

## **Hawthorn Aquatic & Leisure Centre project Feedback from current users of stadium and squash courts (December 2009)**

Clubs using the HALC stadium and squash courts were given the opportunity to provide feedback to Council on the proposed redevelopment of HALC. Clubs that provided feedback were:

- Basketball - including ATOMS, Hawthorn Basketball Association  
Basketball use is estimated at 0.82% of total HALC attendances
- Netball - including mixed netball and mid-week netball  
Netball use is estimated at 1.55% of total HALC attendances
- Badminton - mid week social competition  
Badminton use is estimated at 2.02% of total HALC attendances
- Squash- Pennant, social, and school training/competition  
Squash use is estimated at 5.5% of total HALC attendances

In addition, several individuals provided feedback.

Most felt that the location of HALC could not be replicated elsewhere in the municipality and than other locations, if they could be found, would be inferior. The clubs felt that they not only provided health and skill benefits to the community, but they also provided a space to encourage community spirit. There was little support for the change of emphasis away from squash and/or stadium at HALC.

### **Advantages of HALC**

HALC's proximity to public transport and the Glenferrie Road shops and café precinct was valued.

### **Problems identified by current stadium users at HALC**

The main problem reported with the current stadium was that the floor was not adequately sprung and did not meet the regulation size (non-compliant run off). The floor surface created the potential for knee injuries particularly for senior players. Other problems with the stadium included: seating is a waste of space, and heating and cooling is inadequate.

## **Alternative locations**

### **Stadium**

While a few had ideas about alternative locations, others were not positive about alternative locations in the municipality. Most of the users talked about the facilities at private schools. Some had already tried to use them, or had had conversations with schools in the past. A list of the problems with school facilities is below:

- Cannot provide security of tenure (will prioritise their own needs over external clubs)
- Provides a public liability insurance issue
- Schools don't need money from leasing courts out
- Some schools cannot be used because of limitations on their hours of usage
- Minimal car parking at some schools
- Lack of lighting and safety issues at some schools
- Already booked out at peak times

It was acknowledged by the Hawthorn Basketball Association (HBA) that by using existing stadiums over a longer period of the day (especially rostering in the early morning), some of the shortages of stadium space could be alleviated. It was also suggested by some clubs that more school facilities could also be used if the limitations on hours of usage were relaxed. Cost was also mentioned as a possible disadvantage of using other locations. Regardless of location, clubs talked about the difficulty of finding suitable space for their sport.

### **Squash**

It was suggested by one that the Hawthorn Club, which could be a possible alternative venue, has the disadvantage of 'feeling like a private club', and has pokies which will limit the use of the club by minors/school groups.

## **Other matters raised:**

### **Community spirit**

For each of the clubs that met with Council, the importance of their club in developing 'community spirit' was emphasised. The clubs prided themselves on their inclusiveness and the extent to which they encouraged personal and team growth.

Netballers talked about their players 'placing a high personal importance on the strength of their personal bonds and their commitment to other players and the opportunity to expand their development in the sport as umpires/referees.

Squash emphasised the social benefits of competition, the diversity of their players and the skill development that they encouraged.

### **Growing clubs**

Many of the clubs reported that they were either already 'bursting at the seams', were growing, or had stopped advertising as they could not afford to grow any more.

Squash felt that Council's statistics on its size at HALC was not accurate as the booking from casual users may not be captured. Squash also felt that it would have the potential to grow if HALC advertised or appointed a development officer to promote the sport.

### **Process of decision-making**

There was some discussion from some of the clubs about the lack of consultation about Council's decisions regarding squash courts and the stadium. Squash reported that they thought the declining numbers of squash users reported in statistics reflected the increasing loss of private squash clubs, rather than a lack of interest in the sport. A small number of clubs felt that there were adequate private gyms nearby to cater for a gym/health focus and objected to losing space to cater for health club and warm water program areas.

One individual felt that Council was withdrawing its support from organised sport and was concerned about this philosophical shift.

### **The future**

One club was potentially interested in contributing funds to HALC to include a stadium and moving all of their games exclusively to HALC. Other clubs were interested in having a stadium retained at HALC, but not with the current flooring system or the heating and cooling problems.