources.
- The Club Management Structure should, therefore, be reflective of this responsibility and accountable for the maintenance and management of these facilities and the financial viability of the Club.

(ii) Strategic Direction

There is a need to improve the current management structures and accountability of the current club administrators responsible for elite soccer facilities. This should include

improving the skill base of the Executive Committee in relation to financial management, facility management and maintenance.

A number of Local Government Authorities conduct general club administration programs for sporting clubs based in their Municipality to assist with the efficient and effective administration of the Clubs. These programs are supported by Sport and Recreation Victoria through the VIP Program. An opportunity exists for these types of programs to be extended to provide the appropriate training for club administrators responsible for elite sporting facilities.

There is a need for the VSF, Sport and Recreation Victoria and Local Government representatives to review and extend the VIP program to develop a specialist education/training program for club administrators at higher competition sporting levels. The requirements of the Incorporation Act should also provide a base for the development of this program.

The education/training program should provide sporting club administrators with a skill base for the effective management and operation of elite sporting facilities.

The education/training program should include topics such as:

- Financial management, planning and budgeting
- Club promotion
- Sponsorship
- Understanding Local Government processes/practices
- Maintenance of sporting facilities (pitch/buildings)
- Staffing
- Legal obligations/requirements
- Occupational Health and Safety
- Conducting events/crowd management

To ensure that clubs have both the financial resources and club structure to manage the operations and activities of the club, the club should demonstrate their ability to meet a set of criteria prior to the registration being accepted by the VSF and their approval of a ground allocation by the appropriate local government authority. The criteria should reflect the key topics identified above for the education/training program.

6.6.2 RECOMMENDATION

RECOMMENDATION NO	RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSIBLE AUTHORITY
Recommendation One:	<p>That Sport and Recreation Victoria extend the existing VIP Sports Administration Program and co-ordinate and fund education/training sessions for sporting clubs/associations prior to each sporting season. The education/training sessions should incorporate as a base the following topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial management, planning and budgeting. • Club promotion. • Sponsorship. • Understanding Local Government processes/ practices. • Maintenance of sporting facilities. • Legal obligations/insurances. • Occupational health and safety. • Conducting events/crowd management. 	S&RV LGA Peak Sporting Bodies
Recommendation Two:	That Soccer Clubs encourage committee members and other relevant people to participate in the education/training programs coordinated by Sport and Recreation Victoria.	Soccer Clubs

6.6.3 MAINTENANCE

(i) Key Issues

- The market research findings identified that the maintenance and quality of soccer pitches across the Melbourne Metropolitan area varied from one Local Government Authority to another.

- The recent tendering out of Open Space Maintenance as a result of the Compulsory Competitive Tendering process, has resulted in a variation in pitch maintenance. A number of clubs indicated that the ability to create a relationship with a contracted grounds curator was extremely difficult.
- A number of clubs indicated that the provision of quality soccer pitches was a second priority for Local Government to the more traditional sports of Australia Rules Football and Cricket and, therefore, the facilities provided were often of a poorer quality and condition.
- Due to soccer being played along the surface, the need for an even quality surface is a high priority for soccer clubs. A number of clubs indicated that Parks and Gardens staff did not have an understanding of the needs of soccer or the skills to maintain a soccer pitch.
- Over the past few years Councils have begun to take greater control over the usage of soccer pitches. Generally Councils do not allow additional “make-up” games to be played due to the damage caused by increased wear and tear.

(ii) Strategic Direction

Local Government sporting reserve provision has historically focussed on the provision of traditional sporting code facilities such as Australian Rules Football Grounds and Cricket.

The significant increase in soccer participation and demand for soccer facilities over the past ten years, however, resulted in a number of Councils reviewing the provision and distribution of sporting reserves for the different codes of sport.

As a result, a number of purpose-built soccer facilities have been established over Metropolitan Melbourne. It is anticipated that, as demand increases and the sporting demographics and needs in municipalities change, the establishment or conversion of the traditional sporting reserves to soccer facilities will continue.

There is a need to develop a set of maintenance guidelines/criteria to assist Local Government Parks Department understand the maintenance requirements for soccer pitches. These guidelines should be jointly developed by the Soccer Associations, Parks and Leisure Australia as the National Association with the assistance of some expert advice provided through an organisation such as TAFE or Tertiary institution conducting horticultural and turf maintenance/management courses.

