



Croquet Facility Guide

April 2017





Purpose of this document

This document has been prepared to provide information about croquet for planning authorities who are considering the inclusion of croquet facilities in the development of a comprehensive community sporting facility.

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- Members of the Croquet Victoria Marketing and Publicity sub-committee
- Individual members of Victorian croquet clubs and regional croquet associations
- Australian Croquet Association
- Croquet New Zealand
- Croquet enthusiasts
- Staff of Sport and Recreation Victoria.

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1. Background: Croquet in Victoria

Croquet is understood to have been introduced to England from Ireland in the early 1850's and was probably played in Victoria shortly after as there is reference to a Croquet Club in Kyneton in 1866. Other early records are Charlton (re-formed in 1880), Lilydale (1894), Ballarat City (1902), and Bendigo, Bright, Ballarat Western and several Melbourne clubs in 1904.

In Australia, it was often the case that croquet clubs were built in conjunction with lawn bowls clubs – men played bowls, women played croquet.

In recent times men and women have played both sports. In croquet, men now tend to dominate among elite players, but the majority of players are still women. Croquet is in fact one of the few competitive sports where most players are women of retirement age.

The peak body coordinating croquet in Victoria is Croquet Victoria. This currently comprises some 90 clubs with a total of around 2800 members – 21 clubs in the Melbourne metropolitan area and 69 in country regions.

Croquet is played all year round, in hot, cold or wet weather. Tournament play is available most weekends and in most regions there are also two seasons of weekday pennant competitions per year.

Variants of mallet sports played under the aegis of the VCA include:

- Association Croquet (AC) – the traditional form of the game
- Ricochet – a recent development
- Golf Croquet (GC) – a very popular game, more sociable and easier to learn than AC
- Gateball – a mallet sports game developed in Japan, based on US garden croquet and very popular in several Asian countries.

2. The market: Who plays croquet

Croquet is a challenging sport that is suitable for people of all ages. It is played for a variety of reasons, including exercise, mental stimulation, companionship, and competition.

Key characteristics of croquet:

- a unique sport that attracts both sporty and non-sporty people
- played throughout the year
- played by men and women as equals
- played by all ages from schoolchildren to individuals in their nineties
- played both socially and competitively
- low-cost to participants. Club dues are generally low and most equipment is provided by the club. Second hand mallets cost only a few dollars; a high end mallet costs less than \$600.
- widely played in England, USA, Canada, South Africa, New Zealand, Egypt and Australia – it is a social passport for travellers.

3. The role of croquet in community sport

Croquet makes a valuable contribution to a comprehensive sporting facility catering for the needs of the entire community.

Croquet is a whole of life sport playable from school age to end of life. It is a game of skill and mental agility.

- As a recreational pursuit, it provides gentle exercise at a leisurely pace
- As a competitive sport, it is played vigorously and requires physical skill and finesse.

Current Health Guidelines indicate that it is important to community health that everyone is physically active for at least two and a half hours a week. Providing access to croquet opens up an option for people who aren't catered for by sports such as tennis, cricket, football and soccer.

- 13% of working age Australians have stopped playing a sport which they used to be active in, because their bodies can't manage it any more. Most of these people are likely to be able to play croquet
- Many people stop playing sport when they have young families or other time-consuming responsibilities
- Seniors, particularly older women, are the segment of the community who are least likely to participate in physical activity. Croquet provides an affordable and sociable activity which is attractive and stimulating.

A standard croquet lawn is about the size of two tennis courts and can accommodate the same number of players as two tennis courts: up to eight players at a time.

In New Zealand, where croquet has been actively growing over the past five years, successful regions such as the Kapiti Coast currently involve about 0.7% of the population in playing croquet. Based on the UK ratio of 25 players per court, an area with a population of 67,000 would need two clubs with eight croquet courts between them.

4. Planning a croquet facility

Recruitment

If a new or redeveloped croquet facility is being planned, it is essential to recruit a small steering committee to advise and form the nucleus of the new club. Croquet Victoria and the local Regional Croquet Association can assist with this process. They can be contacted via Croquet Victoria, email administration@croquetvic.asn.au.

This steering committee will be critical in the development. It needs to include people with appropriate expertise, desirably including representatives of local government, so that it can act as a reference group and provide project liaison throughout the development as required.

Where there has been no facility in the past, it would be useful to arrange interim access to a small grassed area or an existing lawn such as a bowling green so that locals can try out the game. If there is an interim space where interested people can start to play regularly, it will be

possible to gauge the level of interest and develop commitment in the local community. In many cases, clubs in neighbouring areas can provide support for the developing club.

