

Engagement Summary Report

Strategic Sports Plan



Overview

We are undertaking a review and update of our Strategic Sports Plan, originally adopted in 2020, to provide a long-term framework to guide investment in outdoor sports and recreation facilities across the Newcastle Local Government Area (LGA). A key component of the review is undertaking detailed community and stakeholder engagement. This has occurred across two phases:

Phase 1

In early 2026, initial engagement with state and national sporting associations and organisations was undertaken to collect data that has contributed to research and analysis to guide Phase 2 engagement activities. This included:



29

survey responses
from key user
groups



30

sporting organisation
representatives attended
a workshop



75

club and association
representatives participated
in workshops at the Sports
Summit

Phase 2

Between 1 April and 11 May 2026, community consultation was undertaken with local users, the community, and external stakeholders to identify challenges and collaborate on exploring future directions. Engagement activities included a dedicated Have Your Say webpage, widespread promotion through flyers, signage, social media, newsletters, media and partner campaigns, and six pop-up stalls across the city. This resulted in:



1,193

survey responses



199

quick poll votes



228

in-person
conversations

Note - While the survey was opt-in and not statistically representative of the broader population, it provided a substantial and diverse body of qualitative and quantitative feedback that will inform the development of a refined Newcastle Strategic Sports Plan.

Our reach

During the engagement period, a communications campaign informed the community of the project and promoted the opportunity for people to provide feedback.



A media release was issued on 1 April 2026, with 118 media contacts notified.



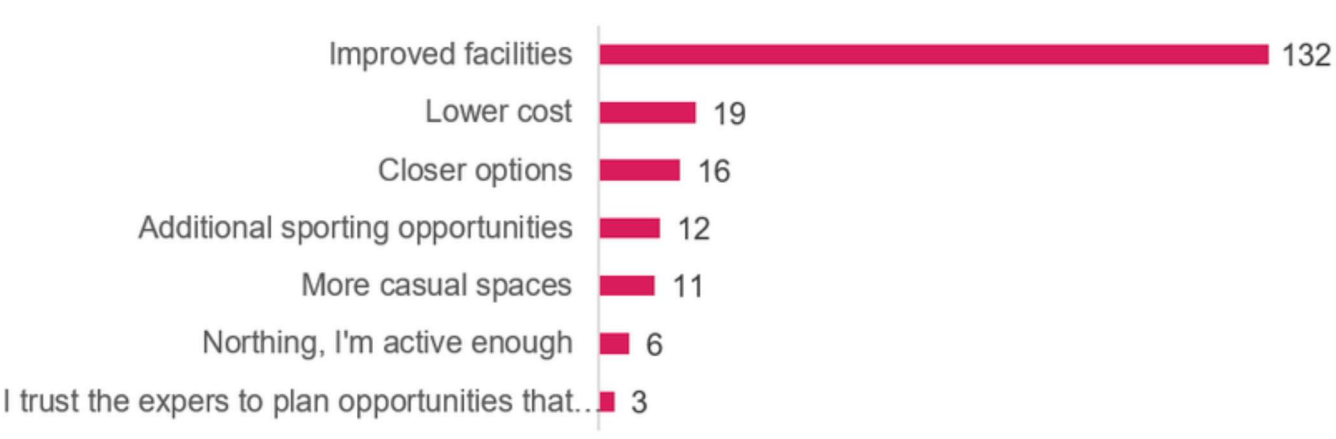
Promotion via our newsletter Newcastle Connect during the consultation period.

What we heard

Quick poll

A brief community poll was conducted as a low-barrier entry point to participation in the consultation process. The poll was designed to provide the community with a concise and accessible way to participate.

Results of the quick poll, in response to the question: **‘What would make you more active in Newcastle?’** are presented below:



Key stakeholder feedback

Engagement was undertaken with state and national sporting associations and organisations to gather insights that informed the research and analysis underpinning Phase 2 engagement activities. Feedback from these stakeholders identified the following key themes:

- Sporting participation is growing across most codes, with many clubs approaching or exceeding capacity, resulting in approximately half of clubs operating at capacity and some turning participants away.
- Facility access, condition and capacity are the primary constraints on growth, with access to suitable playing space consistently identified as the most significant barrier.
- Weather impacts are a critical issue, with ongoing disruptions to training and competition due to poor drainage and prolonged rainfall, significantly affecting seasonal continuity.
- Drainage, playing surfaces and lighting are the highest priority infrastructure investments, consistently identified as essential to improving capacity, reliability and quality of use.
- Existing amenities are widely viewed as outdated, undersized and not fit-for-purpose, particularly in supporting female participation and inclusive use.
- Clubs are adapting through modified formats and flexible programming, supporting participation growth but reinforcing underlying infrastructure constraints.
- There is strong support for shared use of facilities to optimise existing assets, including partnerships with schools, the university and other organisations, although operational challenges (e.g. scheduling and facility wear) remain.
- Stakeholders identified the need for improved CN coordination and communication, including more streamlined processes, clearer points of contact and improved administration systems.
- Barriers to participation for priority groups, including culturally and linguistically diverse communities, highlight the importance of inclusive facility design, improved communication and targeted engagement approaches.

Community feedback

Community consultation was undertaken with local users, the community, and external stakeholders to identify challenges and collaborate on future directions. Engagement activities included a dedicated Have Your Say webpage, widespread promotion through flyers, signage, social media, newsletters, media and partner campaigns, and six pop-up stalls across the city. Community feedback highlighted the following key themes:

- Participation in sport and recreation is high and frequent, with strong use of both organised sport and informal recreation across a wide range of facility types.
- There is a strong perception that existing facilities are not keeping pace with demand, with many participants identifying limitations in quality, capacity and availability.
- Facility condition and modernisation are the most prominent issues, with ageing infrastructure, poor maintenance and outdated amenities impacting user experience across the network.
- Drainage and surface performance are key concerns, with wet weather regularly limiting access to fields and reducing participation opportunities.
- Lighting and safety are key priorities, with demand for increased lighting to support evening use, improve safety and extend facility capacity.
- Female participation is increasing, with strong demand for inclusive, safe and equitable facilities, particularly modern, female-friendly amenities.
- Demand is diversifying beyond traditional field sports, with gaps identified in infrastructure for emerging and growing activities such as pickleball, basketball and cycling.
- The community places strong value on high-quality, accessible and safe facilities, with health, social connection and enjoyment identified as key participation drivers.
- Key barriers to participation include facility availability, condition and weather impacts, alongside access-related challenges such as transport and parking.
- Across all engagement activities, there is consistent prioritisation of playing surface improvements, lighting and amenities upgrades as the most critical areas for future investment.

Next steps

We will continue to review and analyse the outcomes of community consultation and incorporate community feedback into the Strategic Sports Plan review process.

The project has now progressed to the next stage, with the Demand Analysis, Preliminary Directions and Opportunities Assessment (Phase 3) completed and the Draft Plan Development (Phase 4) currently underway. These stages have built on the findings from community engagement, technical investigations and stakeholder feedback to help shape the future direction of sport and recreation planning across Newcastle.

Following completion of the draft plan, it will be placed on public exhibition providing the community with another opportunity to have their say.

Feedback from the public exhibition will then be considered before finalising the plan and reporting to Council for adoption.

We will continue to keep the community informed as the project progresses and will provide further opportunities for community participation at key stages of the plan's development, including during the public exhibition period.

The detailed consultation report is available on the Strategic Sports Plan project page at newcastle.nsw.gov.au/yoursay.

Thank you for helping to shape the future of sport and recreation in Newcastle.

