



Balmain & District Football Club
PO Box 1020
Rozelle NSW 2039

17 August 2010

Callan Park 'your plan' submission
Leichhardt Council
PO Box 45
Leichhardt NSW 2040

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: Callan Park Masterplan

The Balmain and District Football Club (BDFC) makes the following submission in relation to the Masterplan for Callan Park.

The BDFC was established 40 years ago. Over this period it has grown to become the largest club in the Canterbury District Soccer Football Association (CDSFA) with a membership of over 1,700 players and officials and a supporter base in excess 3,000 taking into account the parents of junior players.

BDFC offers football (also known as soccer) to male and female players from age 4, through our free Junior Training Squad (ages 4 and 5), up to players in their 60s playing in the Over 35 or 45 competitions. We have in excess of 400 women and girl players making us the largest girls/womens club in the inner west.

A breakdown of our numbers is detailed below.

AGE GROUP	REGISTERED PLAYERS	NUMBER OF TEAMS
U6 – 7 (mixed)	271	34
U8 – 11 (mixed)	291	27
U12 – 18 (boys)	155	10
U9 – 17 (girls)	315	23
All Age Women	104	6
All Age Men	224	13
O35/45 men	122	7
Coaches/managers/officials	240	

The sport is continuing to grow rapidly in the Balmain area as it has been for the past 10 years, but sadly, in the last two years we have had to limit new membership to the club due to a lack of playing fields currently available to us as 'home grounds'. The Club estimates that there is a community demand for even more access to football in the Leichhardt LGA that all clubs in the area are unable to service due to the lack of playing fields in the area

For BDFC's entire history Callan Park has been the Club's home field. Within the Callan Park precinct, the club has played matches at various times during their 40 year history, not only at our current location of the "Waterfront Oval" (the oval closest to the water), but also at the areas known locally as the "Balmain Road Oval" and the "Glover Road Oval". These last 2 areas are currently not used for organised sport.

The Waterfront Oval is our main full sized home ground. It is used every Saturday and Sunday in the season from April through to September when we pass it over to the Balmain Cricket Club for summer. We also use it for preseason trials in March and over the summer months on an ad hoc basis for training by various groups affiliated to our club. We also use Easton Park, Birchgrove Oval, Cohen Park and Wentworth Park to play home matches. It should be noted that Wentworth Park is outside our local LGA and indeed strictly speaking outside the CDSFA geographic area. This illustrates the lengths the club has been forced to due to the lack of sports fields in the Leichhardt LGA.

As there are no lights at any of the Callan Park fields we are limited in being able to utilise this field for training. Because of this we are restricted to training on Easton Park (43 teams) Birchgrove Oval (36 teams) and Cohen Park (20 teams) from Tuesday to Fridays only. We share Birchgrove oval with several other local sports teams.

As a long time user of the playing fields at Callan Park we are keenly interested in the future of Callan Park and, in particular, the possibility of having additional playing fields made available for the community sporting clubs.

BDFC is only one of many sports clubs needing access to sports fields in the Leichhardt LGA and in an inner west area desperate for active recreational open space, an opportunity such as currently presents itself at Callan Park may arise only once in a generation, perhaps longer, and must not be lost.

As such we propose that Callan Park have sports fields in the following locations:

1. **Waterfront Oval.** This is the location that we currently use as our main home field and currently has 2 full sized football fields used in winter and one cricket pitch used in summer. We request this area be retained as our home ground and hopefully undergo some perimeter changes to allow a better orientation of the playing fields and cricket pitch.

As a club (and in conjunction with the Balmain Cricket Club) we would be keen to utilize the currently disused building in the southern side of the oval as club rooms to provide storage, canteen and change room facilities as well as providing a location to hold meetings etc. This would become our club's first clubhouse after 40 years and would be a significant moment in the club's history. We believe that if this was to come to pass the current amenities block on the western end of the oval could be demolished and the fields realigned to a better orientation of the playing fields and cricket pitch.

2. **Glover Rd Oval.** This area has been used in the past as a sports field and is to our mind still a sports field that is simply not being used at present. Any Master Plan must have this area dedicated as a sports field. It is suitable for a number of community based sports in both the winter and summer seasons.
3. **Balmain Rd Field.** This area has been used in the past as a sports field and is to our mind still a sports field that is simply not being used at present. Any Master Plan must have this area dedicated as a sports field. This area, as it is, could be used for small sided football games and/or mini cricket, League or AFL. We believe that if the two houses at either end of this area were to be demolished a full sized multi sport pitch could be constructed in this location.
4. **Veterans Site.** This is the area between the Waterfront and Glover Rd Ovals, where currently there are disused hospital wards once occupied by war veterans. In the Master Plan process undertaken in 2008, this area was identified as another potential area for sports fields as the buildings were not of heritage or architectural significance. We would endorse this being a new playing field area which would give a dedicated zone of active sports fields from King George Oval in the east through to Leichhardt Oval in the west.

5. **The Bowling Green/Pool Area.** This is an area just south of the Waterfront Oval which could easily be levelled in order to provide at least an area for small sided games or a larger area with a full sized field. We would like to see this included in the final Master Plan.

Whilst this correspondence comes to you on our letterhead there are other sporting bodies in the municipality who are affected, either directly or indirectly, by the potential outcome of the Master Plan and subsequent processes at Callan Park. You are probably already aware that the Balmain Junior Cricket Club currently uses over the summer the same facilities as do we. Whilst the cricket club is not as numerically large as the football club, its activities are currently likewise stifled by the general lack of facilities in the municipality.

There are also two other football (soccer) clubs located close to us in the area – Leichhardt Saints and Leichhardt Tigers. The Leichhardt Saints Club in particular, is about half the size of our club in terms of playing numbers but still therefore fielding 40-50 teams, and currently restricted to a single full sized playing field and, like us, has no capacity to grow or develop due to lack of facilities in the area. The Leichhardt Tigers club plays at the highest level of all clubs in the area and also struggles for grounds in the local area for training and matches for its lower grade teams. We know that they support our quest to secure, and with luck grow a little, our 'home' at Callan Park.


Currently many of the fields used for active sport in the Leichhardt LGA are shared between different clubs and sports (King George Oval; football/rugby league/athletics, Blackmore Oval; rugby league/rugby union/baseball). This intensity of use causes stress to the playing surfaces of all fields in the LGA as well as the volunteers trying to run the clubs and co-ordinate preseason activities and training sessions during the season.

In summary, there is a desperate need for not only maintenance of the existing playing fields available in the LGA, but for creation of new fields. This need arises from both community demand for active recreational pursuits and the need to reduce the wear and tear on existing fields that arises from their high use. It is worth noting of course that active playing field areas serve a dual purpose in that they are able to be used for passive, non-organized recreational activities at many times during any given week.

Preservation of the existing fields and creation of new fields at Callan Park is clearly the most direct and simplest opportunity to address community concerns, and we urge those driving the Master Plan process to place addressing these concerns at the core of every proposal.

We commend the progress made to date and look forward to further dialogue with the various stakeholders on development of the plan and how we, as sporting clubs, can contribute.

On behalf of Balmain and District Football Club


Jill Lawrence
President