



**9.3 NORTHPORT OVAL CROWD CAPACITY**

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**1. PURPOSE**

- 1.1 To review the current restrictions and limitations on crowd numbers at North Port Oval (NPO) and provide Councillors with options to increase the capacity of the site on event days to 6,000 people.

**2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 2.1 North Port Oval (NPO) has two long-term tenants Port Melbourne Football Club (PMFC) and Port Melbourne Cricket Club (PMCC), both have been at the site for over 150yrs.
- 2.2 Both Clubs have a licence agreement for use of the oval and amenities, with PMCC access from October to February, and PMFC April to August. PMFC have a lease that allows exclusive management of the Sandridge Event centre all year round.
- 2.3 The capacity at the ground is just under 2000 patrons after fence openings have been increased recently and with unisex toilets being allocated for female use. This capacity is calculated including public access to toilet facilities in the Sandridge Event Centre. If the Event centre is not available to the public, the capacity is reduced to 1080.
- 2.4 Capacity relates to the number of people who can be present at a venue. Councils in Australia assess capacity of venues through National Construction Code (NCC) regulations. The NCC standards are used for all major events held within the City of Port Phillip.
- 2.5 Venue capacity regulations ensure appropriate arrangements are in place to evacuate patrons safely in case of emergency, ensure suitable amenities to service the guests, and compliance to relevant safety regulations.
- 2.6 While NPO is a large venue the capacity at the site is reduced due to the numbers of sanitary facilities (toilet facilities) and emergency exits. Both need to be increased if 6000 people are to attend the site.
- 2.7 Currently the clubs or people hiring the site will hire toilets and other infrastructure to allow crowds over the current capacity, costs are usually paid by the venue hirer.
- 2.8 PMFC and VFL currently have up to eight games a season at NPO with up to 2000 patrons, and up to six with potentially up to 6000 patrons.
- 2.9 AFLW and VFLW regularly book the ground, and it is estimated that their usage in upcoming seasons will be up to seven for 2000 patrons and up to eight times for crowds to 6000. This is in addition to other hirers who may hold events ranging in various sizes.
- 2.10 Crowds of over 5000 in enclosed spaces such as NPO need a Place of Public Entertainment (POPE) Permit for compliance to the Building Regulations (Building Act 1993). This is in addition to meeting NCC code regulations.



- 2.11 A Motion was adopted on 7 September 2022 requesting the permitting of crowds to 6000 and a review of restrictions in place be undertaken.
- 2.12 Estimated costs for upgrading facilities to meet capacity numbers on a permanent base are:
- \$100K for 2000 capacity, assumes use of the Sandridge Event Centre - increasing gate openings and additional permanent female toilets in place..
  - \$2.52m for 6000 capacity -increasing gate openings and permanent female/male/unisex toilets.
  - A feasibility assessment would need to be undertaken to better understand both options, particularly the location for new facilities and fence openings to cater for crowds up to 6000 patrons. Many of the facilities at NPO are aging and most have some form of heritage overlay, making upgrades to current buildings difficult. A heritage and condition audit will need to be undertaken across the site.
- 2.13 Council have currently committed \$739K in the current Council Plan towards an upgrade for fencing, opening the ground to the public and improved cricket nets. Design in 22/23 and deliver in 23/24. The scope of this project could be extended to include toilet facilities.
- 2.14 No amendments can be made to regulations guiding the use of NPO for crowds 2000-6000 people.

### 3. RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

- 3.1 Notes the limitations with crowd capacity is compliance to Building Code regulations and statutory regulations.
- 3.2 Notes that all users of the site need to comply with the National Construction Code site capacity requirements, and that this may include the need for them to hire additional facilities.
- 3.3 Notes the limitations of the site for large events without additional infrastructure.
- 3.4 Undertakes a minor upgrade to sanitary facilities and fencing to make the site compliant for a capacity of up to 2000 patrons.
- 3.5 Endorses funding of \$100k to undertake these works.
- 3.6 Includes consideration of increasing sanitary facilities in the NPO Upgrades project which is due to begin feasibility and design early 2023.

