

BIRCHIP RECREATION RESERVE MASTER PLAN

**Final Report
2025-2037**

About this document

This document is the Master Plan for the Birchip Recreation Reserve prepared by @leisure Planners.

Previous documents related to this study include:

- Birchip Recreation Reserve Site Analysis
- Birchip Recreation Reserve Options

The views expressed in the consultation section of this document are those provided by the Birchip community. They do not necessarily reflect the views held by @leisure or Council.

Acknowledgements

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We would also like to thank the representatives of the sports clubs and user groups who were interviewed and those who sent in comments regarding the project.

Buloke Shire Council and @leisure Planners acknowledge that the Birchip Recreation Reserve is situated on the land of the Wotjobaluk, Jaadwa, Jadawadjali, Wergaia and Jupagalk Nations.



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1. Introduction

1.1. Project aim

The project aim is to develop a Recreation Reserve Master Plan that provides:

1. Clear guidelines regarding the level and standard of sporting facilities at the Birchip Recreation Reserve
2. A four to twelve year costed strategy for the development and future provision of sporting facilities within the Reserve
3. Clear priorities and standards for the maintenance and development of infrastructure upon the sporting Reserve
4. Clear definition of Council's, other resource partners, and the community's role in the development of facilities, and
5. Identification of gaps in provision of recreation facilities, and appropriate location for identified gaps, whether within existing Reserve or elsewhere.

1.2. Objectives

The objectives of this project are to:

1. Undertake a demographic analysis of the Birchip catchment area and identify existing and future population trends that may impact upon the growth or decline of specific recreation activities, including sustainability of user clubs
2. Liaise with local and peak sporting/recreation bodies and industry groups to identify trends that may impact future demand for sporting and recreation facilities at the Reserve

3. Identify development priorities for the future planning, development and/or upgrade of existing and/or new recreation facilities within the Reserve in response to identified needs
4. Research and identify the short, medium and long term needs of users occupying this Reserve to enable the provision of an appropriate range and standard of recreation infrastructure to match current and future needs
5. Review and assess the current provision of recreation facilities, programs and services provided at the Birchip Recreation Reserve in terms of community need, usage, gaps in service provision and adequacy
6. Identify environmental considerations in any future developments, with specific focus on water management and renewal energy initiatives
7. Consider the possible co-location, relocation or rationalization of existing recreation facilities at the Reserve
8. Review the role of Council and the community in the development of recreation infrastructure, i.e., what should be the Council's responsibility and what should be the user group/committee of management responsibility
9. Develop a strategic business plan for the Reserve Committee of Management
10. Develop a master plan, which links to existing plans and strategies, and is responsive to community expectations, as well as being achievable, realistic and attainable within the funding options available.

1.3. Outcomes

The project is required to achieve the following outcomes:

Analysis of sport and recreation issues to be resolved through:

- Assessing demographic information that will assist in predicting population growth
- Identifying and clarifying sport and recreation demands and user preferences
- Identifying gaps in sport and recreation offering and barriers to resident participation
- Identify non-users and reasons for non-participation, and
- Working closely with the various departments within the Council to identify important sport and recreation issues

Assessment of guidelines and policies by preparing a 'key issues report', to assess:

- Current and projected sport and recreation facilities usage
- Dual/joint community use of sport and recreation facilities
- Current environmental management and sustainable design features
- Current asset condition reports, many of which are available from Council (some investigation may be required)
- Cost of provision of sport and recreation
- Reserve maintenance issues
- Role of Council and sporting clubs
- Safety and risk management issues, and
- Identification of rationalization of users and/or land at the Reserve

Establish capital works priorities for the Recreation Reserve for the next 12 years through:

- The development of a prioritised capital works program, including timelines and cost estimates for developments, and
- Developing high-level conceptual plans for proposed works

Ensure effective implementation of the Recreation Reserve Master Plan through:

- Establishing realistic goals and objectives for sport and recreation provision and facility planning
- Identifying priorities over a five-year period for the implementation of the Recreation Reserve Master Plan, including cost estimates
- Developing high-level concept plans for facility development priorities
- Preparing specific Action Plans for implementation, which are inclusive of a proposed capital works schedule identifying costs and priorities for maintenance and construction, and

Developing a strategic business plan for the Birchip Recreation Reserve in line with priorities and costings of recommended capital works.

1.4. What is a master plan?

A master plan is a blueprint for the future development.

A master plan is an agreed direction by the landowner/manager and users about the best way to develop a site or a facility, based on the current demand and condition of facilities and context. It is not intended to be a commitment to fund development projects in the short term.

The intent is to be able to direct a complete package of improvements over time and develop components of that plan as and when funds become available, therefore a master plan shows the broad concept and areas for development, rather than specific design details. These packages of improvements are often expressed as recommendations or potential future projects that are expected to improve the community access and use of a venue or facility over a period of 10 years+.

