



Ararat Rural City

Fair Access Policy

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Acknowledgment of Traditional Owners

Council acknowledges the traditional owners of the land on which we meet, and pay our respects to their elders, past, present, and emerging.

INTRODUCTION

In 2020, the Victorian State Government passed the *Gender Equality Act* which is designed to improve workplace gender equality in the Victorian Public Sector.

As the level of government closest to the community, Victorian Councils have a mandate to create healthy, safe, and inclusive communities.

The Fair Access Policy (the Policy) seeks to address known barriers experienced by women, girls and gender diverse people in accessing and using community sports infrastructure. The Policy aims to progressively build capacity and capabilities of Ararat Rural City Council (Council) in the identification, and elimination of systemic causes of gender inequality in policy, programs, communications, and delivery of services in relation to community sports infrastructure.

Council will undertake all necessary and proportionate steps towards implementation of the Fair Access Policy.

STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT TO GENDER EQUALITY

Council is committed to ensuring that everyone, regardless of their gender identity, has equal access to opportunities, resources, power, and are treated with dignity, respect, and fairness.

Achieving gender equality supports Council's stance that all forms of violence against women and children, persons of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities are not acceptable and will not be tolerated as part of our business practices.

This Statement of Commitment establishes the expectation that gender equality is considered and prioritised in all current and future planning, policy, service delivery and practice.

BACKGROUND

Sport is a highly visible and valued feature of Councils culture and identity. The sport and active recreation sector provide opportunities for enriching our communities through the promotion of respect and fair mindedness for all people, while also supporting the physical and mental wellbeing of all Victorians. Council is well positioned to design and implement place-based, integrated actions plans that progress gender equality in community sport.

The Victorian Government is committed to developing an environment for all Victorians to live in a safe and equal society, have access to equal power, resources, and opportunities, and are treated with dignity, respect, and fairness. A reform agenda has been developed to change the systems that have perpetuated gender inequality by designing an enduring structure that requires implementation and tracking of progress over time.

This reform agenda includes addressing the traditional structures and way community sport and recreation organisations operate through the implementation of all nine (9) recommendations from the *2015 Inquiry into Women and Girls in Sport and Active Recreation*. This includes recommendation six (6):

"...encourage facility owners and managers to review access and usage policies to ensure women and girls have a fair share of access to the highest quality facilities at the best and most popular times"

and

“facilitating a universal adoption of [policies, strategies and audit tools] will drive change further”

As a defined entity of the *Gender Equality Act 2020*, Council will be required from 31 March 2021 to conduct Gender Impact Assessments (GIA) on all new policies, programs, communications, and services, including those up for review, which directly and significantly impact the public (*Gender Equality Act 2020*). The access and use of community sports infrastructure is an example of policy that has a direct and significant impact on the public.

SCOPE

The Policy enables effective and efficient integration of the requirements of the *Gender Equality Act 2020*, the *Local Government Act 2020* and the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008* and other legislative frameworks.

The scope of the Policy is to support Council to take positive action towards achieving gender equity in the access and usage of community sports infrastructure. This complies with the *Gender Equality Act 2020* and aligns with Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plans or Council Strategies:

Reform Agenda	Objectives
To support Ararat Rural City Council to take positive action towards achieving gender equity in the access and use of community sports infrastructure	<p>To build capacity and capabilities of Ararat Rural City Council in the identification and elimination of systemic causes of gender inequality in policy, programs, communications, and delivery of services in relation to community sport and recreation.</p> <p>To ensure an effective place-based response for the gender equitable use and access of community sports infrastructure.</p> <p>To promote gender equality in policies, programs, communications, and services as they relate to community sports infrastructure.</p>

For Ararat Rural City Council, the Policy applies to the following community sports infrastructure/facilities:

	Facility	Location
1	Alexandra Oval Community Centre	Waratah Avenue, Ararat
2	Gordon Street Recreation Reserve	Gordon St, Ararat
3	Ararat Fitness Centre	61-73 High St, Ararat
4	Willaura Recreation Reserve	Delacombe Way, Willaura
5	Pomonal Recreation Reserve	Ararat-Halls Gap Road, Pomonal
6	Tatyoorn Recreation Reserve	Tatyoorn Road, Tatyoorn
7	Mininera Recreation Reserve	Mac Street, Mininera
8	Elmhurst Recreation Reserve	Green Street, Elmhurst
9	Lake Bolac Recreation Reserve	Lake Bolac Complex Road, Lake Bolac
10	Buangor Recreation Reserve	Main Street, Buangor
11	Wickliffe Recreation Reserve	Willaura-Wickliffe Road Wickliffe.