These guidelines should also form part of any future maintenance specification for Parks and Gardens Contracts.

6.6.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION NO	RECOMMENDATIONS	RESPONSIBLE AUTHORITY
Recommendation One:	That Soccer Associations, in conjunction with Parks and Leisure Australia and with the assistance of horticultural/turf maintenance advice develop guidelines for the preparation and maintenance of soccer pitches.	VSF ASFV Parks and Leisure Australia
Recommendation Two:	That Local Government Authorities include the agreed maintenance guidelines in any future specifications for the maintenance of sporting reserves.	LGA
Recommendation Three:	That Soccer Clubs are informed of the maintenance guidelines developed for soccer facility maintenance.	Soccer Clubs
Recommendation Four:	That the guidelines established for the maintenance of soccer pitches include an assessment of the maximum level of training and matches on a ground.	LGA
Recommendation Five:	That the guidelines established for the maintenance of soccer pitches identify the safety issues in relation to playing over turf or matting cricket pitches.	LGA

6.6.5 FEES AND CHARGES

(i) Key Issues

- A number of soccer clubs have indicated to Local Government that once they have paid the registration fees to the VSF they do not have sufficient funds to pay Council the facility hire fees. The Councils are often seen as being the last organisation to require payment.
- The Amateur Soccer Clubs and some smaller VSF Soccer Clubs, often have the most difficulty in paying Council fees as they are usually only one or two team clubs with limited options for fund raising.
- The Soccer Associations also have fees, registration, levies and a fine system that puts pressure on the financial resources of the clubs.
- There is a perception by some of the junior clubs that they are subsidising the senior players. This tension between the senior and junior clubs is building and may be a problem if the junior clubs decide to split from the senior clubs.

(ii) Strategic Direction

The majority of Local Government Authorities have reviewed the fees and charges structure and policies for the hiring of sporting reserves over the past five years. A number of Councils have based their fee structure on a percentage of maintenance cost recovery system. Local Government Authorities will however, reserve the right to levy their own fees which may and will vary from Council to Council.

A number of clubs who use school-based sporting facilities expressed concern over the high fees and inconsistency in charges applied by schools.

An opportunity may exist for discussions to be held with the Education Department in relation to the development of a recommended fee schedule and guidelines detailing conditions of use.

In some circumstances, the junior soccer teams have moved away from the senior teams due to the reliance on funds provided by the Juniors. In any sporting code the long-term continuation of a sporting club is heavily reliant upon a strong base of junior participation. The structure also provides the avenues for juniors to move up into senior levels within the same club structure. The splitting of junior and senior teams should therefore be carefully monitored to ensure that it does not impact on the long-term development of the sport.

6.6.6 RECOMMENDATION

RECOMMENDATION NO	RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSIBLE AUTHORITY
Recommendation One:	That the Soccer Associations instigate discussions with the Education Department in relation to the potential development of generic guidelines for the use of school sporting facilities by community sporting clubs and the development of a recommended fee schedule.	Soccer Working Group. Education Department

6.6.7 SEASON LENGTH

(i) Key Issues

- A number of Local Government Authorities expressed concern over the seasonal creep that has been occurring with sporting clubs, including the soccer competitions over the past 10 years.

- The club auspiced cup events, which are fixtured separately to the home and away matches, are the main competition causing an increase to the seasonal length. In particular, the ASFV cup events which are scheduled at the end of each winter season.

- The cup events are normally co-ordinated by the individual club and are scheduled as a fund/revenue raising activity. Many of the clubs financial position is reliant upon receiving funds through such events.
- The VSF indicated they are conscious of the need to regulate the length of the season to meet council's needs for maintenance and to facilitate sharing of facilities with a summer sporting code. To assist this process, the VSF has reduced the size of all senior men's leagues to 12 teams, commencing in the Year 2000, and the majority of junior leagues to 10 teams.
- This has enabled home and away season to be reduced to allow cup events to be scheduled within the standard seasonal dates for the winter season and has reduced the concern in relation to seasonal length and season creep.
- The impact of the Olympic Games in the Year 2000 will require the need for improved cooperation and communication in relation to season length and ground usage.

