

3.0 - THE NEED FOR AN INDOOR 12 COURT SPORTS CENTRE FOR WELLINGTON

“A 12 court indoor community sports centre presents a unique opportunity to contribute to the aim of getting more Wellingtonians more active, more often, through regular physical activity and addressing health issues resulting from increased sedentary lifestyles.”

3.1 The Status of indoor community court-based sports facilities in Wellington

“Wellington has fallen well behind the rest of New Zealand in this area - it means fewer people are active and we miss out on hosting sports events such as school and other national tournaments because we don't have a good enough facility.”

Wellington City does not currently have an indoor court-based sports facility. Key sports codes such as netball, basketball, volleyball, handball, and other minority sports, currently use the following facilities:

Netball

Netball Wellington Centre is based at Hataitai Park where it has 14 outdoor courts and its administrative base. Netball is a game traditionally played outside and now moving progressively indoors in an effort to provide safe playing surfaces to avoid injury and eliminate the effects of inclement weather. Demand is unable to be met particularly in social leagues due to inadequate facilities and junior competitions are spread over five satellite sites with poor-quality facilities and playing surfaces across the city.

Basketball

The Wellington Basketball Association operates out of two courts referred to as the South West Stadium in a complex formerly known as the Wellington Show Buildings. The South West Stadium was not purpose-built to accommodate the needs of basketball so has been adapted since the basketball stadium at Newtown Park was burnt down in 1998. Both courts in the current home for Wellington basketball operations are sub-standard and deteriorating to a point that they will be unusable within 2 years.

Volleyball

Wellington Volleyball players compete at the Walter Nash Stadium, which has three inferior courts, in Hutt City and at the newly completed 4-court Te Rauparaha Arena in Porirua. There are no adequate facilities for volleyball in Wellington and team training is dispersed across the city in single-court school gymnasiums where space and access is severely limited. Tournaments are not held in Wellington and when Wellington Volleyball is awarded regional or national competition hosting rights it holds tournaments in other regions such as Manawatu and Wanganui with any direct benefits accruing to those centres and not Wellington.

Handball and other minority indoor sports

Minority sports such as handball, korfbal and indoor soccer feed off the scraps of facility space left over after major codes have filled up the variety of small indoor spaces across the city.

Aside from community halls and recreation centres, school gymnasiums and warehouses, venues such as the Chinese Sports and Cultural Centre, and the Victoria University Recreation Centre provide variable opportunities but are too small, have no markings, goals or are too costly. Venues such as the TSB Arena and Te Rauparaha Arena are not considered for hosting community sports tournaments as they cost the minor sports too much to hire. The ability for these sports to increase participation is severely impacted by the absence of any appropriate playing and training venues.

The current venue limitations result in:

- A lack of availability of suitable timeslots for each of the sports
- Safety issues for players, coaches, umpires and referees related to the poor quality of sports floors and surfaces.
- Inadequately sized playing spaces and courts with insufficient area for safe 'run off' space
- Limited numbers of teams participating in competition/round-robins because of limited physical courts or co-locations of courts for teams involved
- Wellington sports associations hosting sports tournaments but holding the event in other cities
- Games being cancelled due to conflicts of use ('getting bumped'), or poor weather conditions (for outdoor courts)
- Limited opportunities to increase competitiveness and success of Wellingtons sports people and/or hold regional or national competitions or championships due to no adequate facilities built to national sports code standards
- No large-scale facility to host large numbers participating in schools sports activities such as the Sports Hall Athletics Programme

3.2 The Starting Point for the ICSC Project

"Wellington needs a quality training and playing facility for indoor community sports such as netball, basketball and volleyball – many other minority sports will certainly benefit too."

In 1999 the court-based sports of basketball, netball and volleyball approached the Regional Sports Trust to ask for its help to pull together a proposal for an indoor facility for use by the community for their sports in the first instance, but which would also be available for other sports.