POLICY FRAMEWORK

The Policy is designed to comply with the *Gender Equality Act 2020*, and the wider Victorian Government gender equality strategy.

1. Ararat Rural City Council is committed to an equitable, diverse, and socially inclusive community. Council supports residents from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage, people living with a disability, LGBTIQ+ and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds irrespective of their gender identity
2. Councils philosophy ensures that products, buildings, environments, programs, services, and experiences are innately accessible to as many people as possible, regardless of age, disability, cultural background, gender identity, or any other differentiating attributes.
3. Council is committed to addressing inequity and creating accessible facilities for all communities to participate, connect, and contribute through sport and active recreation
4. Creating an “equitable playing field” requires action by Council and all partners and stakeholders including, but not limited to sporting clubs and their respective associations to address barriers to participation faced by our diverse community.
5. Council has zero tolerance towards antisocial, gender discriminatory and misogynistic behaviour towards women. Clubs, associations and leagues will be expected to appropriately manage indiscretions. Council will consider sanctions if it is deemed that the situation has not been appropriately managed.
6. Councils recreation facilities and sports fields must be made available for everyone. People of any gender identification should have fair and reasonable access to the “best” training and game times as well as to social and change room facilities.
7. Council is committed to aligning with the Fair Access principles, ensuring access to and use of sport facilities by the community.
8. Council will support Clubs and reserve committees with advice, guidance, and referral to relevant resources.

Ararat Rural City Council acknowledges:

- the disadvantaged position some individuals have had in the sport and recreation sector because of their gender; and
- that achieving gender equality will require diverse approaches for women, men, trans and gender diverse people to achieve similar outcomes for people of all genders.

Ararat Rural City Council aims to

- engage fairly and equitably with all staff, governance working groups, state sporting organisations, regional sport assemblies (where applicable) and members of our sport and recreation community, regardless of their gender, in a positive, respectful, and constructive manner; and

Complete gender impact assessments to assess the implications for women, men, trans and gender diverse

people of any planned action, including policies and communications. This is a strategy for making all voices, concerns and experiences, an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring of policies and programs.

FAIR ACCESS PRINCIPLES

The Fair Access Principles have been developed by the Office for Women in Sport and Recreation, Sport and Recreation Victoria and VicHealth, in consultation with representatives from local government and the state sport and recreation sector. This Policy and any resultant action plan are based on six (6) principles of inclusivity, full participation, equal representation, encouraging and supporting user groups, and prioritising user groups committed to equality.

Council considers that these principles provide clear direction, while also enabling adaption to the specific environment of our municipality.

COMPLIANCE AND MONITORING

ACTIONS

Council commits to undertake a GIA on all current community sports infrastructure access and use policies and processes, and to consider opportunities to strengthen gender equitable access and use of community sports facilities in alignment with the Fair Access Principles.

If the process of assessing current policies and processes identifies opportunities to develop or strengthen gender equitable access and use of community sports facilities in alignment with the Fair Access Principles, Council commits to developing and adopting a locally relevant gender equitable access and use policy no later than 1 August 2024.

Council acknowledges that the requirement to have a gender equitable access and use policy and action plan (or equivalent) in place, and the ability to demonstrate progress against that policy and action plan (or equivalent), will form part of the eligibility criteria for Victorian Government funding programs relating to community sports infrastructure from 1 July 2024.

RESPONSIBILITY

Council senior officers including Chief Executive Officer, Governance and Risk Lead, Human Resources Business Partner, Major Projects Lead Recreation Engagement Coordinator, and Community Asset Committees will be responsible for implementing this Fair Access Policy.

Management personnel, staff, volunteers, and stakeholders (for example committees of management, community groups and sporting clubs) within Ararat Rural City Council also have a shared responsibility to support the policy, as outlined in the table below.

Role	Responsibility
Local Government - CEO and Executive, and Land Management Group – President or Chair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To promote a gender-aware and gender-responsive culture and community and champion the Fair Access Policy. To promote, encourage and facilitate the achievement of gender equality and improvement in the status of women and girls in sport and active recreation.
Local Government – Senior Officers, and Land Management Groups – nominated committee member/s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and adopt gender equitable access and use policies/standards To communicate policy updates to all staff and members To monitor compliance and issues To promote, encourage and facilitate the achievement of gender equality and improvement in the status of women and girls (away from traditional roles) Support the undertaking of Gender Impact Assessment and submission of progress reports as per the <i>Gender Equality Act 2020</i> obligations

Fair Access Policy



Ararat Rural City

Local Government – Senior Officers, and Land Management Group – nominated committee member/s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the review of sport and recreation policies and processes. • Support the formal adoption process of a new or revised gender equitable policies. • Undertake Gender Impact Assessment and submission of progress reports as per the <i>Gender Equality Act 2020</i> obligations
Local Government – Senior Officers, and Land Management Group – nominated committee member/s	<p>To communicate and educate sport and recreation infrastructure user groups and users.</p>
Local Government – all staff, or Land Management Groups – all committee members/volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To adhere to and communicate the policy when required. • To attend training / awareness programs. • To use their initiative to undertake Gender Impact Assessments where appropriate.