(ii) Strategic Direction

The occurrence of "seasonal creep" of soccer competition results in the following concerns to Local Government:

- (i) The shared nature of sporting reserves results in the summer sporting code having limited access for pre-season training.
- (ii) The Parks and Gardens Department has difficulty assessing the facility for required maintenance between seasons.
- (iii) The increased usage of the reserves results in additional wear and tear and in return the need for increased maintenance

To ensure that there is a clear buffer between the seasons to enable any required maintenance to be carried out and to allow access to the facilities for some pre-season training and final series, the following home and away seasonal dates are suggested. It should be noted that these dates provide a guide as there may be some flexibility with clubs negotiating individual arrangements with Local Government Authorities.

- Summer Season: 1st weekend October to last weekend February.
- Winter Season: 1st weekend April to last weekend August.

To reduce the impact of the above concerns, there is a need for the soccer home and away competition and the cup events to be scheduled as part of the seasonal allocation dates.

The recent decision by the VSF to reduce the size of all senior men's leagues to 12 teams as of the Year 2000 season will reduce the season length, allowing cup events to be scheduled as part of the winter season dates.

The requirement for "make up games" should also be structured as part of the home and away fixture and not at the conclusion of the season.

The provision of lighting at some facilities may also provide the opportunity to schedule special events on weekdays and evenings.

6.6.8 RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION NO	RECOMMENDATIONS	RESPONSIBLE AUTHORITY
Recommendation One:	That the home and away summer and winter sporting season dates as follows be accepted as the guidelines for seasonal dates: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summer Season: 1st weekend October to last weekend February. • Winter Season: 1st weekend April to last weekend August. 	LGA VSF ASFV

RECOMMENDATION NO	RECOMMENDATIONS	RESPONSIBLE AUTHORITY
Recommendation Two:	That all club organised cup events and "make up games" be scheduled within the home and away seasonal dates to reduce seasonal creep.	VSF ASFV
Recommendation Three:	That Association auspiced cup events held outside of the winter season dates detailed above be scheduled on facilities with 12 month tenancy arrangements or by negotiated agreement with the appropriate Local Government Authority.	Soccer Associations

6.6.9 COMMUNICATION

(i) Key Issues

- The communication between clubs and Local Government Authorities vary from club to club and Council to Council. To ensure the smooth co-ordination of the sport however, there is a need to improve the communication channels.
- A large number of soccer clubs are required to share facilities with alternate sporting codes. The opportunity however, for the State Sporting Bodies of those sporting codes who share grounds, to meet and discuss common issues is limited.
- There is a lack of resources within Soccer Associations to enable the ongoing communication between clubs, Local Government and the Associations.
- The study process identified some internal tensions between the VSF and the ASFV.

(ii) Strategic Direction

There is a need to improve the communication channels between some Local Government Authorities and Soccer Clubs/Associations.

Improved communication would ensure that both parties had a greater understanding of each other's needs, requirements and constraints.

There is also a need to improve communication between the VSF and the ASFV to reduce the tensions between the Association to enable the joint development and growth of the sport.

The development by the Yarra City Council of the Metropolitan Local Government Forum, which included Local Government representatives, and the subsequent soccer working Group including Sport and Recreation Victoria, the VSF and the ASFV has operated successfully in investigating the current issues in relation to the provision and operation of soccer facilities.

The Consultant Team recommended that this Group continue as an ongoing liaison group between the State Soccer Associations, State Government and Local Government as a means of ensuring ongoing and effective communication.

To increase the effective sharing of scarce resources between different sporting codes, an opportunity exists for State Sporting Associations to meet on a regular basis. Sport and Recreation Victoria, as the State Co-ordinating Body, could play a role in developing a series of liaison groups with associated and relevant sporting codes.

On a bi-annual basis, the State Sporting Body Liaison Group and the Local Government Soccer Liaison Group could meet to discuss issues in relation to the use and development of the sporting facilities.

The Municipal Association of Victoria should also play an overall co-ordinating role in relation to investigating and addressing common issues for Local Government in relation to sporting and recreational activities.

