

Growing Croquet Facilities Infrastructure Planning Project 2020 - 2030



Executive Summary & Action Plan

Final Report (May 2019)

Croquet is one of the oldest established formal sports in Australia, with a number of clubs dating back to the 1860's. Croquet in Victoria has a number of important strengths that can be capitalised on in order to increase overall participation in the sport and support the ongoing sustainability of existing clubs. In broad terms key strengths include (but not limited to):

- the current extensive provision and geographic distribution of clubs/venues across the State (i.e. there are 91 registered clubs and approximately 225 individual courts spread across 60 Local Government areas throughout Victoria and southern NSW (i.e. Murray River border towns);
- the membership profile is dominated by females (69%) and adults aged over 45 years – these are key groups targeted by Government health initiatives to increase physical activity participation;
- croquet provides an opportunity for life-long involvement in competitive (and social) sport which is not available through a number of other higher profile sports, as well as opportunities for community connectedness through belonging to sporting clubs; and
- the availability and capacity of existing facilities (i.e. the majority of existing venues are predominately used during mid-week day-time hours when other sport facilities often receive little use and there is capacity within the majority of existing venues to increase use and times available for the community).

However, there are a number of challenges facing the sport including the sustainability of existing clubs; ageing infrastructure and limited capacity for asset renewal; a lack of provision in emerging residential growth areas and challenges associated with sports development, including increasing participation, member diversity and raising the profile and awareness of the sport.

In order to address these issues, Croquet Victoria (CV) initiated a strategic review of existing State-wide facility provision in order to provide a framework to guide facility improvement priorities and to support opportunities to increase participation in the sport.

Research, consultation and feedback confirmed that priorities for improvement included renewal of existing built facilities; renewal of playing courts and lighting installation. However the demand assessment also identified opportunities for additional court provision to service current and future participation demands. Importantly, it is also noted that enhanced flexibility in programming and scheduling of existing participation may also be required by individual clubs in order to maximise the use of existing facilities.

In 2018 there were almost 3,000 members of croquet clubs across the State. Clubs in metropolitan Melbourne average around 44 members per club and 28 members per club in country Victoria. This strategy identifies a target to increase the number of registered members by 300 in metropolitan Melbourne and a further 300 members in country Victoria by 2030. This document can be downloaded at www.croquetvic.asn.au/CroquetInfrastructure

represents a membership increase of around 30% and 15% respectively (Metro; Country) to be supported by up to 18 new courts in Melbourne and 15 new courts in country Victoria over the next ten years. Priorities for additional courts are identified in the body of the report and attached Action Plan.

Membership growth will largely be driven by overall population increases, however strategies to proactively increase participation have also been identified. It is telling that Croquet Victoria (CV) is one of only a few State/ Peak sporting bodies that does not employ paid Development Officers or support staff to help promote the sport, increase participation and service existing affiliated clubs. Like the majority of other sports, croquet is managed by volunteers at all levels (i.e. club, Region, State). Whilst this can be considered a strength, it is also acknowledged that a lack of resources, professional expertise and support may be hindering sport development opportunities across the State.

The majority of existing clubs are located on Crown Land (42%) or Council owned land (36%); furthermore 47% of venues are either managed by Council or a Council appointed Committee of Management. However, individual clubs generally retain responsibility for the management and maintenance of playing fields and buildings. This reinforces the importance of collaborating with LGAs in the planning and development of croquet facilities.

To aid future facility planning this project has established a hierarchy classification and recommended standards for croquet facilities to help guide future provision and improvement projects. Establishment of a venue hierarchy will help guide future resource and investment priorities for clubs, LGAs and stakeholders as well as support the sustainability and growth of existing clubs.

In addition, it is acknowledged that demand for croquet facilities may also emerge in Melbourne growth areas and LGAs that do not currently have facilities/clubs. Appendix 1 provides guidance on facility demand assessment and spatial requirements for new (Greenfield) facility provision.

Aside from facility improvement priorities, this project has considered possible initiatives to help increase overall participation in the sport and the sustainability of existing clubs. Chapter 8 outlines recommended improvement initiatives focusing on building from a position of strength; increasing participation; improving the awareness and profile of the sport; and improving support to existing clubs. In order to achieve this it is seen as critical that Croquet Victoria explore options to employ a full-time dedicated Sport Development Officer (or similar).

Implementation of the actions outlined in this report will help contribute to achieving the vision for croquet in Victoria, specifically...

"The Victorian croquet community to be active, engaged, and growing."

69%
of members
are women

91 clubs
spread across Victoria



Action Plan

The following section outline each of the strategic recommendations within an overall prioritised implementation framework in order to guide CV initiatives over the ten year period 2020-2030. Green shading represents primary implementation periods, however this can be modified in order to respond to new opportunities (including LGA planning initiatives) where opportunities arise. A number of actions are not time-dependent, rather they will require sustained commitment in order to provide ongoing support to individual clubs, Regions and the croquet community.