CONSULTATION

COUNCIL CONSULTATION

All Councilor's were provided with the opportunity to contribute to the development of this Fair Access Policy.

STAFF CONSULTATION

The Fair Access Policy was circulated to all Council staff, to seek their input. The policy was then developed after providing all employees with extensive consultation.

COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

The Ararat Rural City community were provided with the opportunity to contribute to the development of this Fair Access Policy.

RELATED POLICIES/LEGESLATION:

- Gender Equality Act 2020
- Local Government Act 2020
- Equal Opportunity Act 2010
- Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008
- Disability Discrimination Act (Cth) 1992
- Disability Act (VIC) 2006
- Age Discrimination Act 2004
- Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986
- Racial Discrimination Act 1975
- Sex Discrimination Act 1984
- Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005
- Victorian Government Fair Access Policy Roadmap
- Gender Equality Action Plan 2011-2025 (Ararat Rural City Council)
- Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2023-2026 (Ararat Rural City Council)
- Seasonal User Agreement Alexandra Oval - Ararat Rats Football Netball Club
- Seasonal User Agreement Alexandra Oval - Ararat Eagles Football Netball Club
- Gymnastics Club Ararat Fitness Centre Agreement
- Ararat Basketball Association Ararat Fitness Centre Agreement
- Grampians Cricket Association
- Community Asset Committee Governance Guide

DEFINITIONS

Committees of Management

For the purposes of this document, refers to committees appointed by the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DECCA) (previously known as Department of Water, Environment and Planning) under the *Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978* to manage recreation reserves where community sport training and games are held.

Community Sports Infrastructure

Publicly owned local, rural, regional, or state level sport and recreation infrastructure operated and maintained primarily for the purpose of facilitating community sport activities, including sporting grounds, surfaces, facilities, and pavilions.

Gender

How you understand who you are and how you interact with other people. Many people understand their gender as being a man or woman. Some people understand their gender as a mix of these or neither. A person's gender and their expression of their gender can be shown in different ways, such as through behaviour or physical appearance.

Gender diverse

An umbrella term for a range of genders expressed in different ways. Gender diverse people use many terms to describe themselves. Language in this area is dynamic, particularly among young people, who are more likely to describe themselves as non-binary.

Gender equality

The equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women, men and trans and gender-diverse people. Equality does not mean that women, men and trans and gender diverse people will become the same but that their rights, responsibilities, and opportunities will not depend on their gender.

Gender equity

The provision of fairness and justice in the distribution of benefits and responsibilities based on gender. The concept recognises that people may have different needs and power related to their gender and these differences should be identified and addressed in a manner that rectifies gender related imbalances.

Gender Impact Assessment, or GIA

A requirement under the *Gender Equality Act 2020* to be carried out on policies, programs and services which have a direct and significant impact on the public. The assessment must evaluate the effects that a policy, program or service may have on people of different genders.

Transgender, or trans

Someone whose gender does not only align with the one assigned at birth. Not all trans people will use this term to describe themselves.



Fair Access Action Plan 2025-2029

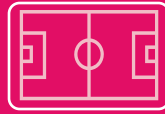
Ararat Rural
City Council

Introduction

The Fair Access Action Plan 2025-2029 (Action Plan) underpins the Fair Access Policy by identifying specific actions to progress gender equitable access and use of community sports infrastructure.

The actions align with the aims of Council's Fair Access Policy principles and specifically address the Fair Access Principles developed by the Office for Women in Sport and Recreation.

The Action Plan supports the commitment of Council and the municipality sports clubs to take positive actions towards achieving gender equity and removing barriers for women and girls to participate in community sport and recreation.



Community sports infrastructure and environments are welcoming, safe and inclusive



Women and girls can fully participate in all aspects of community sports and active recreation, including as players, coaches, administrators, officials, volunteers and spectators.

