

Media release
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Sport and recreation at risk under proposed Auckland Plan and Long-term Plan

Sport, recreation, physical activity – however it is described – requires more recognition and investment in Auckland Council’s “refreshed” Auckland Plan and draft Long-term Plan (LTP) for 2018-28 says Active – Auckland Sport & Recreation (Active).

The sport and recreation sector contributes at least \$1.76 billion to the Auckland economy, employing more than 17,000 people. There are also 308,880 volunteers who contribute 22.1 million hours of their time each year, organising thousands of formal and informal opportunities for hundreds of thousands of people.

Dr Sarah Sandley, Chief Executive Officer, Active says all Aucklanders regardless of age, ethnicity and ability should be able to participate in sport, recreation or physical activity in fit for purpose facilities and spaces to enable them to live active, healthy lives, with positive health, community and economic benefits.

“Sport and recreation connects people and all Aucklanders deserve opportunities to participate. Auckland Council is the major provider of our sports and recreation facilities. We appreciate this support and investment – without it, much of what happens in our sector wouldn’t be possible,” says Dr Sandley.

“But from the limited comparative information available, there appears to be insufficient investment into sport and recreation in the draft LTP – this is concerning. Not only do facilities need to be upgraded and maintained to ensure their longevity, but new facilities are required to address the current shortfall and the rapid growth in Auckland’s population – these needs are applicable to both indoor and outdoor spaces.

“In addition, the draft Auckland Plan relegates sport, recreation and physical activity from a chapter of its own in the current version (Chapter 5) to barely being acknowledged. The Auckland Plan is a reference point for Auckland Council investment so this exclusion represents another blow to sport and recreation.”

Inadequate investment in sport, recreation and physical activity in Auckland risks driving participation rates down. Physical inactivity cost New Zealand’s health care system over \$200 million in 2013. 32% of New Zealand children are expected to be overweight or obese by 2025, with 21% of 4-year-old children in Auckland already overweight or obese.

Furthermore, the availability of spaces and facilities is already failing to meet demand in certain areas. Known, current, and well-researched regional facility plans prepared by sports codes demonstrate current, short-, and medium- term shortfalls in facility provision, including gaps of approximately 30 indoor courts 70 outdoor netball courts and 40 outdoor tennis courts; as well as winter sports fields shortfall in hours the equivalent of circa 50 artificial turfs.

“Without sufficient investment, our current and future community sport and recreation spaces are further compromised,” says Dr Sandley. “This means our growing, increasingly diverse population won’t have adequate access to suitable infrastructure to participate in physical activity – whether it’s a competitive rugby match, social tennis, school sports events or a friendly game of kilikiti. Even with the increase in funding for renewals indicated in the draft LTP, Council has acknowledged that there will be a decreased level of service, deteriorating assets, and risk of failure and asset closure.

“As a sector we are aligned and collaborating to ensure every Council dollar is invested wisely for maximum return in benefits to the community. Aucklanders love to be active so it’s critical we have a say and get involved in protecting sport and recreation investment and support,” states Dr Sandley.

Key aspects include to advocate that budgets for capital investment in both renewals and growth for parks, recreation and community facilities in the draft LTP are increased, and Local Boards’ key local priorities that relate to sport and recreation are fully funded. A further aspect is to advocate that the Auckland Plan acknowledges the enormous contribution that sport, recreation and physical activity makes to the wellbeing of all Aucklanders, of all ages, social levels and ethnicities, as well the part it plays in meeting the outcomes identified in the Plan.

All Aucklanders can make submissions on the Auckland Plan and Long-term Plan to Auckland Council, with public consultation open now to 8pm, 28 March 2018. Ways people can have their say are detailed on www.akhaveyoursay.nz.

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About Aktive

Aktive - Auckland Sport & Recreation is a charitable trust that has been established to make Auckland the world’s most active city. It is a key strategic partner of Sport NZ, Auckland Council and major grant makers and funders. Aktive invests more than \$11m per annum in a range of delivery partners, organisations and projects that will get more people recreating and playing sport in Auckland, with focuses on young people and identified communities. For more information visit <http://aktive.org.nz>