Recommendations	Indicative Implementation Priorities										Milestones		
	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	Targets	
1. Based on CV Region, club and LGA feedback, initiatives to address facility improvements should focus on (in priority order): Priority 1: Facility upgrade and renewal; Priority 2: Ground upgrade and renewal; and Priority 3: Lighting provision.	Ongoing role										<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CV support and advocacy provided as required. Target a minimum of two facility upgrades per year. 		
2. CV to support Regions and individual clubs to work with Asset/Property Owner to ensure appropriate facility condition audits and asset management plans are developed for all croquet facilities. (CV consider developing a facility Audit template to assist individual clubs where required).												<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All clubs to have a current Facility Condition Audit/Asset Management Plan in place by 2025. 	
3. CV to provide advocacy support for local club initiatives to improve facilities and increase court provision at the sites identified in the following table. Priorities for additional court provision include:												<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CV support and advocacy provided as required. Target a minimum of two new courts per year over the next ten years at existing venues. 	
i. Eastern Metro (potentially 5 courts – plus new regional facility Rec #4);												<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As above. 	
ii. South Eastern Metro (potentially 3 courts);												<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As above. 	
iii. North Eastern Region (potentially 3 courts);												<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As above. 	
iv. Northern Districts Region (potentially 3 courts);												<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As above. 	
v. Ballarat & Districts Region (potentially 2 courts)												<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As above - possible relocation and expansion of Ballarat Western. 	
vi. Geelong Region (potentially 4 courts); and												<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As above. 	
vii. Gippsland Region (potentially 2 courts).												<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As above. 	
viii. Other regions as demand warrants – to be monitored annually.												<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As above. 	
4. There may be opportunities for selected consolidation or merger of individual clubs, particularly in rural areas, if participation cannot be increased at smaller clubs to enhance overall club and facility sustainability. CV to support individual clubs upon request to explore possible merger opportunities.	Ongoing role – case by case basis										<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Case by case basis. 		
5. CV to engage Cardinia and Casey LGAs in order to explore potential opportunities to establish a new regional standard facility. Seek funding support from SRV and each respective LGA to undertake a specific feasibility study for a regional standard facility in the south east urban growth corridor.												<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial engagement with Casey and Cardinia LGAs – 2020. Regional Facility Feasibility Study – 2021-2022. Regional facility design and development - 2029-2030. 	
6. CV to work with LGAs that either do not currently provide croquet facilities, or those experiencing significant residential growth, to consider opportunities for land acquisition/allocation and facility development where the adult population (aged over 15 years) exceeds 33,000 people. (Commencing with Whittlesea, Wyndham, Hume, Geelong/Surf Coast and Melton LGAs).	Ongoing role										<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Target establishment of one new club in each growth area – i.e. 5-new clubs and associated facilities by 2030. 		
7. Lighting provision to be considered by individual clubs on a case by case basis.	Ongoing role – case by case basis										<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a Lighting Improvement Plan in consultation with local clubs by 2025. 		
8. CV to encourage lighting provision, particularly where additional land is not available to provide additional courts (e.g. Williamstown) and to maximise use of existing venues.												<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Target – 5 additional Metro clubs/venues with lighting by 2030. Target – 3 additional Country clubs/venues with lighting by 2030. 	
9. CV to document Case Studies of venues with lighting (particularly where new lighting is installed) in order to monitor and evaluate the impacts of lighting provision on participation, member profile and club operations.												<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A minimum of five case studies (e.g. 3 Metro; 2 Country) documented by 2022 to help inform the Lighting Improvement Plan and case by case advocacy. 	
10. CV to investigate long-term options to establish after-hours competition structures and scheduling to promote use of venues with lighting.												<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pilot an 'after-hours' competition in Metro regions by 2023. Monitor participation outcomes and formalise competition structure from 2024. 	
11. In consultation with SRV, CV executive to explore the practicalities associated with the potential employment of a Sport Development Officer (or similar), for example: Position Description; Governance/management structure (including day-to-day support for the position); Funding/financial arrangements (including possible funding support from SRV); and Training and professional development.												<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sport Development Office (SDO) appointed by 2022. 	
12. Key objectives for the position are to lead and implement a range of sport development initiatives, including (but not limited to):												<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Target - SDO to attend at least one Regional Committee meeting per month (i.e. attend each Region at least once per year). Target – SDO to meet with individual clubs at least once every 18 months. 	
o Providing strategic support to existing clubs - particularly capacity building, growing recruitment and participation, volunteer support and assistance with facility upgrade or renewals (i.e. assistance with funding applications and advocacy).												<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introductory program and material established by 2024. Target inclusion in at least 10 school sport programs by 2030. 	