Facility¹

Minimum requirements for a croquet facility are:

- Lawns: an area of flat ground, preferably with fine turf already established, sufficient initially for at least two croquet courts. Each court requires a grassed area of 39 yards by 32 yards, enabling a playing area of 35 yards by 28 yards and a two yard perimeter area. Limiting initial provision to one court will mean the club is too small to be viable over the long term.
- Expansion capacity. One court is required for every 25 players (the target UK ratio), so two courts can cater for 50 players. More players will require more courts. Big events are easier to organise on four courts than three.
- Clubhouse and storage: a meeting space with access to a kitchen and toilets; storage for equipment (hoops, balls, mallets, personal belongings); and changing area. Section 7 below provides detail.
- Parking
- Lighting for evening play (essential if the sport is to provide for working adults; enables after school activities in winter)
- Application of Universal Design principles (see sport.vic.gov.au/design-for-everyone-guide/overview-of-universal-design). Issues to be considered include ramps for easy access, limiting steps and stairs, planning for shade, and providing seating. Particular attention needs to be given to accessibility for older adults.

Planning requires a view to the future. Decisions that are needed include:

- The scope of the facility – local or regional?
 - A facility catering to a local community can be smaller and will enable ready access by people who may not be able to travel far for weekly play
 - A regional facility will need at least four courts and a clubhouse (see section 7 below). This level of development will enable a fully fledged competitive centre to develop. This can host tournaments and offer competition to clubs across a broader area, bringing in revenue and fostering a large active membership
 - A larger facility can provide a community resource and be hired out to visiting groups, contributing to club resources and also connecting the groups into croquet.
- Staging of the development
- Arrangements for disability access.

Lawn, lighting and clubhouse requirements are detailed in the following sections.

¹ See Appendix 1 for information on the lawn layout and equipment required for croquet and gateball. Note that Imperial measurements are used here and throughout this guide, in line with the policy of the World Croquet Federation.

5. Developing and maintaining a croquet lawn

Issues to be considered in designing and developing a croquet lawn are:

- Size: including grassed border areas, each court should measure 39 by 32 yards minimum
- Substructure: the surface must be flat and level, not subject to subsidence
- Drainage: play continues in wet weather and good drainage is essential
- Grass cover: needs to be a hard wearing, preferably drought tolerant grass such as Santa Ana couch (this requires an average of 3mm rainfall per week)
- Irrigation system: regular watering significantly improves grass cover
- Water capture and energy use, with the aim of maximising environmental sustainability
- Provision of a perimeter path outside the grassed area, ideally raised 100mm above the level of the lawn so that it can act as a barrier to the passage of balls.

Lawns require considerable attention to be maintained in good order. Croquet, like bowls, is played on the surface and requires green keeping support. The local Council is vital in this. A new club will not have the resources or expertise to maintain its own lawns.

Maintenance provision needs to include:

- Regular mowing with a cylinder mower: up to three times a week in the growing season, at a height of 3mm to 5mm
- Periodic scarification and aeration (at least once a year)
- Pest control: spraying for mites, beetles, worm control
- Top dressing to level and fertilise
- Weed control: eg spraying for broadleaf couch, summer grass.

Rolling may also be required.

Useful references:

- Oxfordcroquet.com – go to the section on lawn care, which includes general principles and detailed specifications for English conditions
- The New Zealand Croquet Association has commissioned a Lawn Book with detailed guidelines on lawn design and maintenance. Much good advice, though some of the points are specific to NZ conditions. This can be bought direct from Croquet New Zealand (admin@croquet.org.nz) or borrowed from the VCA (administration@croquetvic.asn.au).

6. Lighting requirements

Ideally any new croquet facility should have LED lights installed with an even illumination of at least 150 lux (lumens/m²), with a variance of no more than 0.87 across the playing area. This will enable the new club to recruit working adults as members, and offer training and competitions in the evening.

There is no specific Australian Standard for lighting croquet courts. Experience has shown that 100 lux (the minimum requirement for bowls, as per AS 2560.2.8 1994) is insufficient for croquet: players and onlookers cannot readily discern the colour of the balls or scoring clips if they are any distance away.

The cost of installing new generation LED lights is dropping compared with the traditional halogen lights, and LED lights have much lower running costs and a much longer life. Halogen lights should be installed on 10m corner poles; LED lights can be installed on a shorter pole.

Relevant guidelines are provided in:

- AS2560.1 2002 The Australian Standard for the lighting of sporting facilities. This is the general standard, although there are other in the series which deal with specific sports, such as football (various codes) cycling, etc.
- AS4282 1997 The Australian Standard covering reflected light from such installations.
- *Community sporting facility lighting guide*, available from sport.vic.gov.au. This is a Victorian Government publication for Football/Soccer/Netball. Many of the design considerations would be equally applicable to the design of lighting for croquet courts.
- *Artificial Sports Lighting Design Guide* is available from the Sports England website www.sportengland.org.