All these sports could demonstrate additional demand for people of all ages to play their sports but they did not have the facilities available to cater for this untapped demand. For the three cornerstone sports, the new facilities were needed primarily for community-based games for 'everyday' Wellingtonians to take part in.

For basketball and volleyball there was no facility available where they could play a number of games at one time. For netball their only option was outdoors. Leading up to this joint approach to the Regional Sports Trust in 1999, the Wellington Basketball Association's two-court facility at Newtown Park burnt down in 1998 and, at the same time, netball had approached the Council to cover one of the courts at Hataitai.

The three main sports had identified the following sports that also had demand for and were interested in using such a facility:

- Handball and korfball
- Table tennis
- Martial arts
- Gymnastics
- Movement and dance
- Archery and climbing
- Athletics.

Following extensive consultation with the sports that would use this facility, critical elements for success were identified to be:

- Single-purpose use dedicated to community sports
- Available 365 days a year, 15 hours a day
- Built to national and international sport code standards for netball, basketball and volleyball
- Safe, secure access for users
- Onsite car parking.

Separate to the needs of the sports, the Council has a Social and Recreation Strategy which is within its Council's Long Term Council Community Plan (LTCCP). In this strategy the Council aims to promote healthy lifestyles and build strong communities. Making Wellington a healthier city means:

- Promoting recreation programmes and increasing participation
- Continuing and enhancing provision of recreation facilities and their programmes, including swimming pools, recreation centres, playgrounds, parks and sportsfields
- Promoting high standards of public health through regulation, advocacy and support (including the regulation of food premises, liquor licensing, managing the city's burials and cremations).

For the period 2006-2009 of its LTCCP the Council identified three priorities in relation to getting more Wellingtonians, more active, more often. These are:

- Working harder to increase the value of community facilities to their communities
- Building capability and capacity within the community to promote social cohesion and sound social infrastructure
- Increasing the Council efforts to promote participation in sport and recreation, particularly for youth.

To support its Social and Recreation objective the Council role is to provide services for community sport, recreation and leisure opportunities for the people of Wellington. It has a network of recreation facilities and assets and through these provides a broad range of programmes with an emphasis on encouraging physical activity both in the outdoors and indoors.

The provision of an indoor community sports centre is related to achieving the aspirations of this strategy.

The Council has observed that when other communities had built dedicated indoor court-based community sport centres there had been significant growth year on year in 'everyday grassroots' participation in the sports, including the development of new sports (Appendix 6).

3.3 The TSB Arena (formally known as the Queens Wharf Events Centre)

“The TSB Arena has given priority to high-earning events and functions at the expense of use by community sports.”

The TSB Arena, opened in 1995, is a multi-use centre which includes provision for court-based sport (three courts). The intended purpose of the centre was to provide for both community sport needs and attract events to Wellington that had economic benefit. Court-based sports organisations in Wellington were invited to use this facility when it opened, but found that there were significant limitations regarding access and usage.

The TSB Arena was designed to be a multi-purpose facility meeting the needs of an extensive range of users. In order to achieve the desired commercial return the Arena has increasingly given priority to high-earning events and functions at the expense of use by community sport – some events are booked with very short lead times.

When functions were on, including the set-up and dismantle phases (sometimes requiring a day either side of the event/function) the sports can not access the Arena – i.e. they were 'bumped' from their scheduled playing time and had to either cancel games or find somewhere else to go.

For the sports this was frustrating as they would have to get the message out to all players affected and competition structures could be interrupted. The commercial imperative for the TSB Arena also meant that the base rates they would charge for sports were fully commercial, which limited the affordability of the venue for some sports. This contrasts with the Council's funding policy which subsidises community sports use of its recreation centres by up to 70%.

In addition because of the multi-use nature of the Arena (it is designed for concerts, functions, banquets, events, shows and sports) the court sizes do not fully meet the standards (size and run-off) and safety requirements for all sports on all of the courts.

These issues mean the TSB Arena cannot support the growth potential desired by sports bodies or the Council in regard to getting Wellingtonians active through participation in court-based

sports. The TSB Arena currently has a significant number of days of committed event activity each year and forecasts this continuing into the future.