Clubs need to ensure that they keep Soccer Associations up-to-date with discussions and negotiations with Local Government Authorities.

6.6.10 RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION NO	RECOMMENDATIONS	RESPONSIBLE AUTHORITY
Recommendation One:	That Sport and Recreation Victoria instigate bi-annual meetings with Soccer Associations and Local Government.	S&RV
Recommendation Two:	That Local Government encourage Sport and recreation Victoria to establish bi-annual meetings between State Government, Local Government and Soccer Associations.	LGA
Recommendation Three:	That Sport and Recreation Victoria and Local Government identify funding opportunities for the future development of soccer facilities.	S&RV
Recommendation Four:	That the VSF and ASFV with Local Government where appropriate develop a joint submission to Sport and Recreation Victoria for the funding of a Project Officer to implement key strategies as outlined in the report.	VSF ASFV
Recommendation Five:	That Sport and Recreation Victoria assist and enhance the dialogue between the VSF and the ASFV to assist the progress and development of the sport.	S&RV
Recommendation Six:	That Sport and Recreation Victoria support the Soccer Associations in investigating the best long term coordination of soccer in Victoria.	S&RV
Recommendation Seven:	That Sport and Recreation Victoria instigate bi-annual meetings with appropriate State Sports Associations to discuss issues in relation to the sharing of structured sporting fields.	S&RV

6.6.11 FACILITY PROVISION/FACILITY SHARING

(i) Key Issues

- The VSF soccer facility requirements are a major problem to Local Government. Over the past two years some of the criteria has been relaxed which has taken some of the pressure off by Councils and the clubs. There is, however, a need to continue to review these facility requirements. Facilities provided should directly reflect the level of play and the core facility requirements to participate in the sport. It should be recognised however that Local Government will continue to have limited resources to address the range of competing needs and demands of the various sporting and recreational groups.
- A major concern to Local Government is that the facility requirements were developed without consultation with Councils. As Local Government is the major owner/manager of the sporting fields, it is appropriate that the facility criteria be developed in collaboration with the Councils and Sport and Recreation due to their funding role.
- A number of clubs who play in the Premier League, which is the highest Victorian League below National Soccer League, are playing at facilities that are not appropriate for this level of competition and does not provide the required facilities for players and spectators. A number of clubs are currently playing on grounds that do not meet the current facility requirements.
- The provision of training lights is usually the responsibility of the individual clubs. The need for training lights to improve access to the facilities and reduce the wear and tear on the pitches is recognised by both Local Government and the soccer clubs. Due to the limited resources available, a joint funding formula is required which recognises Council, Club and Sport and Recreation Victoria's funding contributions.
- Access to facilities for pre-season training is extremely difficult. Local Government authorities require access to the facilities between the seasons to undertake the necessary maintenance works. To assist with addressing this issue the sporting codes sharing the facility ie soccer and cricket need to improve their communication and liaise on a regular basis to enable access to the facilities at both ends of the season.

- Access to appropriate support facilities and social rooms is an issue sporting clubs continually raise with Local Government. The soccer clubs indicated that they require access to these facilities as a means of raising revenue and creating a club atmosphere. The issue for Local Government, however, is the allocation of scarce funding resources across a range of facility requirements.
- A number of clubs share grounds on a home and away basis. Consideration of ground sharing arrangements must include a realistic assessment of the number of matches and training hours on the grounds. This assessment should be identified within the maintenance guidelines established for the preparation and maintenance of soccer pitches.
- The representatives of the VSF Premier League and State League Focus Group generally agreed that their League Clubs could share grounds for competition matches if they had separate junior/training grounds for their other teams. An important condition for this structure to work is independent management of the ground.
- A number of clubs indicated that they had invested significant funds into the upgrading of facilities such as lights and pavilion improvements. If Clubs were required to share facilities, it was felt that some form of rental discount should be provided to compensate them for their investment.
- A large number of soccer clubs share the grounds with cricket clubs. The turf cricket pitch and the matting cricket pitch can be an area of safety concern on wet days as the pitch area can become slippery and muddy and the dirt on top of a matting pitch can move due to the plastic covering the pitch.
- A number of grounds currently being used by single team clubs appear to be under-utilised. Junior teams are currently being restricted due to lack of facilities. There is a need, therefore to maximise the use of existing facilities.