As recommended actions they may not necessarily be delivered in the immediate or long term due to budget and other priorities or factors.



Figure 1. Birchip Tennis Clubhouse.
Image: @leisure Planners

1.5. Context

The town of Birchip

Birchip is located in the Mallee region on the Sunraysia Highway north of Donald and 230 kilometres south of Mildura.

Birchip was named after the Wirrumbirchip pastoral run which was taken up in 1842. The name is thought to be derived from an Aboriginal expression describing the track followed around the dense Mallee country when travelling towards Swan Hill.¹

Before the arrival of Europeans, the area was inhabited by Warkawarka tribe, possibly a subgroup of the Wergaia².

Birchip Recreation Reserve is crown land, managed on behalf of Buloke Shire Council by the Birchip Community Leisure Centre Committee. The eastern portion of the site is reserved for and is also known as Birchip Showyard Reserve.

The George Cartwright oval is currently classified as a 'local' level facility under the AFL Central Victoria standards and the Cricket Victoria Facility Hierarchy.

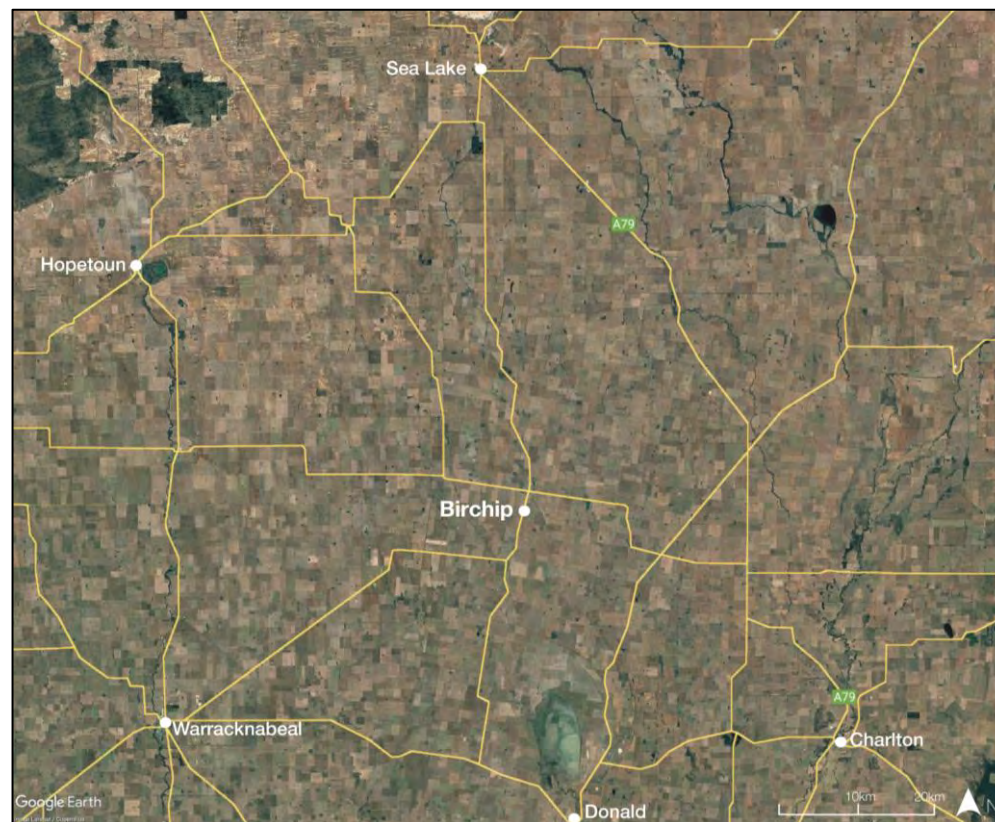


Figure 2. Map of Birchip and surrounding townships. Image source: Google Earth, 2024.

¹ Victorianplaces.com.au

² Beveridge, Peter (1865) "A few notes on the dialects, habits, customs and mythology of the Lower Murray aborigines". Transactions of the Royal Society of Victoria.

Relationship of the Reserve to other land uses

Birchip Recreation Reserve is very central to the immediate township, (see map following) as well as regional sports competitions, the North Central Football League (football, netball and hockey) and the Wimmera Mallee Cricket Association.



Figure 3. Location of the Recreation Reserve in the Birchip township.
Image Source: Google Earth, 2024.

The Reserve is 1km from the Birchip P-12 School and about 200m from the main street (Refer following Map).

The Reserve has a good relationship with adjoining land uses having a road on the south, east and north of the perimeter and relatively good sightlines into the park.



Figure 4. Birchip sporting facilities. Image source: Google Earth, 2024.