3.4 Multi-purpose versus single-purpose for a Community Sports Facility

“The key issue with multi-purpose centres is that community sports get ‘bumped off’ in favour of other events and sports participation does not meet its full potential.”

Multi-purpose facilities reflect those centres that have multiple outcomes and objectives - which include non-sport activities such as concerts, exhibitions, trade shows, social functions and events.

Discussions with the managers of TSB Arena and Westpac Stadium, as well as community based sports organisations, identified significant issues for community sports using multi-purpose facilities.

Access

The first and most important issue is the lack of consistent access for sports, with community sports use having a lower priority over revenue-earning commercial events and activities (as is the case of the TSB Arena and Westpac Stadium) and/or owner-initiated events (eg in the case of school community halls and gymnastics). This means community sports have to cancel competitions. An example of this is handball which has endeavoured to use the TSB Arena (albeit that the courts are smaller than the official requirement) but lack of availability on a regular basis, and costs, have seen the sport suffer. The impact of an event on availability of the courts for sports activity is not just lack of access during the event day (or days) itself, but also the time spent with the ‘pack in’ and ‘pack out’ of an event.

Cost

The second issue is the cost to community sports to use commercially-run venues, where hire costs and rental charges makes it uneconomic for sports to access for participation level use (especially for lower socio-economic players, communities and lower-decile schools and not-for-profit organisations).

Safety and Compliance

The third issue is lack of compliance with the court/runoff standards for the various sports codes. This means teams aren’t training on courts that will be compatible if they go on to compete in zone, region or national competition. It also can create safety issues for players, coaches and referees where run-off spaces are insufficient.

Damage

Finally, sports floors are generally not designed for activity and use that is not sport-related. By their very nature, some of the multi-purpose events mentioned above are more ‘rugged’ with damage and degradation to sport facilities and related fixtures and fittings being commonplace, resulting in higher maintenance costs.

3.5 Lessons From Other Centres

Appendix 6 summarises key learnings from other community court-based sports centres in New Zealand including the Edgar Centre - Dunedin, Stadium Southland - Invercargill, Arena Manawatu - Palmerston North, Trusts Stadium - Waitakere City and the Energy Events Centre - Rotorua.

The key learnings from these court-based centres can be summarised as follows:

- All are located within 5-15 minutes of the CBD
- Some have good bus servicing, while others don't and several are within walking distance of the CBD.
- 85-95% of users of all of these centres travel to the venue by private motor vehicle.
- All centres have experienced year-on-year strong growth in court-based sports as well as non-court-based sports (such as indoor cricket, hockey, and soccer). The Edgar Centre had 120,000 attendances in 1994 when it opened and now has 500,000 per year, and has 27 different sports being played.
- Growth has included big increases in recreational programmes such as evening social leagues, school programmes etc.
- Occupancy ranges from 50-70% off-peak and 100% at peak for all of these centres.
- Court numbers to population are 21/118,613 Dunedin, 11/50,328 Invercargill, 14/75,543 Palmerston North, 6/186,444 Waitakere, and 7/65,901 for Rotorua. The ratio for Wellington for a 12-court facility will be 12/192,500.
- Carparking ratios per court range from 11 in Invercargill to 70 in Waitakere. Dunedin's Edgar Centre has 19 carparks per court. The ratios for the Cobham and Concourse options are 26/court and 20/court respectively

3.6 Projected Demand

"It's apparent that the ICSC will operate at capacity at peak times when it opens – a subsequent decision on where to build the second centre to ensure these sports continue to grow and meet demand is inevitable."

Key sports organisations and the Council were asked to identify current levels of participation, what percentage of their use would be by 'everyday' Wellingtonians versus elite athletes, and consider future demand once the new centre reaches full capacity.

The three proposed anchor sports codes who will be users of the centre have substantial membership and all identified that existing demand is not being met. These codes have indicative levels of utilisation which indicate that at the traditional peaks times of use will be oversubscribed when the new ICSC opens.