7. Clubhouse and parking

The clubhouse plays a vital role in developing the social side of the sport. It is often the visible face of the club and plays a major role in attracting and retaining members and participants. Clubs that have their own clubhouse thrive with the sense of ownership. Hiring to external groups is also easier to organise with a separate clubhouse.

However, shared clubhouse facilities are common in recently developed sporting centres. This can work well provided there are some areas which the croquet club can call its own. The croquet club will require:

- Lockable changing area: for a local facility, this requires a space at least 6.6m², with secure storage for clothing, personal possessions and mallets. Both female and male change facilities are desirable. A regional facility would require a larger changing area.
- Access to toilet facilities: preferably two toilets within the clubhouse area and two toilets easily accessible from the courts – more for a regional facility. At least one unisex toilet needs to be designed for disability access.

- Access to office or administration area
- A meeting area for the club committee with storage for club documentation.
- Notice boards – ideally in a space private to the club
- Space for members to socialise (this could be shared with other groups), possibly combined with access to licensed bar facilities
- Access to a kitchen, with refrigerator and boiling water
- Separate, secure storage for croquet equipment, preferably convenient to the courts (eg hoops, balls, mallets, baulks, line marking paint, cylinder mower, line marker)
- Storage space for larger equipment items which are used occasionally, such as a BBQ or gazebo
- Access to parking commensurate with the number of members being planned for, and also allowing for visitors attending competitions and tournaments.

8. Safety and risk – strategies to address risk and safety management at croquet facilities

Croquet is a non-contact sport and injuries on the croquet court are rare. Occasionally players may hurt themselves with the mallet or be hit by a ball. The demographics of croquet players also indicate a need to be alert to the risk of falls and heart attacks.

Risks associated with the specific croquet facility should be identified in developing the risk and mitigation policy for the sporting centre. Standard provision should include:

- Briefing for committee members on incident and risk management
- Training for club members in first aid and the use of a defibrillator
- A first aid kit
- An incident reporting book
- Ready access to a defibrillator.



9. References and further information

Research on sport participation:

Australian Sports Commission (2013), *Market segmentation for sport participation*. Available online via https://www.clearinghouseforsport.gov.au/research/smi/market_seg/market_segmentation_-_adults.

Research into health aspects of sporting participation and government health guidelines for participation are summarised at: https://www.clearinghouseforsport.gov.au/knowledge_base/sport_participation/community_participation/mature-aged_sport_and_physical_activity.

Other sources of material in this guide:

- croquetvic.asn.au – the website of Croquet Victoria. The Resources section includes links and materials designed to help clubs develop.
- Oxfordcroquet.com – focuses on Association Croquet. Includes a wide range of useful resources.
- croquet.org.nz – the website of the NZ Croquet Association

Other croquet websites:

- <https://www.croquet.org.uk>
- <http://www.worldcroquet.org.uk>

Appendix

Croquet lawns and croquet equipment

The croquet lawn

Croquet is played on a court which measures 35 yards by 28 yards (a 5:4 ratio).

- Playing area: 35 x 28 yards minimum.
- Extended playing area: 37 x 30 yards minimum.

It is desirable to have at least one yard of similar surface all round the playing area. This allows for free backswing of mallets, and makes possible the moving of the court one way or another periodically to permit the moving of the hoop positions. This is essential to avoid damage to the lawn at the hoops. Wear occurs between the uprights of the hoops due to constant passage of balls through them, particularly in wet weather.

The layout never varies. Six hoops are laid out on the court with a central peg. There are four corner hoops, each ideally 7 yards in from the two closest edges, and two central hoops, each 7 yards from the centre peg.

Court equipment

Each player uses a mallet to strike a ball with the aim of running each hoop in a specified order and direction. Each game is played with either two players (singles) or four players (doubles) and four coloured balls are in play at all times. Balls, four to a game, each weigh one pound and have a diameter which, in top-class competition, is only $\frac{1}{32}$ " less than the inside width of a hoop.

Typically courts are surrounded by movable barriers (eg wooden baulks or 4 inch irrigation tubing) which stop balls travelling far from the court and reduce the risk of injury to passers-by.

Players' equipment

Mallets typically weigh $2\frac{1}{2}$ to 3 pounds. Modern materials improve their durability and balance, but designs that substantially change their playing characteristics are banned.

Gateball

Gateball can readily be played on a standard croquet lawn, using about half the court. It has its own hoops (three per court) and centre peg.

Gateball mallets and balls are smaller and lighter than croquet mallets and balls. A full game requires two teams of five with players taking it in turns to play. Ideally clubs playing gateball will have club sets of balls, mallets, and court equipment, including tape to mark out the court. These are available from supply companies in Japan.

Information about gateball is available via gateball.com.au.