1.6. The site

The following aerial image shows the extent of the Reserve.



Figure 5. Aerial view of Birchchip Recreation Reserve.
Source image: Google Earth, 2024.

The Reserve is made up of multiple parcels of land. Some of these parcels are Crown land. See following image. Ownership, purposes of a reservation and management of each may differ and necessitate different approval processes.

The following image shows the different parcel of land that make up the Reserve and adjacent reserves.

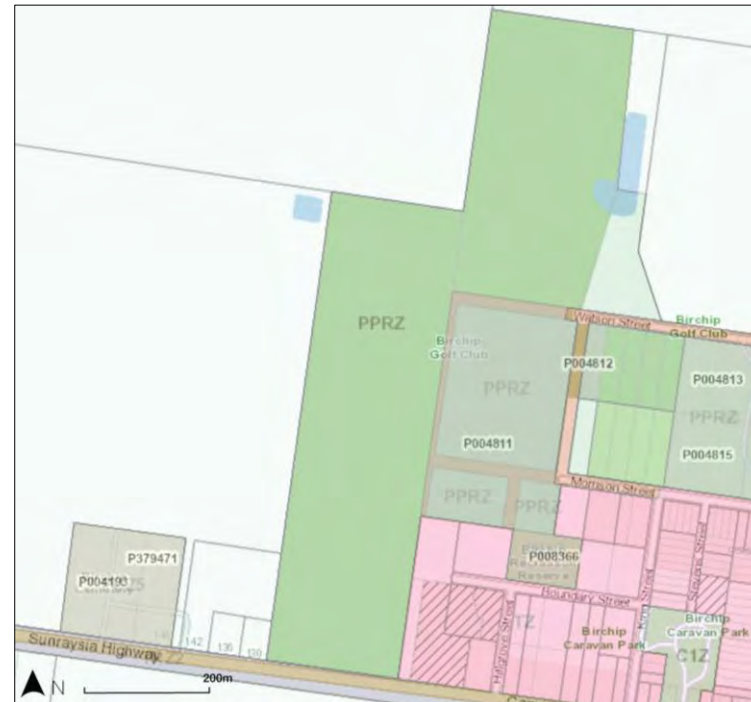


Figure 6. Individual parcels of property in and around the Birchchip Recreation Reserve.
Image source: VicPlan, 2024

Planning Scheme Zones and Overlays

The Reserve is zoned Public Park and Recreation in the Birchip Planning Scheme. See following image from VicPlan.

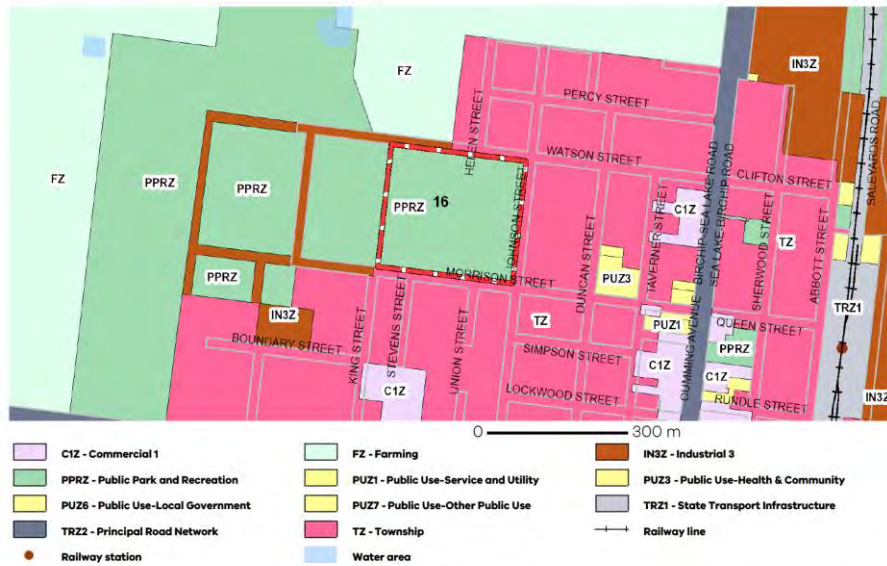


Figure 7. Planning scheme zones over the site and adjacent properties.
Image VicPlan.

There are no planning overlays over the Recreation Reserve land however there are heritage overlays in adjacent land.

See following image from VicPlan.