### 4. KEY POINTS/ISSUES

#### Background

- 4.1 The Port Melbourne Cricket Ground (referred to as Northport Oval) is owned by the Crown with City of Port Phillip operating as Committee of Management.
- 4.2 There are two seasonal tenants of the Oval, the Port Melbourne Cricket Club (PMCC) and the Port Melbourne Football Club (PMFC). Both clubs have a long and historic 150 year connection to NPO. Both Clubs have a licence agreement for use of the oval and amenities, with PMCC access from October to February, and PMFC April to August.



PMFC have a lease that allows exclusive management of the Sandridge Event Centre all year round.

- 4.3 The ground is open for bookings for other users, and the AFL requested the site for AFLW games in September 2022.
- 4.4 In September AFLW booked the site and when developing their Event Operations Plan it became clear that the current ground capacity of the site was less than the expected 6000 patrons.
- 4.5 Councils in Australia assess capacity of venues through National Construction Code (NCC) regulations This is the standard used for all major events held within the City of Port Phillip.
- 4.6 Venue capacity regulations ensure appropriate arrangements are in place to evacuate patrons safely in case of emergency, ensure suitable amenities to service the guests, and compliance to the relevant safety regulations
- 4.7 Prior to the recent AFLW Events, the AFL revised expected spectator numbers to 3000 and hired the required temporary toilets at their cost. Council assisted by creating additional exits around the site prior to the first match.
- 4.8 On 7 September 2022, Councillors adopted the following Substantive Motion:

*That Council:*

- *Permits crowds of up to 6,000 people to attend sporting events at North Port Oval.*
- *Reviews the current Port Phillip Council imposed restrictions and limitations on crowd numbers at North Port Oval due to insufficient toilets and ground emergency egress requirements, and comes back to Council with a plan to address these concerns.*

### **Capacity Requirements**

- 4.9 The following regulations need to be addressed and considered to set the capacity levels and associated requirements at the site:
  - National Construction Code (NCC) regulations. This is the Standard used in Australia and for all major events held within the municipality
  - Building Regulations (Building Act 1993) - sets the legal framework for the regulation of building standards
  - The review and assessment applied the principles of the Australian Standard for Risk Management (ISO AS/NZ 31000)
  - Guidelines provided by applicable Occupational Health and Safety standards and legislation as well as industry standards for emergency planning (AS 3745).
- 4.10 The occupancy number at a venue is limited by:
  - The number of sanitary facilities provided for the public.
  - The number, width and spacing of emergency exits.
  - Event and emergency management plans.



### Sanitary Facilities

4.11 Capacity is limited at NPO due to the available sanitary facilities, notably female amenities.

4.12 Table 1: Sanitary Facilities available at NPO (calculated by PMFC and include access to the Sandridge Event Centre).

Unisex	Female Closet Pans	Female Washbasins	Male Closet Pans	Urinals	Male Washbasins
4	13	8	14	33	8

4.13 Table 2: NCC Regulations for Sanitary Facilities. The table includes coding to show the availability (green) and deficit (red) of facilities at NPO.

Patrons	Female Closet Pans	Female Washbasins	Male Closet Pans	Urinals	Male Washbasins
2000	16	8	3	10	7
3000	23	11	4	15	10
4000	30	14	5	20	14
5000	37	18	6	25	17
6000	45	21	7	30	20

4.14 There are four unisex toilets also on site.

4.15 There is a surplus of male toilets for 2000 capacity, however not enough female facilities. The capacity requirements for 2000 patrons would be available if unisex options or toilet configurations were changed. Further investigations would need to be undertaken to understand the feasibility of these options.

4.16 If Sandridge Event Centre (leased by PMFC) is not available to the public, the capacity of the site is reduced to 1080.

4.17 There are requirements for DDA amenities, that however is not a set number. If temporary amenities are included for an event, each toilet block should include one accessible toilet.

### Emergency Exits

4.18 The Building Code of Australia dictate the evacuation requirements. The regulations require 2m of exit width for the first 200 people and then 0.5m of exit width for every 75 people or part thereof.

