

10 September 2025

Subject: Norman Griffiths Upgrade - FOKE submission

Dear Mayor Kaye

RE: Norman Griffiths Oval Upgrade

Friends of Ku-ring-gai Environment (FOKE) supports ecologically sustainable development and that is why we support the upgrade of the Norman Griffith oval to natural turf. We opposed council's original decision to replace the natural grass oval with synthetic turf.

The health of the environment and safety of its citizens should be a priority by Council in what is now a world of increasing climate change, plastic pollution and environmental collapse.

FOKE believes on merit that natural turf presents the following advantages over synthetic

1. Natural turf is devoid of the chemical compounds which constitute synthetic grass fibres and supporting materials. The synthetic fibres break off and chemicals leach out. These chemical compounds present as health risk to humans and wildlife. The increased capacity of a natural turf field is possible if council commits to funding best drainage and maintenance management.
2. Natural turf provides a softer, cooler, and more forgiving playing surface, reducing stress on athletes' joints and bodies and offering a more comfortable playing experience.
3. Natural grass is more environmentally friendly by absorbing CO₂, releasing oxygen, and cooling local temperatures, while potentially having lower installation and long-term costs than synthetic fields.
4. Natural grass offers numerous environmental benefits, from reducing carbon emissions to improving air and water quality which helps reduce council's carbon footprint and makes a positive impact on the environment. Real grass is a natural air purifier, removing pollutants and allergens from the air.
5. Natural grass acts as a natural water filter, absorbing rainwater and reducing the amount of runoff that enters the stormwater system. This is important because stormwater runoff can carry pollutants and chemicals into our waterways, damaging aquatic ecosystems and threatening public health.
6. Natural grass can be maintained using organic and sustainable practices, such as using compost as a natural fertiliser, thus avoiding the use of harmful pesticides and herbicides.
7. Natural grass can be easily recycled and composted at the end of its lifecycle, reducing landfill waste and in supporting a circular economy.

8. Natural grass can help to provide a natural habitat for wildlife and supports biodiversity which is in decline. The area is a mapped wildlife corridor for microbats and the Powerful Owl.
9. By choosing natural grass over synthetic turf or concrete, supports a more sustainable and eco-friendlier lifestyle while enjoying numerous environmental and health benefits.
10. The increased capacity of a natural turf field is possible if council commits to funding best drainage and maintenance management.

Across the world there is a growing movement both at state and local levels to restrict the use of synthetic or artificial turf use due to concerns over environmental damage, microplastics, toxic chemicals like PFAS, and increased urban heat island effects.

Council does have a choice as the cost of completing the project is similar for both synthetic and natural turf, so Council's finances are not compromised or increased in installing natural grass.

As councillors you have a responsibility for the long-term interest of the wider community and the health and safety of its residents in providing facilities that minimise injury or harm.

We urge you to complete Norman Griffith Oval as natural turf.

Yours sincerely

Kathy Cowley

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PRESIDENT

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