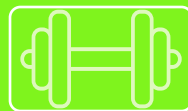


Women and girls will have equitable access to and use of community sport infrastructure:

- a. of the highest quality available and most convenient
- b. at the best and most popular competition and training times and locations &
- c. to support existing and new participation opportunities and a variety of sports.



Women and girls should be equitably represented in leadership and governance roles.



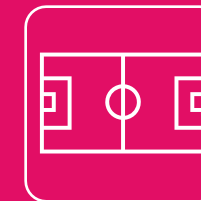
Encourage and support all user groups who access and use community sport infrastructure to understand, adopt and implement gender equitable access and use practices.



Priorities access, use and support to all user groups demonstrating an ongoing commitment to gender equitable access and use of allocated community sports infrastructure

01 COUNCIL ACTIONS

Community sports infrastructure and environments are welcoming, safe and inclusive.



ACTION	PROGRESS INDICATOR	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMEFRAME
1.1 Develop all current and future sports infrastructure including pavilions and active recreation facilities to support gender equitable access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide unisex facilities • Support infrastructure such as adequate lighting and car parking where appropriate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council 	2025-2029
1.2 Seek relevant State and Federal Government funding opportunities to support infrastructure upgrades and participation projects that support fair access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding applications are submitted for capital projects that support gender equitable access and participation by women and girls in community sport 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council 	2025-2029
1.3 Conduct Gender Impact Assessments for all new and reviewed policies, strategies, plans and designs relating to community sports infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender impacts Assessments are completed in accordance with the Gender Equality Act 2020 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council 	2025-2029

02 COUNCIL ACTIONS

Women and girls can fully participate in all aspects of Community sports and active recreation, including as players, Coaches, administrations, officials, volunteers and spectators



ACTION	PROGRESS INDICATOR	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMEFRAME
2.1 Provide and promote training and development opportunities focused on gender equity and fostering inclusive sporting environments to local clubs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Council facilities relevant training and development opportunities• Training and development opportunities delivered by other organisations are promoted to sports clubs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Council	2025-2029
2.2 Promote grant opportunities to sports club that support increasing participation among women and girls in community sport	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increase awareness for grant opportunities available to sports clubs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Council	2025-2029

03 COUNCIL ACTIONS

Women and girls will have equitable access to and use of community sport infrastructure;

- Of the highest quality available and most convenient
- At the best and most popular competition and training and
- To support existing and new participation opportunities and a variety of sports



ACTION	PROGRESS INDICATOR	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMEFRAME
3.1 Encourage state sporting organisations and local sporting associations to consider fair access when fixturing games	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Women and girls have equal access to the most popular and convenient competition times. Women and girls have equal access to the highest quality infrastructure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council State sporting associations 	2025-2029
3.2 Target community engagement on sport and recreation infrastructure projects to reach people of all genders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The needs to women and girls are represented in community engagement processes. Community engagement is undertaken in line with Councils Engage Ararat Policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council 	2025-2029
3.3 Investigate further opportunities to provide women and girls only programs and services at Council Fitness Centre and recreation grounds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase participation on women and girls in programs delivered at Councils Fitness Centre. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council 	2025-2029

04 COUNCIL ACTIONS

Women and girls should be equitably represented in leadership and governance roles



ACTION	PROGRESS INDICATOR	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMEFRAME
4.1 Highlight and celebrate clubs that support and encourage women and girls in leadership and governance roles through Council publications and social media	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increased awareness of opportunities for women and girls to participate in community sport in leadership and governance roles.• Encourage and support the engagement of women and girls in leadership and governance roles within the sports clubs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Council• Sports Clubs	2025-2029

05

COUNCIL ACTIONS

Encourage and support all user groups who access and use community sport infrastructure to understand, adopt and implement gender equitable access and use practices



ACTION	PROGRESS INDICATOR	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMEFRAME
5.1 Update sports club Conditions of Use to include reference to the Fair Access Policy and Action Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clubs demonstrate their commitment to fair access by accepting the Conditions of Use as part of the seasonal allocation process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council Sports clubs 	2025-2026
5.2 Develop and implement a Fair Access Audit Tool (or equivalent)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collect and analyse data pertaining to women and girls and gender diverse participation within sports clubs and club progress against the Fair Access Action Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council 	2025-2026

06 COUNCIL ACTIONS

Priorities access, use and support to all user groups demonstrating an ongoing commitment to gender equitable access and use of allocated community sports infrastructure