(ii) Strategic Direction

Discussions with the VSF League Committees and the Executive Officer indicated that Clubs are being encouraged to share grounds in order to accommodate the growth in junior and female participation.

The Soccer Associations need to identify opportunities for improved fixturing that allows optimum use of existing facilities. This should include improved communication between the VSF and ASFV to maximise the use of scarce resources, specifically the sharing of facilities.

The use of synthetic surfaces such as hockey pitches should also be investigated as an opportunity for accessing additional training facilities.

There is also a need for Local Government Authorities to identify creative uses of open space areas to maximise community assets.

The Study findings clearly indicate however, the need to review the usage and provision of soccer facilities across Metropolitan Melbourne.

The current participation trends identified in Section 5.3 of this report, indicated that junior and female growth should continue to influence the sports overall increasing participation over the next five to ten years. This growth will however, be significantly affected by the availability and access to soccer facilities.

Section 6.3 of this report presents a facility development model for discussion to address the issue of participation growth and facility demand.

6.6.12 RECOMMENDATION

RECOMMENDATION NO	RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSIBLE AUTHORITY
Recommendation One:	That the Soccer Associations review the opportunities to share grounds to ensure scarce facility resources are maximised.	S&RV
Recommendation Two:	That Local Government Authorities be encouraged to develop policies that consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximum use of grounds • Capital facility improvements/development including requirements for males and females • Cultural/ethnic issues 	LGA
Recommendation Three:	That the Soccer Associations investigate the opportunities for training on synthetic surfaces as a means of increasing access to training facilities.	Soccer Associations
Recommendation Four:	That Local Government Authorities be encouraged to create a funding formula that recognises the need for support amenities including club rooms and social facilities.	LGA
Recommendation Five:	That Local Government Authorities and Sport and Recreation Victoria recognise the importance of flood lighting for facilities.	LGA SRV

6.6.13 FEMALE SOCCER

(i) Key Issues

- Until 1998 women's soccer was independent from the VSF. It has now been integrated within the VSF which has eased the administrative workload on volunteers running the competition as this is done by administrative staff in the VSF.
- The number of women's teams has increased in the last five years especially in the junior ranks, for example in 1998 there were only 10 junior teams compared with the current 20.
- A benefit of operating under the VSF is that State Teams and Development Squads become part of the VSF Squads.
- Most women's soccer clubs are part of a male/female club with very few solely women's clubs. It was felt that there were better long-term prospects if women's soccer was
- Whilst some clubs treat women's teams as equals at others women are given much lower status than men's and junior teams.
- The major problems in terms of facilities for women's soccer clubs are:
 - lack of showering facilities or open shower (ie no cubicles)
 - change-rooms often are shared with men's teams and due to programming of fixtures creating problems of access.
 - women's toilets are often inappropriately located in relation to the change rooms.
 - physio rooms are often located off change rooms which can be a problem if change rooms are currently being used by males.
- When (male) Premier League matches are played, other teams cannot use the change rooms. This creates difficulties when one set of change rooms caters for three or four pitches.
- Women's soccer teams tend to be allocated the lowest quality pitches. The main problems occur on training nights when senior and junior men's teams and women's teams are competing for the same floodlit areas and change rooms.

(ii) Strategic Directions

Section 6.4 of this report identifies as part of the competition structure the requirements for a women's competition.

**Sport and Recreation Victoria, Victorian Soccer Federation,
Amateur Soccer Federation Victoria and Local Government Authorities**

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Over the past five years significant growth has been experienced in women's soccer participation. Anecdotal evidence both nationally and internationally suggests that this growth will continue over the next ten years.

The main problem, however, impacting on female participation is the lack of appropriate support amenities to cater for the dual gender participation in the sport.

As part of Local Government Authorities ground allocation process, clubs should be required to identify female teams. This will enable Local Government to fairly allocate resources to Women's Soccer.

Clubs providing opportunities for female soccer participation should also liaise with individual Local Government authorities to identify the process and priority of providing funds to upgrade or redevelop facilities to cater for dual gender use.

An opportunity also exists for the soccer associations to review fixture schedules to reduce the possible impact of male and females sharing changeroom facilities.