o Increase promotion and use of GC / Aussie as an introductory option for the sport – including the shorter game formats and inclusion in school sport programs.												<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Target – 50 members aged under 21 years by 2030 (currently 24 members). 	
o Implement options to recruit and retain participants from under-represented groups, for example people with disabilities and younger age profiles.												<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Case by case to support targets outlined in actions 1, 2, 4 and 5. 	
o Liaise with Local Governments to advocate and assist with croquet facility planning, club development, recruitment and activation of existing venues.												<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Target establishment of at least one new club in each Melbourne growth area – i.e. 4-new clubs and associated facilities by 2030. 	
o Support the establishment of new clubs – including possible opportunities to utilise existing turf surfaces in areas where facilities do not already exist (e.g. cricket ovals, lawn tennis courts, golf clubs or where appropriate surfaces can be prepared) particularly to generate interest in the sport or to conduct school programs prior to establishing new facilities (e.g. 'pop-up' Croquet programs).												<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Target – at least one 'pop-up' croquet event per year (2022-2030) to promote interest and exposure of the sport. 	
13. CV Executive (and proposed Sport Development Officer) to develop a marketing plan and promotional campaign for the sport to raise awareness and increase participation. Build off the current member profile to further increase participation by those aged over 45 years, including women. Initiatives to focus on Promote; Partner & Provide – indicative targets/milestones include:	Ongoing												
o Promote – establish a bi-annual Marketing and Promotional campaign for the sport.												<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Marketing and Promotional Plan established, implemented and reviewed every two years. 	
o Promote - review and update generic marketing templates, resources and material to assist clubs to promote the sport locally.												<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update marketing material as required. 	
o Partner - explore opportunities to partner with VicHealth (i.e. This Girls Can campaign) to build off the strong base of female participation in the sport.												<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partnership with Vic Health established/confirmed – 2020. Implement at least one participation/promotional event per year targeting women and girls. 	
o Partner – clubs/regions to partner with local older adult service providers (including LGAs) to facilitate participation opportunities.												<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish relationship / participation programs with Local Government Aged Service/Recreation Departments– target 5 by 2025 and 10 by 2030. 	
o Provide – clubs to facilitate annual Come and Try Day/s; Bring a Friend Day; free introductory participation programs; etc.												<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish and promote an annual "Try Croquet Day" established. Provide strategic support so that all clubs host at least one promotional event per annum. 	
o Provide – opportunities for social participation (e.g. twilight croquet; BBQ and croquet packages, host community events, functions or annual break-ups).												<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As above. 	
14. Review and improve volunteer education and development programs to improve the capacity of individual clubs to coach / teach all forms of the game – including opportunities for further education and elite pathways (for coaches, officials and players).												<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review existing material/program in 2020. Implement training and development programs – deliver at least one education/training session in each Region annually. 	
15. Utilise existing clubs and venues to leverage participation opportunities – build from a position of strength. Work with the Regions and local clubs to increase flexibility in the delivery of the sport, including scheduling to encourage access by a wider audience (i.e. evening and after-work-hours participation where lighting allows and/or during day-light savings periods) and to maximise use of existing facilities. Clubs have indicated that a lack of willing and trained volunteers is an impediment to broadening scheduling opportunities.												<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Target – increase Metro membership by at least 300 registered members by 2030 (i.e. approx. 30% increase from 2018 (880 members)). Target – increase Country membership by at least 300 registered members by 2030 (i.e. approx. 15% increase from 2018 (1,982 members)). Target – increase average club membership by 10% by 2030 (i.e. average club membership (2018) in Metro regions is 44; average in Country areas is 28 members per club). 	
16. Identify, develop and support initiatives to introduce social participation opportunities to introduce a wider audience to the sport, including opportunities for family participation.												<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Targets/milestones included within other actions e.g. annual promotional events (Try Croquet Day); success stories/awards; increase average club membership by 10%; etc. 	
17. Continue to improve mechanisms for sharing success stories and learnings from successful initiatives with all Regions and clubs (e.g. on-line, magazine and/or annual club development forum).												<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Target – at least one edition of the on-line magazine per annum to focus on success stories. New annual awards program established by 2024 (e.g. Club of the Year; Promotional Initiative of the Year; Community Engagement Award, etc). Establish and implement an annual (or bi-annual) Club Development Forum. 	
18. Update the Croquet Facility Guide to include information on facility demand assessment, standards and recommended hierarchy to help inform Local Government planning, provision and partnerships – refer to Appendix 1.												<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Croquet Facility Guide updated by 2020. 	