A summary of feedback received from sports stakeholders included:

Athletics

There are no indoor facilities within Wellington for athletics. The two main areas of interest are:

- 'Sports hall' indoor athletics for schools (a programme developed in the UK to promote participation by primary school children)
- 'Conditioning' facilities to enable year-round development programmes in sprints and jumps for competitive athletics.

The 'sports hall' programme is for schoolchildren in general (rather than registered club members) and has already been trailed at Miramar South School, St Anne's (Newtown), Kilbirnie and Karori. However, primary school halls (if they have them at all) are too small to get the full benefit of the programme, and totally inadequate for any sort of inter-school events.

The work Athletics Wellington has done indicates a significant interest in the programme:

- It meets all the movement and flexibility goals sought by SPARC and the school curriculum
- It provides benchmark measures so individual students can measure their own progress
- It provides a fun indoors programme for the winter.

The programme's goal is to get "more Wellington children active" with the possibility of some children moving into competitive athletics as a result of the interest created.

School participation would be within school hours with school groups walking or bussing to the centre and spending half or the whole school day engaged in physical education programmes. Participation in the programme would reach 2000 per year with an average 250 high-performance athletes using the centre regularly.

Volleyball

Wellington Volleyball provides local and regional affiliated activity including schools, inter-club and representative teams. Membership growth potential is significant and sport is particularly popular with Maori and Pacific Island populations.

An area for significant growth is also in the primary and secondary school areas. These are not currently catered for in an adequate fashion but with an indoor facility that can cater for larger numbers there is great potential. The ability to provide court playing space has a direct impact on the ability of the game to grow.

Wellington Volleyball would be able to attract many regional, national and international volleyball competitions to the city if there was an adequate facility to host such multi-team events.

Until the Te Rauparaha Arena opened in Porirua in 2008, 24 teams travelled to the Walter Nash Stadium in Lower Hutt, as this is the only facility available. This league is fully subscribed - no social grades or schools competitions can be played despite the demand. The restriction on the competitions is the number of courts and times available. Currently Sunday night is the only time available to play. This excess of demand has continued throughout the 10-year planning period for the new ICSC.

Further growth potential for volleyball has been identified in the following areas:

- Week-night local social competitions
- Secondary school competition
- 'Kiwi Volley' (primary and intermediate children)
- Improved elite team training
- Hosting zone competitions
- National squad 'role modelling'
- Hosting national competitions.

There is a regular Friday night competition for the seniors in term 1 and juniors in term 4. Teams play in local school gyms around the city in four zones, coming together for the regional tournament normally held at Walter Nash Stadium. Potential for this event to expand across the whole region exists if Wellington City also had a facility as volleyball is one of the largest participant sports on the New Zealand secondary school calendar and the Wellington tournament continues to grow in numbers. 2009 had the largest numbers ever with 16 girls teams and 14 boys teams.

Currently there are no Kiwi Volley (kids' introductory game) competitions played in Wellington. By way of comparison in Tauranga a regular Friday night league is played in the local stadium which has 18 Kiwi Volley courts (size of badminton courts) catering for over 700 children. This is also an area of enormous growth potential as a 12-court sports centre in Wellington would have capacity for 48 Kiwi Volley courts catering for up to 1800 participants.

There are virtually no training facilities for elite teams. NZ Institute of Sport has six members of the New Zealand team in its squad but currently can only train one night a week due to insufficient space. The team must beg for time where it can, as it competes with netball and basketball for space.

National squads are always brought to Wellington for trials and training in preparation for international tours and events due to the city's central location and coaching resources based here. Currently there is always a struggle to find a suitable venue to train in and hold trials, and if available this would be a further use of the community facility. This use provides an opportunity for role-modelling for younger players as well by hosting these events in the city.

Wellington Volleyball in conjunction with the NZ Institute of Sport has been successful in the past securing hosting rights for national championships. Unfortunately it was impossible to host events in the Wellington region as there was no facility that could cope with the number of courts required to run the event – so the championships have been moved to other cities such as Palmerston North and Wanganui.