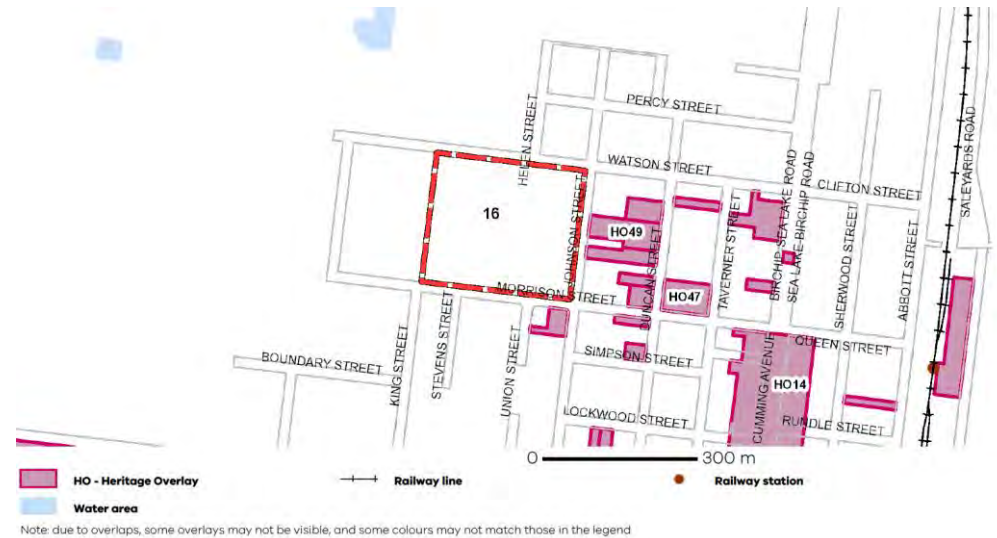


Figure 8. Planning overlays adjacent to the site.
Image VicPlan.

Part of the site is in a bush fire prone area. See following image from VicPlan.

This property is in a designated bushfire prone area.
Special bushfire construction requirements apply. Planning provisions may apply.

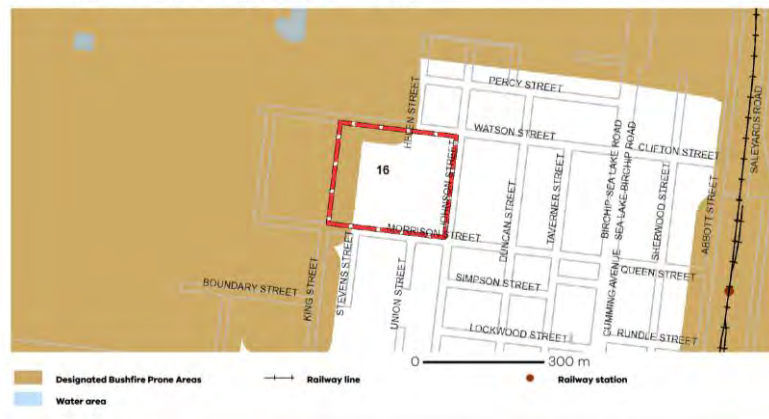


Figure 9. Designated Bushfire Fire Prone areas. Image VicPlan



Figure 10. Home game George Cartwright Oval. April 2022.
Image. Facebook page - Birchchip Community Leisure Centre

1.7. Existing facilities and features

The site is relatively flat and has no major encumbrances, except the bushfire prone nature of the golf course.

The Reserve has boundary planting around the eastern area and the golf course has good canopy cover.

Buildings are centralised and are serviced by an internal road network and parking. Parking space inside the Reserve around the oval is ample, although parking for hockey to the west is limited.

Figure 10 shows the Reserve in use and where users park.

The Reserve has a range of sporting facilities including the following:

- AFL/Cricket oval – including:
 - Turf wicket, inground sprinkler system
 - Four oval lights
 - Electronic scoreboard
 - Coach's boxes
 - Cricket practice Nets (2) and storage shed
- Netball courts – (2 – one of which has significant surface cracking)
- Tennis courts – grass (10), hard courts (2) synthetic – (2)
- Tennis club house
- Hockey pitch - grass
- Golf – 18-hole sand scrapes
- Leisure Centre /pavilion/player change rooms/ squash courts x 2, function space
- Public toilet blocks (2)
- Water tanks – (numerous)
- Storage sheds including show pavilion.

Existing services

The existing services on the site include the following:

Electricity

- Citipower/Powercor advise of low voltage cables underground from the toilet block south of the oval near Morrison St. to the oval on the southwest. (See Appendix 3 – Electricity).

Water

- Grampians Wimmera Mallee Water – water mains and sewerage pipes and pits are located on the perimeter of the Reserve along Watson St., Morrison St., and the Sunraysia Highway are shown Water and Sewerage. (see Appendix 3)
- There are multiple water tanks located around the Reserve. Some are in use and others may be surplus to current needs. A review of existing tanks is recommended with a view to consolidating
- Buloke Shire Council. Drainage and drainage pits at the north end of the Reserve along Watson St. may have some impact on future works for future buildings or future fields/extensions at the north end of the Reserve. (See Appendix 3) There is also a drainage pit on Morrison St. some 8-10 metres west of King St. that is unlikely to have any influence on future works.