6.6.14 RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION NO	RECOMMENDATIONS	RESPONSIBLE AUTHORITY
Recommendation One:	That Local Government Authorities ground allocations processes require soccer clubs to identify male, female and junior soccer teams.	LGA
Recommendation Two:	That soccer clubs and soccer associations liaise with Local Government Authorities to identify the process that prioritises facility upgrades to meet the needs of dual gender use.	Soccer Clubs VSF LGA
Recommendation Three:	That Sport and Recreation Victoria and Local Government Authorities identify funding opportunities to assist with the upgrade of facilities to meet the needs of dual gender use.	S&RV LGA
Recommendation Four:	That the soccer associations review the match times to reduce the conflict of male and female use of soccer facilities.	VSF ASFV

6.6.15 CULTURAL ISSUES

(i) Key Issues

- A number of soccer clubs who attended the focus group sessions indicated that there is a general perception that soccer has been regarded as a second priority to the needs of Australian Rules Football and Cricket. The clubs suggested that it has taken many years for soccer clubs to gain access to good quality facilities.
- A number of soccer clubs have been established around cultural community groups. This has caused some tensions between both spectators and competitors.
- The cultural base of some soccer clubs has also impacted on the ability of clubs to share facilities.

(ii) Strategic Directions

The cultural tensions that exist between some clubs which occasionally transfer from spectators onto the playing field can result in a poor public image or perception for soccer.

Approximately three years ago, Soccer Australia restricted clubs in the National Soccer League from naming the club after cultural backgrounds or Country's of origin. This restriction also included incorporating cultural symbols and logo's on the club uniforms.

The VSF does not permit clubs to display external flags or slogans, with the exception of the Australian flag at the club's home sporting venue. However, clubs are permitted to decorate the internal area of the club rooms as they see fit.

There is a need for the soccer associations in conjunction with the national body and soccer clubs to develop a series of strategies to ensure the cultural tensions do not:

- Negatively affect the soccer players experience or participation in the sport.
- Restrict the future development and growth of the sport.
- Reinforce the negative image and perception that some people have in relation to the sport.

The strategies should include guidelines that clearly detail the impact of any form of negative behaviour and the penalties for involvement in such actions.

6.6.16 RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION NO	RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSIBLE AUTHORITY
Recommendation One:	That the soccer associations identify and implement strategies to ensure the cultural tensions are reduced and do not negatively impact on the participation, growth and image of soccer.	VSF, ASFV Soccer Australia

