

Submission in Support of the Hunter Indoor Sports Centre (HISC) - SSD-65595459

Introduction

I write in strong support of the proposed Hunter Indoor Sports Centre (HISC) at Broadmeadow, as outlined in the State Significant Development Application and accompanying documentation. This facility represents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to deliver a modern, inclusive and sustainable indoor sporting venue for Newcastle and the Hunter, with benefits extending across the local, regional, and state levels.

1. Strategic and Community Need

Meeting Demand for Indoor Sport

The socio-economic impact assessment demonstrates significant unmet demand for indoor sport in the Lower Hunter. Current venues are ageing (with Newcastle Basketball Stadium now 55 years old) and at capacity, restricting participation growth and athlete development. HISC will deliver contemporary, flexible courts and infrastructure to support participation at grassroots, community and elite levels. The current facilities in the Lower Hunter are unable to support growing participation in basketball, netball, futsal, gymnastics, and other indoor sports

Strategic Need and Site Suitability

The project aligns with multiple policy frameworks, including:

- Planning alignment:
 - o Hunter Regional Plan 2041 and Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Plan 2036, which call for investment in community infrastructure and active recreation facilities.
 - o City of Newcastle Strategic Sports Plan and Hunter Regional Sport and Active Recreation Plan, which highlight the need for modern multi-court indoor facilities.
 - o Broadmeadow Place Strategy, which designates this precinct as the city's pre-eminent sports and entertainment hub.
- Permissibility: The site is zoned RE1 Public Recreation, and the proposed use as a "Recreation Facility - Major" is permissible and appropriate under the Newcastle LEP 2012. The site's location - at the heart of the emerging Broadmeadow Sports and Entertainment Precinct - makes it ideal for a venue of this nature.

2. Design and Environmental Excellence

Architectural and Landscape Design

The design has been reviewed through the State Design Review Panel and revised to improve pedestrian connectivity, public domain interface and landscape integration. The architectural design incorporates cultural narratives and contextual references to Newcastle's sandstone forms, while the landscape masterplan reflects local ecology and Country, providing shaded promenades, swales and tree canopy.

Design Quality and Environmental Excellence

- Responsive Amendments: The building footprint and carpark have been shifted west to allow for a grassed flood swale, reducing flood risks and providing a landscaped buffer along Turton Road. Four trees previously proposed for removal will now be retained.
- Architecture and Landscape: The façade uses sandstone-inspired cladding and glazing for articulation, while landscape plans integrate shaded promenades, stormwater-sensitive design, and green buffers.
- Sustainability: The project embeds Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD) principles, including a Green Travel Plan, EV-readiness, and embodied carbon tracking (Appendix V, Y, KK).
- Connecting with Country: The design incorporates cultural narratives and acknowledges Awabakal Country, embedding Indigenous values into the built form and public domain.

Connecting with Country

The project has been guided by Indigenous design principles through collaboration with Belanjee and the Local Aboriginal Land Council, ensuring cultural values, storytelling, and respect for Awabakal Country are embedded in both the built form and landscape.

Mitigation of Environmental Impacts

A comprehensive suite of mitigation measures addresses potential impacts during both construction and operation, consistent with ISO 31000 risk management standards. These include controls on construction noise, staged landscaping for early visual screening, stormwater and flooding management, and traffic/parking strategies. Following implementation, residual impacts are assessed as low or negligible.

3. Addressing Key Concerns

Most concerns have been constructively addressed through:

- Revised flood modelling and drainage swale to reduce offsite flood risk.
- Reconfigured vehicle access and carpark to improve safety and reduce traffic conflicts.
- Mitigation of noise and operational impacts through detailed acoustic planning and event management controls.
- Commitment to ongoing community engagement throughout the construction and operational phases.

Flooding

A revised Flood Impact Assessment and Flood Emergency Response Plan, peer-reviewed by Watertech, confirms the project's flood risk management is robust, with design modifications to reduce off-site impacts and increase safety in emergency events.

Traffic and Parking

Updated SIDRA modelling and a site-specific Traffic Management Plan ensure safe, efficient operation during both everyday use and major events. Public transport access is strong, with bus and rail options nearby, and active transport infrastructure has been incorporated (including cycleway corridors and widened footpaths).

Visual and Amenity Impacts

The Visual Impact Assessment concludes that Stage 1 of the project will have negligible visual impact, while full build-out (Stage 2) will result in low to moderate impacts, mitigated through landscaping and façade treatments. The setting within a developed sports precinct further reduces sensitivity.

Social and Green Space Considerations

While some concerns were raised about green space loss, the socio-economic assessment finds that relocation of displaced sporting clubs to alternative facilities, combined with the expanded indoor capacity, will deliver a net social and community benefit. The project enhances opportunities for youth, schools, women and girls, people with disabilities, and culturally diverse groups to access safe, all-weather facilities.

Community and Agency Engagement

The Response To Submissions and Appendix B detail extensive and responsive engagement with:

- Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) - leading to critical refinements in flood design;
- City of Newcastle - leading to critical refinements in flood design;
- Transport for NSW - leading to critical refinements in traffic and parking;
- Venues NSW - leading to critical refinements in parking;
- Stakeholder groups including:
 - o Local residents,
 - o Sporting bodies, and
 - o Accessibility advocates.

Importantly, the proponents have amended the project to preserve more green space, improve pedestrian safety, and consolidate construction staging to limit disruption.

4. Economic and Social Benefits

- Construction Phase: creation of hundreds of direct and indirect jobs.
- Ongoing Operation: significant employment and volunteer opportunities across sport, events, hospitality and facility management.
- Economic Uplift: increased visitation and sports tourism, spill over benefits for local businesses and accommodation providers.
- Health and Productivity: improved community wellbeing and physical activity participation, reducing long-term health costs.
- Social Inclusion: dedicated design for universal access, programs for under-represented groups, and partnerships with local schools and community organisations.

Conclusion

The Hunter Indoor Sports Centre represents a transformative investment in Newcastle and the Hunter Region's sporting and community infrastructure. The proposal has undergone extensive design refinement, agency consultation, and mitigation planning. It addresses environmental, traffic, and social concerns comprehensively, while delivering clear strategic, economic and social benefits.

On this basis, I urge approval of SSD-65595459 to enable delivery of a facility that will serve current and future generations of the Hunter community.