Gas

- There is no gas transmission pipelines in Birchip

Dump point

- The Reserve has Dump Point for RV vans near the south entrance.

A site analysis that assessed the issues with each facility was prepared and submitted.

1.8. Key issues from the site analysis

Following is a summary of the key issues and opportunities:

Leisure Centre

- Limited capacity from the veranda/viewing area to the oval to provide shade and shelter to spectators
- Viewing area and seating on hill in front of building requires upgrading.
- Views to oval are blocked by people standing outside
- The kitchen and social facilities require equipment and furnishing upgrades
- The ramp to the Leisure Centre is not compliant with current building accessibility standards
- The external squash court walls have some structural issues that are currently under review.

Tennis courts

- There is no external shade provided by the club house
- Additional tree shade could be provided
- Court lighting is required – preferred for 4 courts including hard courts to allow tennis to be played year round
- The 2 hard courts require an upgrade

- Court fencing around the grass courts will require replacing in the long term
- Play equipment under shade is required.
- General landscaping and re-paving is required.

Hockey

- The hockey pitch is some distance from the central facilities. Relocating the pitch closer to the Leisure Centre will provide better access to existing infrastructure (Inc. toilets, change rooms, parking) and reduce need for duplication of facilities
- Pitch lighting requires upgrade
- Parking and vehicle access is poor to existing location.

Golf

- Watering system is over 50 years old and not built for current need. Very narrow pipes – poor water pressure.
- Re-configuration of fairways and holes would need to be considered in future to accommodate the master plan concept.

Netball courts

- There is significant surface cracking that has developed along the west side of court 2 which is currently under investigation by Council to remediate the surface condition.
- Court 2 surface condition is not safe to play on.
- Increased seating for spectators is required around both Courts 1 and Court 2 when fixed.
- Netting is required at the north and south ends of Courts 1 and 2, to prevent balls going over the fence
- Lighting is required on west side of Court 2; currently Court 2 doesn't meet training lux standards.

Oval and support facilities

- There is a ongoing issue with rabbits damaging the oval surface. A rabbit proof fence is required to prevent surface damage. Community have identified that well designed picket fencing would be preferable.
- There is no netting behind goals to retain balls on the oval and protect cars/spectators.

Cricket facilities

- Consider extending nets. Include sight screen on back fence at rear of nets.

Spectator facilities

- Improve spectator areas in front of Leisure Centre
- Provide seating at north end of netball courts
- Spectator seating is required along with shade and shelter at hockey
- Separate kids and cars with bollards and walking paths
- More oval seating around boundary line is preferred
- Shade and shelter for viewing netball courts and the oval, north of the Leisure Centre is required along with and upgrade of seating in front of the Leisure Centre.

Toilets

- Upgrade the toilet block at the south end of the oval. Include a changing places toilet
- Upgraded toilet facilities to be family friendly.

Entries, traffic and parking

- There is no clear delineation between vehicles and pedestrians around the oval, the south or west of the Leisure Centre
- There is an area of unmarked parking between the Leisure Centre and the grass courts. This area also carries through traffic to hockey and golf and is a key crossing point from tennis to the Leisure Centre. There is no clear delineation between vehicles and pedestrians
- Vehicles entering from corner of Morrison St. and Johnson St. on match days, can restrict vehicle movement on those streets. Ticket box should be relocated further inside the Reserve
- Speed humps on internal road around oval do not reduce vehicle speed.

Trees and green space

- A tree planting plan for wind breaks, shade and presentation would improve the Reserve for all users.

Play space

- There are no designated play spaces or play equipment within the Reserve
- Install a play area at the north end of the Leisure Centre to serve football, netball, cricket and Leisure Centre users. Consider a shaded play space near tennis courts.

Other presentation and improvement options

- Remove the loading ramp at the Watson St entry if no longer in use
- Remove the dirt mound along Johnston St or use it for further landscaping along the east side of the Reserve
- Update, relocate or remove the picnic tables and BBQ at the west side of the Leisure Centre
- Include walking links through Reserve - short loop, medium loop and longer loops. Wide enough for two to three people walking
- Consider a fishing platform off golf dam.

Most recent works

Recently, Buloke Shire Council were successful in obtaining \$1.9 million in grants to fund several projects at the Reserve.

Two new acrylic netball courts and lighting were funded by the Federal Government's Drought Resilience and Response Program, Buloke Shire Council, the State Government's Local Sports Infrastructure Fund – Female Friendly Facilities 2020-21 and the Birchip-Watchem Netball Club. One of the netball courts surface condition has deteriorated and is currently not able to be used for Netball.