The economic benefit of 124 teams of players, coaches, supporters (approx 2000 participants) on these occasions accrue to those cities and not Wellington.

In addition the teams from Wellington have to travel outside of their own region to a tournament hosted by their own association and cover the costs associated with this.

Netball

Wellington Netball Centre draws its entire membership from Wellington City residents and has been experiencing a severe shortage of courts at its five venues (or hubs) for a number of years. The shortage is the result of a sustained growth rate of 11% per annum over the past five years (53% increase). Netball has been forced to actively limit the growth in the number of teams and shorten game durations due to the shortage of sufficient courts at its major activity hubs and has had to terminate the social grade competition to make way for competition grades. Overcrowding at their courts creates health and safety issues for players - games rotate at 50 minute intervals (each game is 40 minutes) thus not allowing sufficient warm-up for teams going on to the court.

Wellington Netball notes that there is a shortage of courts for the number of players wanting to play in Saturday competitions. The current policy of playing competition netball games on Saturday only with no alternatives is intended to meet a number of objectives:

- Enabling umpire resources to be used more efficiently and greater mentoring of inexperienced umpires
- Reducing conflict with other sports, particularly basketball and volleyball that are played mostly on weekdays and Sundays. This enables players to participate in more than one sport rather than choose between the sports, a mutual benefit to both codes
- Maintaining the concentration of activity to ease administration.

The vision of Wellington Netball is for a 12-court indoor facility with an international-standard sprung wooden sports floor (DIN rated) to facilitate its senior competition in a safe consistent environment.

Netball Wellington Region is interested in the potential to host tournaments in Wellington. National tournaments have not been played in Wellington for some time because of the lack of available indoor courts. National tournaments now prefer venues with access to a minimum eight courts. National tournaments provide great role-model opportunities for schoolchildren and can help motivate them to become involved.

Basketball

Wellington Basketball Association operates 50 weeks each year. Activities include leagues for all age groups (male and female), national women's and age group representative teams along with a limited number of skill development programmes and tournaments. Other basketball providers include schools, the National Basketball League franchise, the Council, and one or two clubs.

The association has indicated that extending its programmes to meet current need would utilise 4-6 dedicated courts (with sprung wooden sports floors) full-time outside school hours and would utilise a further 3-court area for major events such as national tournaments.

Basketball bases its projections on developing school basketball activity and social leagues, running tournaments and events and increasing training programmes for players, coaches and officials. These are currently not happening or are only happening in a very limited way due to a lack of facilities. A recent change to the administrative structure to better promote and develop basketball at both the association and regional levels will ensure rapid growth in these areas.

The association also sees the creation of a 'home for basketball', with all activities and support facilities under one roof, as a key factor to strengthening basketball in Wellington. It expects its player numbers to treble within five years based on current participation levels of 3500 players. Social leagues are expected to double - increasing from the current 40 to 80 teams immediately the ICSC opens.

College Sports

College Sport is an organisation that co-ordinates sports leagues and tournaments for secondary schools. College Sports has made the following comments about the community sport centre proposal in relation to need:

- Weekly school volleyball, basketball or badminton leagues could be accommodated at a facility with 12 courts. Currently College Sport Wellington caters for 120 basketball teams, 300 badminton teams and 110 volleyball teams.
- A minimum eight courts are needed to host school regional and national tournaments, e.g. basketball, volleyball, and badminton.

Corporate Sports ('pay for play')

The review also considered corporate 'pay for play' sports needs. From research, users indicated that they required an accessible venue that allows them to travel, play and return to work within one hour. The research found that the Cobham site would certainly not be used for lunchtime CBD corporate sports and, equally, 63% of users involved with the CBD corporate sports on the waterfront said that they were also unlikely to use the Concourse site given the extra time spent in travel.

3.7 How will players use the facility

"Getting to the venue safely and in time for our game is really important – we need to be sure we can get to play and train on a regular basis."