4.19 The exit points at NPO were increased in September 2022 in preparation for the AFLW games, with previously locked gates now able to be accessed for larger events.

4.20 Currently there is 17m of gate exit space at NPO, but one of these 4m gates is utilised for emergency services at part of the Event management requirements, therefore reducing available exits to 13m.



- 4.21 An additional gate can easily be added to provide the minimum 14m exit width for 2000 people.
- 4.22 In order to accommodate the requested 6000 people a total exit width of 41 metres is required, currently there is 13m available on Event Days, so another 27m of gate opening is required.
- 4.23 To address risk and to ensure all patrons can safely exit the site in case of an emergency, PMFC, PMCC, AFL or other event managers are required to have an Event and Emergency Management Plans in place. These may include controls such as Event Security, first aid, and emergency response plans.

**POPE**

- 4.24 Pursuant to Section 49 of the Building Act 1993 a person must not conduct public entertainment (event) or occupy a Place of Public Entertainment (POPE) unless an Occupancy Permit (OP) has been issued by the Municipal Building Surveyor. This requirement binds both, the Crown, State and Federal Government and their agencies.
- 4.25 Crowds of over 5000 in enclosed spaces such as NPO need a Place of Public Entertainment (POPE) Permit for compliance to the Building Regulations (Building Act 1993).
- 4.26 The Victorian Building Authority (VBA) Building Practice notes requirements for POPE, including requirements for obtaining an occupancy permit for the space and / or for prescribed temporary infrastructure.
- 4.27 The application for the POPE is accompanied with important documentation to support the event plan, including site plans, details of proposed temporary structures, evacuation and emergency management plans, details of toilet amenities, and approvals from local emergency authorities.
- 4.28 Councils Building Surveyor reviews Event Plans and their POPE application form, and issues a POPE Permit for such larger events. Sufficient lead up time is required by the hirer to complete the POPE process. There is a fee for each POPE to be charged to the event hirer.
- 4.29 PMFC have also raised that the site does not have enough catering facilities for crowds of over 6000 and catering trucks had to be brought on site to address this need. This is not required to meet capacity or POPE requirements; however available food and water is required to meet PMFC liquor licencing regulations.

**Site Usage**

- 4.30 PMFC have provided expected numbers of high usage days for a regular season. It includes PMFC regular VFL games and finals, VFLW and AFLW requirements.
- 4.31 Table 3: Breakdown of PMFC usage over 1000 patrons

Expected Crowd	Times per year	Usage PMFC	Comments
500 to 2000	4 to 8	Home & Away Season	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• VFL fixture has 22 rounds for the season (Plus finals)</li> <li>• Spectator numbers depend on who they play</li> <li>• Expect around two larger crowd games per month</li> </ul>



6000	2	Home & Away Season	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some games attract higher crowds due to who is playing (i.e. grudge matches or AFL teams)</li> </ul>
6000	2 to 4	Finals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PMFC Home finals</li> <li>VFL neutral ground finals</li> </ul>

4.32 AFL identified that the site has the potential to become a critical AFLW venue for this season and beyond, due to the centralised location and broadcast lighting that has just been installed.

4.33 In the past NPO has also being considered as potential training and game venue for an AFLW team.

4.34 At this point AFL have not made a decision as to the timing of future AFLW seasons. This means under the current tenant clubs licence agreements that there could be between 2-8 games at this site:

- 4-8 games if the season runs between July to August.
- potentially 2 games if the season runs between Sept to Oct

4.35 Football games are restricted in and after September as NPO needs to be prepared for the pending cricket season. This includes approx. four weeks to establish the required turf wicket for the PMCC games which start 1 October.

4.36 Table 4: Estimated usage by VFLW & AFLW as provided by PMFC

Expected Crowd	Times per year	Usage	Comments
<b>VFLW</b>			
500 to 2000	7	Home & Away Season	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* VFLW fixture has 14 rounds for the season (plus finals)</li> </ul>
<b>AFLW</b>			
6000	2 to 8	AFLW Games	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>AFLW has 10 rounds for the season (plus finals)</li> <li>Eight games could only be played at NPO if the season returned to a July -August fixture</li> </ul>

4.37 PMCC have confirmed that the current facilities are suitable for their Home and Away season. The only time additional toilets may be needed would be if Cricket Victoria wish to access the ground.