The Birchip Leisure Centre Changeroom Redevelopment Project (\$234,667) delivered female friendly changerooms for both teams and umpires as well as new accessible family friendly amenities upstairs and was funded by the Victorian Government's Female Friendly Facilities Fund 2018-19, Buloke Shire Council, Federal Government's Drought Resilience and Response Program, AFL Victoria's Female Friendly Facility Program and Birchip Leisure Centre.

Whilst the Main Oval Redevelopment (\$221,000) included drainage and resurfacing works that were funded by the Victorian Government's Country Football and Netball Program 2019-20, Federal Government's Drought Resilience and Response Program, Buloke Shire Council and Birchip Watchem Football Club.³



Figure 9. Netball courts and shelters following 2021 upgrade
Image: @leisure Planners



Figure 10. Golf entry to Leisure Centre. Image: @leisure Planners

³ Website: Buloke.vic.gov.au

2. Demand for sport and recreation in Birchip

2.1. Population and demographic profile

The key demographic factors that influence the demand for sport and recreation activities are population size, age, gender, income, education, cultural background, disability and location of residence and availability of facilities. There are an estimated 694 residents in Birchip, comprising about 11% of Buloke Shire's total population of 6,178 in 2021⁴.

The table following shows the projected population for Birchip from 2021 until 2036 based Victoria In Future forecasts.

Table 1. Projected population growth of Buloke Shire, 2026 and 2036

	2021	2026	2036
Population ⁵	694	661	577
Change in population (5 yrs.)		-38	-84

By 2026 Birchip is forecast to have 661 residents and 577 by 2036. However forecast population decline has been less than anticipated in Victorian In Future 2019 calculations from 2016 to 2021.

In 2021 the largest age group of Birchip residents was 70 to 74 years (71 people). There were 122 children between the age of 0 and 14 years. It is anticipated that the Birchip will continue to trend towards an aging population. The average age in Birchip in 2021 was 49 years. The average age for rural and regional Victoria is 42 years and older than the median for Greater Melbourne, 36 years. The following graph shows the number of people per 5-year age cohort and that projected for 2036.

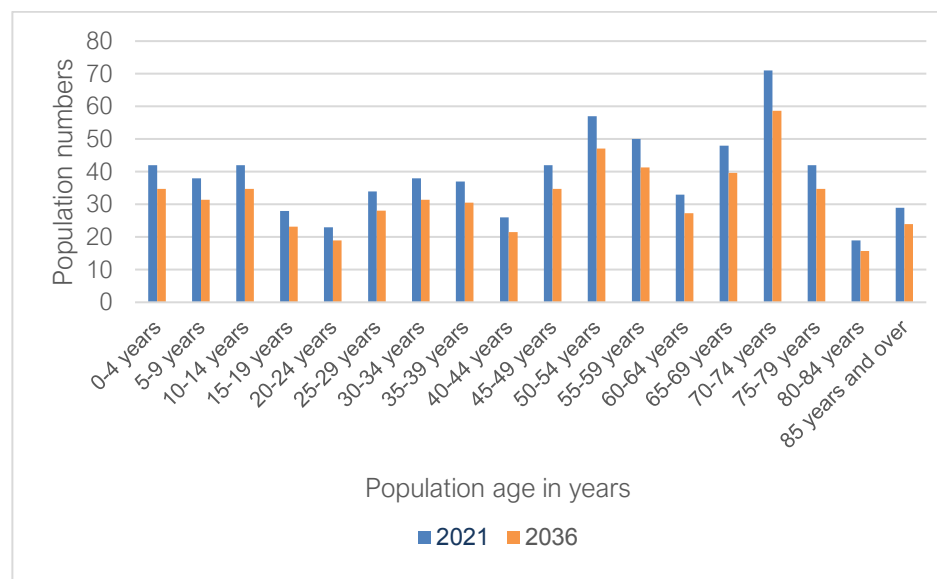


Figure 11. Age structure Birchip 2021 compared to 2036 forecast.

Source: Victoria in Future

⁴ Quickstats 2021

⁵ www.delwp.vic.gov.au/victoria-in-future

Demographic snapshot of Birchip

- A large proportion of Birchip residents had both parents born in Australia 89% compared to 58.7% Victoria.
- Some 49.7% of the population in Birchip was male in 2021.⁶
- Some 21.8% of the population completed secondary education compared to the rest of Victoria (21%) but much less attend university - 10.1% Birchip to 24.5% Victoria.
- English is spoken in 88.4% of homes in Buloke.⁷
- Birchip's index of social disadvantage is 970. This is slightly higher than Buloke Shire, 967 and below the regional Victorian average of 986.
- Some 35% of Birchip residents did voluntary work through an organisation or group in the last 12 months compared to 13% for Victoria.⁸

The demographic profile of Birchip suggests that there is a relatively high propensity for residents to play sport, due to:

- The small proportion of residents who speak another language or were born overseas from a non-English speaking background
- A relatively small (7.4%) of residents need assistance with core activities due to age or disability

⁶ Ibid

⁷ Buloke Shire Council Inclusiveness Plan

2.2. Existing and projected use of Birchip Recreation Reserve

Club usage

Data collected from the clubs and our engagement indicates that the Birchip Recreation Reserve is a popular and well used venue for both clubs and individuals.