All sports said their experience is that players will turn up just before their activity, possibly change, play, possibly change and leave immediately after their activity. There will be little interest in staying to socialise afterwards.

This reflected patterns experienced in similar centres in Dunedin, Invercargill, Rotorua and Waitakere. Individual players will primarily come by private car with carpooling often occurring within a given team (versus individual training).

Players will either be dropped off, with their driver returning to pick them up after their activity, or their driver will stay to watch the activity. The driver may be interested in having a drink at a cafe within the centre. This has been found to be the case in the Edgar Centre in Dunedin, the Energy Centre in Rotorua and Stadium Southland in Invercargill. Alternatively players may drive themselves and park at the centre.

Teams/schools may use their own minivan and leave this parked while they play. Other than schools situated within about 800-1500 metres of the centre, school parties would travel to the centre by bus and leave once the activity is completed.

3.8 Who will use the facility?

“70% to 80% of users will be ‘everyday’ Wellingtonians playing sport they love.”

The ICSC’s primary focus is to provide opportunities for everyday Wellingtonians to participate regularly in indoor sports with a local grassroots development focus.

Key sports codes were consulted on what level of activity was envisaged for three levels of involvement and the current level of participation that can be expected on day one when the ICSC opened.

The three levels of involvement are:

- Participation (‘everyday’ Wellingtonians playing sport)
- Development
- High-performance (elite athletes).

Volleyball: 70% participation; 20% development and 10% high-performance is currently identified and not expected to change with the provision of a new court-based sports centre.

- There are presently 13 clubs in Wellington with 260-300 representative players affiliated to Wellington Volleyball.
- 100 teams (= 1000 players) take part in the Capital City corporate league.
- Wellington Volleyball estimates there are about 2300 volleyball players in Wellington.

Basketball: 70% participation; 20% development and 10% high-performance is currently identified and not expected to change with the provision of a new court-based sports centre.

- Inter-city league 32 teams
- Midweek league 75 teams
- School College league 45 teams
- School Intermediate league 14 teams
- 3 tournaments involving 47 teams.

Netball: 80% participation; 10% development and 10% high-performance is currently identified and not expected to change with the provision of a new court based sports centre.

- Club teams 92 teams
- College teams 175 teams
- Primary teams 282 teams
- Umpires 52
- Coaches, managers & administrators 400+

3.9 The Benefits of the Wellington ICSC

A quality playing and training facility for Wellington netball, basketball, volleyball and many other community indoor sport activities. The centre will provide a focal point for the community, be a valuable asset for physical education, recreation and sports development for schools.

The objective of the ICSC is to provide an affordable, accessible quality playing and training facility for netball, basketball, volleyball, and many other sports. The centre will also be an important city asset for physical education, recreation and sports development for primary and secondary schools.

3.9.1 BENEFITS FOR INDOOR SPORTS CODES

- Key indoor sports (netball, basketball, volleyball) - existing demand and projected growth can be met.
- Local, regional, national and international sports tournaments can be held in Wellington bringing economic benefit.
- Growth in other indoor sports such as handball, korfbal, indoor soccer, hockey, and indoor space for developing outdoor sports skills for athletics, bowls, tennis and cricket.
- Single destination and home for regular club play and sports leagues.
- Destination for school, university and sports development programmes, competitions and performances.
- Venue for local, regional, and national youth/college sport development programmes.
- A destination for sports proficiency programmes, coaching clinics and training camps.

3.9.2 BENEFITS FOR COMMUNITY RECREATION AND SPORT

- Appropriate local community casual and club access is maintained alongside elite sports training and competition
- A broader range of sports and activity programmes and packages for community groups and schools can be developed and delivered - unaffected by weather
- Provides an indoor hub for the Council's "Push Play Outreach physical activity programme targeting low-decile schools across the city
- Meets sports participation demand for shift-workers and lunchtime business-house sports leagues
- A large indoor venue for community and school performances, presentations, displays and gatherings.