



DATE ADOPTED:

VERSION: 1.0

WET WEATHER GROUND CLOSURE PROCEDURE

This Wet Weather Ground Closure procedure has been developed to compliment and expand on the Closure of Sporting Facilities Policy particularly in relation to blanket closures.

WEEKDAYS

Council will control ground closures from Monday through to 2pm Fridays. Notification of ground closures during this time will be via email to user groups and on the Council website. It is the responsibility of all hirers to provide to Council the contact details of a liaison officer regarding ground closures.

WEEKENDS

Use of sportsgrounds from 2pm Friday until 8.30am Monday will be allowed at the discretion of the User Group that has been allocated use of the ground at that time. All User Groups must undertake a wet weather assessment and complete a wet weather ground assessment form whenever there is surface water or ground softness present on the sportsground or there has been a recent rainfall event. The completed document must be forwarded to the Recreation Planning and Development Officer by 5pm the following Monday via email to recreation@maitland.nsw.gov.au (with "Wet Weather Assessment" as the subject line) or delivered to Council's Administration Building at 285-287 High Street Maitland.

DAMAGE

Council will inspect the grounds for damage at appropriate times. If Council officers deem that the grounds are damaged, a penalty fee will apply plus the cost of any rectification works. In the event that a ground is used over a weekend by more than one club or association the damage will be attributed to the last user of the facility.

PENALTIES

Any club or association deemed to be utilising a ground that has been closed by Council will receive a penalty fee. If this use is deemed to have damaged the playing surface a further damage penalty fee will apply plus the cost of any rectification works required to return the playing field to its original condition. Penalty fees and damage penalty fees are detailed in Councils Fees and Charges document. Any penalty fees will be issued in writing to the offending ground hirer/s.

User Groups that are deemed to have damaged the grounds or failed to provide appropriate Wet Weather Assessments to Council by the deadline will have their right to assess and utilise the grounds reviewed by Council. Council reserves the right to cancel individual user groups right to assess grounds for a period of up to 12 months where damage has been caused.

USER GUIDE

The following measures are to be used as a guide to assist Council and clubs in making a decision about ground closures.

Surface Water

There must be no activities held on the sportsground if there is any surface water visible on the field. The only exception to this would be if the area affected was small (less than 2m²), in a low usage/wear area and the rest of the ground is firm, and no other issues such as ground softness and poor grass cover are evident. Surface water means that the ground has reached saturation point and will be damaged very quickly if played on.

Ground Softness

There must be no activities held on the sportsground if there is any sinking into the field when walking on it and this does not bounce back or if when standing still/walking water rises up to the surface. The only exception to this would be if the only affected area was small (less than 2m²), in a low usage/wear area and the rest of the field was firm and poor grass cover is not an additional issue.

Amount of Rainfall

Rainfall prior to the proposed use of a sportsground should be used to guide decisions. If it has rained heavily or consistently leading up to any proposed usage then this should aid the decision to be made. Some grounds will take rain all week and be fine on the weekend for competition; other grounds will have no rain all week and rain the night before an event and will need to be cancelled. User Groups should take into consideration the rainfall during the week, the night before and the forecast for the day of proposed use when making decisions.

Soil Profile and Drainage

Some sportsgrounds naturally drain better than others; this is due to the different soil profile below the surface. Sand based fields drain quicker and more effectively than those on natural ground or former tip sites. User Groups should have a good idea of the drainage and amount of rainfall their ground can take, and this should be considered when making decisions.

Grass Cover

During the winter season grass cover can often get below 60% or 70% and be fine for play during dry weather. However, during wet weather when overall grass cover is below 70% then this ground is likely to wear more substantially under wet weather training and competition than grounds with more grass cover. If a decision is made to participate in activity on wet ground with low grass cover, then this may cause irreparable damage to the sportsground.

Amount and type of activity

If your User Group is about to have a full days competition with a number of games, then this is going to have a considerable effect on the ground during wet weather. Consideration for all users is very important. Damage during winter has lasting effects on summer usage and vice versa, e.g. cricket pitch in the middle of a football field.

Inspection of grounds

Grounds will be inspected by Council during the week whenever there has been a significant rain event. All sportsgrounds should be inspected by the user group on Saturday and Sunday mornings and if a decision to go ahead with play has been made then the ground should be assessed again mid-morning to see what effect the first few games have had on the ground. Consistency of inspections should also be a priority for User Groups – the same person should do the inspections for a competition day and the User Group should nominate a couple



of people to undertake inspections of their sportsgrounds. The persons completing the inspection need to attend Councils "Turf Talk" on an annual basis.

Substantial damage to field

User Groups need to ensure their grounds are not damaged for one day's use which could see their ground taken out of action for maintenance for a number of weeks. User Groups should attempt to assess what affect 22-30 players running, tackling and or scrimmaging on this field will have. If you are in doubt, erring on the side of caution will ensure your ground is still suitable for play in the last few weeks of the season.

DEFINITIONS

Damage

Physical harm to the turf surface and/or soil profile, above and beyond normal wear and tear that forces a ground to be closed by Council and rectification works to be undertaken.

Playing Surface

The turf surface and soil profile of the sportsground

Rectification Works

Works undertaken by Council to repair damage to the playing surface of the sportsground outside of the programmed maintenance regime.

Sportsground

Land that is used, or to be used, primarily for active recreation involving sports or the playing of outdoor games. (Local Government (General) Regulation 2005)

User Groups

Any Club, Association, School or Hirer that has formal approval from Council to utilise Council's sportsgrounds.