In addition to the usage as per the club data below, the Reserve is a popular site for individuals to walk, run, ride bikes and socialise. It is difficult to estimate the casual usage of the Reserve, but it is expected that usage will continue to grow if facilities continue to improve, and Birchip follows the trend in growth of non-organised activity that is occurring Australia.

Data from AusPlay shown in the graph below shows how non-sport physical activities have grown significantly from 2001 to 2020.⁹

Although the Birchip Recreation Reserve is predominately a sports reserve, it has an important secondary open space function as a social/family recreation area. It can accommodate a significant amount of unorganised physical and social activity. This is due to its relatively large size, central and prominent location, flat topography and the existing facilities that attract people to the Reserve. It does not cater well for people with a disability.

For this reason, additional attractions and improvements should be made to the Reserve to benefit a broader range of the community.

⁸ ibid

⁹ Participation Trends In Australia. app.powerbi.com

The higher and increasing proportion of women and older persons are participating in non-organised physical activities and sports.

The following graph shows the growth in sport related activities and non-sport related activities from 2001 to 2020 from data gathered by Exercise Recreation and Sport Survey (ERASS) and AusPlay surveys.



Figure 12. The growth in sport and non-sport related activities, 2001 to 2020 from ERASS and AusPlay surveys. Source; AusPlay report. Participation trends in Australian Sport since 2001.

Some 23 teams and 3 sport development groups consider Birchip Recreation Reserve as 'home' along with regular use from Birchip P-12 School, social competitions and casual use. Almost all user groups have suggested that the demand for team participation is continuing following the COVID 19 pandemic.

The football, netball, hockey, golf and cricket clubs use the Reserve as their main social and training base.

Table 2 below shows the number of sport teams based at the Birchip Reserve and the estimated current participation.

Table 2. The number of sport teams based at Birchip Reserve and the estimated participation

Club	Current no. teams/members	Estimated participants	Participation Trend
Birchip Cricket Club	2 senior teams (35), 3 junior teams (35)	70	Seniors - stable
Birchip-Watchem Football Club	2 senior teams (50), 4 junior including under 14 girls (80) and AusKick (19)	149	Steady
Birchip-Watchem Netball Club	3 Senior teams (30), 4 junior teams (32) plus Net Set Go – 25	87	Steady. Same as 2019
Birchip-Watchem Hockey Club	1 senior team (11), 2 junior teams (27), In-to-hockey (10-12), Social members (15)	65	Steady
Birchip Tennis Club	2 senior teams (24), Junior coaching (35), Junior tennis (20), Women's Mon comp (24), social comp (16)	119	Increase over last 5 years
Birchip Golf Club	36-40 members	40	Steady
Squash	No active club	7	Decline
Birchip Bowls Club*	3 teams (Div 1 and 2) and 1 x midweek	36-40	Steady
School gym use	28 community members and 12 students	40	Was 50 pre COVID-19

*Potential to be based at Reserve in future

The table below shows the number of current participants per sport at Birchip compared to that projected from State organised participation rates. 'Organised participation' is activity formally organised or conducted by or at a club, association, school or other type of organisation.

Table 3. The number of participants per sport in Birchip shown against potential participants based on the State organised participation

Sport	Participants 2021/22	Projected VIC* 2021	Projected VIC 2026	Project Vic 2036
AFL	149	37	35	31
Cricket (outdoor)	70	24	23	20
Hockey (outdoor)	65	7	7	6
Netball (outdoor)	87	11	10	9
Tennis	119	36	34	29
Golf	40	29	27	24
Squash	7	4	4	3
Bowls	36	8	7	6
Gym-fitness	40	188	178	156

*Projected participation is based on state organised participation rates, applied to the Birchip projected and existing population.

Club affiliations

Clubs based at the Birchip Recreation Reserve are affiliated with several regional competitions including the following.

North Central Football League

The North Central Football League coordinates the winter competitions of football, netball and hockey across 8 towns in the region. Finals are played at an independent venue from the senior football finalists. Birchip Recreation Reserve regularly hosts finals for the League.

Wimmera Mallee Cricket Association

The Wimmera Mallee Cricket Association is made up of teams from 11 clubs across the Wimmera Mallee who enter teams in A Grade and B Grade competitions. In recent seasons Birchip have enter a team in both grades. Grand finals are played on neutral venues with turf wickets; therefore, Birchip is potential venue for final competitions.