### Planning

4.38 In planning for any change at NPO the following needs to be considered:

- Council have currently committed \$739K towards an upgrade for fencing, opening the ground to the public and improved cricket nets at NPO. Design in 22/23 and deliver in 23/24. The scope of this project could be extended to include toilet facilities.



- Many of the facilities at NPO are aging and most have some form of heritage overlay, making upgrades to current buildings difficult. We have engaged a heritage and condition audit to be undertaken across the site to better understand these restrictions.
- One of the current toilet blocks, including the disability access facility, is located behind the pavilion and has minimal passive surveillance. Facilities may not meet requirements of a gender equity or inclusion assessment.
- There is limited space within NPO to build new toilet facilities for 6000 patrons. Planning would need to be undertaken to determine where a new toilet block could be placed, noting soil contamination, undulating land, access to services, and impacts to the open space.
- NPO is located in the Fishermans Bend Urban Renewal Precinct and new opportunities may arise through the associated planning.
- Council is currently undertaking Sport and Recreation service planning across the whole of the municipality (including Fishermans Bend urban renewal precinct). This work will help identify current and future sporting needs across the municipality, including the identification and prioritisation of investment and capital projects.

### Options

4.39 The following options could be considered to address crowd capacity at NPO

#### Option 1: Capacity up to 2000 patrons (permanent)

- Cost up to \$100K
- This option would install an additional three female toilets on site or permanently repurpose male toilets.
- This quantity would meet the current needs of both tenant clubs for the majority of their use.
- Games or activities attracting crowds over current capacity would need to bring in their own infrastructure and temporary amenities

#### Option 2: Upgrade facilities to meet 6000 patrons

- Estimated cost:
  - o Toilets \$2.5m (would require further planning to understand full cost)\*
  - o \$20K – 27m of additional fence openings
- This would respond to the large event days for PMFC/VFL (2-6 games per year) and AFLW (2-8 games per year)
- \*The size of the building would roughly be around 200+ Sqm, impacting available open space around the ground.

4.40 It is recommended that we proceed with Option 1, upgrading the current facilities to include three more female sanitary facilities. This option meets the majority of the tenant club requirements. Further upgrades to toilets and fencing can be considered in the NPO Upgrade project, with design and feasibility work due to begin early in 2023.



## 5. CONSULTATION AND STAKEHOLDERS

- 5.1 PMFC is supportive of increasing the facilities on site and have provided statistics for this report.
- 5.2 PMCC have confirmed that the current facilities are suitable for their Home and Away season. The only time additional toilets may be needed would be if Cricket Victoria wish to access the ground.
- 5.3 Any significant changes/upgrades to NPO will include all site stakeholders (AFL Victoria, Cricket Victoria, PMFC and PMCC) and the local community

## 6. LEGAL AND RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The following regulations need to be addressed and considered to set the capacity levels and associated requirements at the site:
  - National Construction Code (NCC) regulations. This is the Standard used in Australia and for all major events held within the municipality
  - Building Regulations (Building Act 1993) - sets the legal framework for the regulation of building standards
  - The review and assessment applied the principles of the Australian Standard for Risk Management (ISO AS/NZ 31000)
  - Guidelines provided by applicable Occupational Health and Safety standards and legislation as well as industry standards for emergency planning (AS 3745).
  - Legislative Responsibilities (Sections of Building Act 1993) require the POPE to be implemented for crowds over 5000
- 6.2 When implemented correctly they lower risks and increase the safety for Council, the event provider and patrons.

