

## **Mosman Hockey Junior Club**

### **Submission in Support of State Significant Development Application SSD-73688210 Queenwood School Sporting Facilities 1100 Oxford Falls Road, Oxford Falls**

To the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure,

Mosman Hockey Junior Club writes in strong support of the proposed Queenwood School Sporting Facilities development at 1100 Oxford Falls Road, Oxford Falls (Application No. SSD-73688210).

Our club represents junior hockey players and their families across the Mosman and Lower North Shore area. We are an affiliated club of the Northern Sydney and Beaches (NSB) Hockey Association, one of the largest hockey associations in New South Wales, representing more than 5,500 members across a catchment stretching from Mosman to Palm Beach. The proposed outdoor multipurpose pitch with a synthetic surface is of direct and significant importance to the growth and sustainability of junior hockey in our region.

#### **A Critical Infrastructure Gap**

Despite the size and strength of the hockey community across the Northern Beaches and Lower North Shore, there is effectively only one full-size synthetic hockey pitch serving this entire region. The Northern Sydney and Beaches catchment covers a vast area with thousands of active players, yet the ratio of synthetic playing surfaces to participants is dramatically inadequate. To put this in perspective, it would be the equivalent of the local junior soccer or rugby community attempting to operate with a single playing field. No other major junior sport in our area faces this degree of infrastructure constraint.

This is not a reflection of poor planning or lack of advocacy. The Northern Beaches and Lower North Shore are physically constrained by harbour waterways, limited flat land, and intense competition for space driven by high-density residential development. Councils have understandably prioritised multi-sport grass fields and shared school facilities. The result, however, is that dedicated synthetic hockey infrastructure has never been delivered in our region — despite more than fifty years of sustained effort by the hockey community. The willingness of a private partner such as Queenwood School to invest in a facility that includes a synthetic pitch represents a rare and valuable opportunity to address this longstanding gap.

#### **Travel Burden on Families**

The absence of a local synthetic facility means that every training session and competitive match on turf requires our junior players and their families to travel well outside the region. Families regularly make journeys to venues at Homebush, Pennant Hills, Daceyville, and beyond — trips that frequently exceed an hour each way during peak traffic. For young children attending weeknight training or early weekend fixtures, this places an unreasonable and sustained demand on families, particularly those with multiple children, working parents, or limited transport flexibility. The cumulative toll across a full season is significant, consuming time, energy, and family resources that could be far better directed toward the children and their development.

## **Barrier to Entry and Participation**

This infrastructure shortfall acts as a direct barrier to entry for junior hockey. Families considering hockey for their children are immediately confronted with the reality that meaningful participation will require regular travel outside the region. For many — particularly those with younger children or those unfamiliar with the sport — this commitment is simply too great. Hockey cannot compete on a level playing field with other junior sports such as rugby, soccer, netball, and cricket, all of which benefit from accessible local facilities across the Lower North Shore and Northern Beaches. Children who might otherwise discover a lifelong passion for hockey never get the opportunity because the practical hurdles are too high before they even pick up a stick.

This is especially frustrating because interest in hockey is not the problem. Our club has experienced strong and sustained growth through entry-level programs including Play and Learn sessions, mixed junior teams, and indoor hockey development pathways. The demand is clearly there. What is missing is the infrastructure to support that demand beyond the introductory stage.

## **A Broken Pathway from Grassroots to Competition**

The current junior hockey pathway in our region is fundamentally disrupted. Children begin locally — on grass fields, in indoor programs, or through school-based introductions — and develop a genuine enthusiasm for the sport. However, the moment they are ready to progress to competitive hockey on a synthetic surface, they are forced to leave the region entirely. The pathway effectively looks like this: local entry, followed by regional travel dependency, followed by a travel-heavy competition schedule. This is not a sustainable model for grassroots growth.

For a club focused on developing junior players, this structural break in the pathway is our greatest challenge. It means we can attract children into hockey, but we cannot offer them a complete local experience as they develop. The proposed facility at Oxford Falls would close this gap and allow us to offer a genuine pathway from first introduction through to competitive junior hockey within our own region.

## **Dropout and Retention of Junior Players**

The combined effect of travel demands, limited facility access, and a fragmented pathway contributes directly to player dropout. We observe a clear and concerning pattern of both girls and boys leaving hockey as they progress through their junior years. As children enter secondary school, the competing demands on their time intensify — academic workloads increase, social commitments grow, and families are forced to make difficult choices about which activities to sustain. When hockey requires hours of travel that other locally supported sports do not, it is frequently the activity that is sacrificed.

This is a particular concern for girls' participation. Retention of girls through the teenage years is already a recognised challenge across all junior sports, and the additional burden of travel and limited facility access compounds this problem significantly. Every junior player lost to dropout weakens not only our club but the broader pipeline that sustains hockey at association, state, and national representative levels. Growing and retaining female participation in sport is a

stated priority at every level of government, and this facility would make a tangible contribution toward that goal.

### **A Facility That Would Transform Junior Hockey in Our Region**

The proposed development at Oxford Falls would directly and meaningfully address each of these issues. A synthetic pitch within the Northern Beaches and Lower North Shore region would dramatically reduce travel times for families, lower the barrier to entry for new participants, provide a complete local pathway from grassroots to competition, and give existing junior players — both girls and boys — a compelling reason to stay in the sport. It would allow our club and the broader hockey community to grow in a way that is sustainable, accessible, and family-friendly.

Mosman Hockey Junior Club is committed to working collaboratively with Queenwood School and the NSB Hockey Association to maximise the use of the facility for junior hockey training, competition, and community development programs. We see this as a genuine partnership that would benefit the school, the hockey community, and the wider Northern Beaches region.

We strongly urge the Department to approve this application. It represents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to address a decades-long infrastructure gap and deliver lasting benefits for junior sport participation, health outcomes, and community wellbeing across the Northern Beaches and Lower North Shore.

Yours sincerely,

Greg Bible  
President Mosman Hockey Junior Club