APPENDIX A

Regional Local Government Authorities Soccer Survey

APPENDIX B

Metropolitan Local Government Authorities Soccer Survey

APPENDIX C

VSF Junior Soccer Participation Graphs

APPENDIX D

VSF Senior Soccer Participation Graphs

APPENDIX E

VSF Total Soccer Participation Graph

APPENDIX F

ASVF Soccer Facilities

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AMATEUR SOCCER FEDERATION OF VICTORIA SOCCER FACILITIES USED	
GROUND	GROUND ADDRESS
Beaurepaire Pavilion	Aughtie Drive, Albert Park
Coomoora Secondary College	Coomoora Road, Springvale South
Burnley Oval	Cnr Swan Street and Park Grove, Richmond.
Quarries Park	Yambla Street, Clifton Hill
Laverton Park Reserve	Laverton
Mossfiel Reserve	Heaths Road, Hoppers Crossing
Heatherhill Secondary College	Wardale Road, Springvale South
Sullivan Memorial Park – Oval 3	Blake Street, Reservoir
A.W. Bond Reserve	Chambers Road, North Altona
Duane D.N. Reserve	Primular Avenue, Altona North
Maribyrnong Reserve	The Esplanade, Maribyrnong
Hallam Reserve	Boundary Road, Pascoe Vale
J.T. Gray Reserve	Kororoit Creek Road, Williamstown.
Paisley Park	Ross Road, Altona North
Silcock Reserve	William Road, Croydon
Doveton Secondary College	Corner Box Street and Ficifolia Drive, Doveton.
Dorset Recreation Reserve	Dorset Road, Croydon.
Balfie Park	Little Miller Street, East Brunswick
Brearley Reserve	Heliopolis Street, Pascoe Vale South
Stradbroke Reserve	Burke & Harp Roads, Kew
Lord Reserve	Munro Avenue, Carnegie
Italian-Australian Social Club	Furlong Road, Sunshine
Debney's Park	Victoria Street, Flemington
Duffy Street Reserve	Duffy Street, Epping
Thomas Street Reserve	Chappell Street, Thomastown.
Strathnaver Reserve	Mascoma Street, Strathmore
Johnson Reserve	Essex & View Streets, West Footscray
Hansen Reserve	Cnr. Robs & Glamis Roads, Footscray West
Helenic Moorabbin	Lot 1 Madden Road, Heatherton
Green Gully Reserve	Green Gully Road, Keilor Downs
J.J. Holland Park	Kensington road, Kensington
Brimbank College	Jamieson Street, St. Albans
Sasses Avenue Recreation Reserve	Terama Court, Bayswater
Knox Italian Community Club	99 Karoo Road, Rowville
Betula Reserve	Kidds Road, Doveton
Shipston Reserve	Crawford Street, Cheltenham
Hansen Reserve	Robbs Road, West Footscray
Skinner Reserve	Churchill Avenue, Braybrook
Oval 16 Aughtie Drive	Albert Park – Pit Building 5.
Victory Park	Patterson Road, East Bentleigh
Keith Hume Fraser Reserve	Swansea Road, Montrose
Rayner Reserve	Devon Road & Watt Avenue, Oak Park
Jack Edwards Reserve	Edward Street, Oakleigh
A H Capp Reserve	Halwyn Court, Preston
G H Mott Reserve	Cnr Bell & Patterson Streets, Preston
Poplar Oval	Poplar Road, Royal Park
Churchill Reserve	Fox Street, St. Albans
Royal Park No. 1	Corner Elliott Avenue and Brens Drive, Parkville
Lagoon Reserve	Esplanade West, Port Melbourne
Fotheringham Reserve	Alexander Avenue, Dandenong
Chaplin Reserve	Anderson Road, sunshine
Manningham Reserve	Oak Street, Royal Park
Epping High School	McDonalds Road, Epping
Upfield Secondary College	Ambrose Street, Broadmeadows
Central Park	Cnr. Bourke road & Wattletree Roads, Malvern East
Ashwood Reserve	Winbirra Parade, Ashwood
Burnley Oval	Swan Street, Richmond
Central Park	Cnr Wattletree & Burke Roads, Malvern East
Chandler Secondary College	Isaac Road, Keysborough
Henry Turner Memorial Reserve South	Fransworth Avenue, Footscray.
Mentone Grammar, Keysborough Playing Fields	756 Springvale Road, Keysborough
Terrara Park	Terrara Road, Vermont South
Seth Raistrick Reserve	Cnr Hume Highway & Campbell Street, Campbellfield
Morrison Reserve (Off Hereford Road)	Mount Evelyn
I.W. Dole Reserve	Cnr. Cheddar Road and Dole Avenue, Reservoir
Italo-Australia club	Frankston/Dandenong Road, Dandenong

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AMATEUR SOCCER FEDERATION OF VICTORIA SOCCER FACILITIES USED	
GROUND	GROUND ADDRESS
Broadmeadows Valley Park	Cnr. Barry Road & Malmsbury Drive, Broadmeadows
Jack Edwards Reserve	Edward Street, Oakleigh
Newhaven Reserve	Boys Home Road, Newhaven
View Bank Reserve	Rutherford Road, View Bank
Henry Turner Reserve	Cnr. Farnsworth Avenue & Myers Road, Footscray
Wilsmere Park	Willow Grove, North Grove
James Street Reserve	James Street, Heidelberg Heights
Warner Reserve	Flynn Street, Springvale
Dobson Reserve	Bernard Street, Maidstone
Belmont Park	Olympus Drive, Croydon South
Debney Park	Flemington
Bailey Reserve	East Boundary Road, East Bentleigh
Sumner Park	Alister Street, North Fitzroy
Scovell Reserve	Scovell Crescent, Maidstone

APPENDIX G

VSF Soccer Facilities

APPENDIX H

Draft Facility Guidelines

APPENDIX I

Player Postcode Database for VSF and ASFV Registered Players