## 7. FINANCIAL IMPACT

- 7.1 Project cost estimates are:
  - 100K for 2000 permanent capacity
  - \$2.5m for 6000 permanent capacity.
- 7.2 Ongoing cleaning for the existing two blocks of public toilets at North Port Oval is \$16,594.15 per year (2 cleans per day, 7 days per week). Further consideration and calculations would be required to assess ongoing maintenance and cleaning of additional permanent toilet structures.
- 7.3 The project is not currently funded within the Council Plan and Budget 2022/23. Funding and resourcing for the project would need to be diverted from other projects.
- 7.4 Currently the cost of temporary infrastructure is the responsibility of the venue hirer.
- 7.5 The current Council fee to hire NPO is \$534 per day, this will be reviewed as part of Council's Fees and Charges Policy review which is underway. The event hirer is required to pay the venue hire fee for each day of use.





- 7.6 There is currently \$739K in the Council Plan to design and deliver upgrades to fencing and cricket nets and to improve general access to NPO. Delivery due to be complete in 2024.

## 8. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

- 8.1 To construct a new permanent toilet block onsite would likely reduce the available open space of the venue.
- 8.2 New toilets constructed in CoPP are on reduced water flushes in line with Council sustainability principles

## 9. COMMUNITY IMPACT

- 9.1 Increased infrastructure will mean less passive open space in the venue and could impact on sightlines into the reserve
- 9.2 Increasing access to toilets will lead to improved health and safety outcomes for spectators and other patrons to the site and supports female visitation at the venue. Benefits of increased toilets can also be achieved through bringing in temporary toilets for events with large crowds.
- 9.3 Increasing access and egress points will also improve the safety for all patrons in case of an emergency.
- 9.4 Opportunities for larger games and increased participation, particularly women and sport. Larger games and bookings also provide opportunities for clubs to increase their revenue.

## 10. ALIGNMENT TO COUNCIL PLAN AND COUNCIL POLICY

- 10.1 The project aligns with the Council Plan 2021-2031:
- 10.2 Council Plan direction 1; Inclusive Port Phillip; a place for all members of our community, where people feel supported and comfortable being themselves and expressing their identities.
- 10.3 Council Plan direction 2; Liveable; a great place to live, where our community has access to high quality public spaces, development and growth are well-managed, and it is safer and easy to connect and travel within.
- 10.4 Council Plan direction 3; Sustainable Port Phillip; a sustainable future, where our environmentally aware and active community benefits from living in a bayside city that is greener, cooler, cleaner, and climate resilient.
- 10.5 Council Plan direction 4; Vibrant Port Phillip; a flourishing economy, where our community and local businesses thrive and we maintain and enhance our reputation as one of Melbourne's cultural and creative hubs.
- 10.6 The project also aligns with the following strategies:
- 10.7 Sports and Recreation Strategy 2015-2024; to plan, provide and maintain quality sport and recreation spaces for the Port Phillip community.
- 10.8 Public Space Strategy 2022-32; Diverse, attractive and inclusive  
Our public spaces are designed with all people and their needs in mind. Everyone, no matter their age, gender, ability or background, should feel welcome in our public spaces. Our spaces are able to host a variety of uses including active, informal and passive recreation for everyone to enjoy.



## 11. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

### TIMELINE

11.1 The following projects are already underway:

- Sport and Recreation Service Planning for the municipality (including NPO) – currently engaging consultants to undertake this work over the next 6 months
- Heritage and condition audits of NPO

11.2 Late 2022 - Engage with the AFL and PMFC about their upcoming larger events at NPO, including consideration to assist them with the POPE process and compliance requirements

11.3 Nov/December 2022 – begin designing any upgrades to the toilet facilities and fencing at NPO

11.4 Early 2023 – begin feasibility and design for the upgrade to NPO fencing, community access and cricket nets. To be delivered in 2024.

### COMMUNICATION

11.5 Provide an update to PMFC and PMCC regarding the outcomes of the site assessment for spectators

11.6 Early 2023 consult with PMFC and PMCC regarding the NPO upgrades.

11.7 Continue to keep key stakeholders and Councillors informed of the NPO upgrade project.

## 12. OFFICER DIRECT OR INDIRECT INTEREST

12.1 No officers involved in the preparation of this report have any material or general interest in the matter.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

Nil