ACTION	PROGRESS INDICATOR	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMEFRAME
6.1 Review and update sport and recreation leases, policies and user agreements to incorporate fair access practices and principles where applicable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council and sports clubs commit to fair access within lease, policies and user agreements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council 	2025-2026
6.2 Prioritise sports clubs that demonstrate a commitment to gender equity in Expression of Interest processes relating to the allocation and leasing of community sports infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New allocations and leases priorities clubs that have a commitments to gender equity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council 	2025-2029
6.3 Explore the option of introducing discounts for sports clubs that demonstrate a commitment to providing opportunities for participation by women and girls and diverse groups through a review of fees and charges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sports clubs that demonstrate a commitment to providing opportunities for participation by women and girls and diverse groups are charges a discounted allocation fee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council 	2025-2029
6.4 Review Council's Community Grants criteria to align with the fair access principles and priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Council's Community Grants Program criteria priorities projects that benefit and increase participation by women and girls and diverse groups. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council 	2025-202

01 CLUB ACTION

Community sports infrastructure and environments are welcoming, safe and inclusive.



ACTION	PROGRESS INDICATOR	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMEFRAME
1.1 Promote and demonstrate gender-inclusive communication within club rooms and on social media platforms	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• All sports clubs communication is gender inclusive	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sports Clubs	2025-2026
1.2 Complete the Fair Access Audit Tool (or equivalent) as requested by Council and deliver on the actions within the Fair Access Action Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Council and clubs develop an increased understanding of participation by women and girls and progress against the Fair Access Action Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sports Clubs	2025-2029
1.3 Ensure social events are inclusive and welcoming of women and girls and provide a sense of belonging within the club	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increased participation in social events by women and girls	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sports Clubs	2025-2029

02 CLUB ACTIONS

Women and girls can fully participate in all aspects of Community sports and active recreation, including as players, Coaches, administrations, officials, volunteers and spectators



ACTION	PROGRESS INDICATOR	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMEFRAME
2.1 Support and promote opportunities to participate in community sport in various capacities including to those in marginalized groups such as culturally and linguistically diverse communities, the LGBTIQ+ community and people with a disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Awareness of meaningful opportunities for involvement is increased Participation by women and girls including those in marginalized groups increased 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sporting clubs State sporting associations 	2025-2029
2.2 Provide and share training and development opportunities for women and girls' participation and involvement as a player, coach, administrator or volunteer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Women and girls are provided with appropriate training to undertake roles within the clubs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sporting clubs State sporting associations 	2025-2029

03 CLUB ACTIONS

Women and girls will have equitable access to and use of community sport infrastructure;

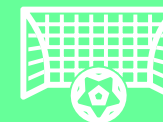
- Of the highest quality available and most convenient
- At the best and most popular competition and training and
- To support existing and new participation opportunities and a variety of sports



ACTION	PROGRESS INDICATOR	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMEFRAME
3.1 Consult with players, coaches and officials regarding preferred match and training times	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Women and girls are equally able to participate in matches and training at the most popular and convenient times 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sports Clubs State sporting associations 	2025-2029
3.2 Ensure women and girls have equitable usage of sports club facilities, including sports grounds, courts or pavillions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All players have equal opportunities to access facilities as part of a clubs seasonal allocation or lease agreement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sports Clubs State sporting associations 	2025-2029

04 CLUB ACTIONS

Women and girls should be equitably represented in leadership and governance roles



ACTION	PROGRESS INDICATOR	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMEFRAME
4.1 Advocate for and support a gender balance within club coaching, leadership and governance roles.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Increased representation by women on club committees and in other leadership roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none">CouncilSports Clubs	2025-2029

05

CLUB ACTIONS

Encourage and support all user groups who access and use community sport infrastructure to understand, adopt and implement gender equitable access and use practices



ACTION	PROGRESS INDICATOR	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMEFRAME
5.1 Consider working with relevant sporting associations to implement a flexible uniform policy that removes barriers to participate by women and girls and gender-diverse people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Women and girls feel more confident and encouraged to participate in sport 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sporting clubs State sporting associations 	2025-2026
5.2 Club representatives to attend gender equity training opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Club representatives are upskilled and increase knowledge on gender equity in community sport and barriers to participation by women and girls. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sports Clubs Other organisations 	2025-2029

06 CLUB ACTIONS

Priorities access, use and support to all user groups demonstrating an ongoing commitment to gender equitable access and use of allocated community sports infrastructure



ACTION	PROGRESS INDICATOR	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMEFRAME
6.1 Sports clubs demonstrate a commitment to fair access and support towards increasing participation of women and girls	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Clubs adhere to the Policy Action Plan and other related documents such as the sports club Conditions of Use etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Sports Club	2025-2029