North Central Tennis Association

The North Central Tennis Association coordinates tennis for a summer competition including the towns of Birchip, Nullawil, Wycheproof, St. Arnaud, Donald and Charlton. The association is a grass court competition only.

Tyrrell Junior Tennis Association

The Tyrrell Tennis Association coordinates tennis for the junior age group for a summer competition

2.3. Birchip Recreation Reserve seasonal bookings

The table below shows the bookings for summer and winter by tenant clubs. The Leisure Centre function space is booked by a wide range of community groups across the year.

Table 4. The table below shows the Summer (October 1st – March 31st) bookings for the Birchip Recreation Reserve

Asset	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Leisure Centre – Social space						Birchip CC, 1.00-8pm	
Leisure Centre – Change rooms						Birchip CC, 1.00-8pm	
Leisure Centre – Squash courts	Casual use only	Casual use only	Casual use only	Casual use only	Casual use only	Casual use only	Casual use only
Oval		Birchip CC, 4:30pm - 7:30pm		Birchip CC 4:30pm - 7:30pm		Birchip CC, 1.00pm - 6:30pm, Juniors play at school 8.30 – 12.00	
Cricket nets		Birchip CC, Juniors and Seniors 3.30 - 8:00pm		Birchip CC Juniors and Seniors 3.30pm - 8:00pm			
Cricket shed (rear of nets)				Birchip CC 4:00pm - 8:00pm			
Netball – Break Dec-Jan		Birchip Watchem Netball, 3.45 - 7.30pm		Birchip Watchem Netball, 3.45 - 7.30pm			
Tennis courts	Women's Comp 5.00-8.00	Juniors coaching 4.00	Junior tennis Social comp			Seniors Comp 1.00-6.00	
Hockey pitch	Off season						
Golf course	Off season						

The table below shows the Winter (season (April 1st – September 30th) bookings for the Birchip Recreation Reserve.

Table 5. The table below shows the Winter (April 1st – September 30th) bookings for the Birchip Recreation Reserve

Asset	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Leisure Centre – Social Space				BWFC		Birchip Watchem Football	
Leisure Centre – change rooms		Birchip Watchem Football		Birchip Watchem Football		Birchip Watchem Football	
Leisure Centre – Squash courts	Casual use only	Casual use only	Casual use only	Casual use only	Casual use only	Casual use only	Casual use only
Oval		Birchip Watchem Football		Birchip Watchem Football			
Cricket nets	Off season						
Netball /		Birchip Watchem Netball 3.45 - 7.30pm		Birchip Watchem Netball, 3.45 - 7.30pm			
Tennis courts	Off season						
Oval		Birchip Watchem Football		Birchip Watchem Football		Birchip Watchem Football	
Hockey Pitch		Birchip Watchem Hockey			Birchip Watchem Hockey	Birchip Watchem Hockey	
Golf Course					Juniors		Competition Tournament June

Potential play space users

The number of children aged 0 to 9 years in Birchip in 2021 was 80 and forecast to decrease by 2031 with approximately 60 children residing in the town based on population decline as forecast by Victoria In Future for the Buloke Shire¹⁰. Therefore, the demand for play space is unlikely to increase, unless there are new families that move to the area. However, the central location of Birchip Recreation Reserve and the large number of sporting groups currently utilising the facilities suggest that a play space would be an attractive feature for the Reserve.

It should be noted however that play equipment is required to be maintained in accordance with the Australian standards and this may require considerable work that is beyond the capacity of the community.

Casual reserve use

The park has a range of casual users including dog owners, walkers and joggers that will benefit from establishing walking trails, lighting, seating and improving toilet facilities.

The Reserve has Dump Point for RV vans near the south entrance that attracts people to the Reserve. RV owners are likely to use the toilet facilities at the Reserve, walking tracks, outdoor and fitness facilities, if available.

2.4. Users' views

Methods of engagement

Feedback from the stakeholders and the community was sought in several ways including telephone interviews, document reviews of previous consultation and on-site review.

- Telephone interviews of Clubs and user groups were conducted to ascertain the nature of their facilities and services
- A site tour with the Recreation and Facilities Project Officer from the Shire of Buloke was held
- Individual submissions were also accepted
- Several virtual meetings were held with key users and staff.

¹⁰ www.delwp.vic.gov.au/victoria-in-future

The table following illustrates the number of respondents by consultation method.

Table 6. The table below shows the range of engagement and number of people contacted as part of the study.

Engagement Method	Contacts	Completed/ Submitted
Inception meeting	1	1
Telephone calls	28	20
Submissions received	0	0
On site visits/meetings	NA	1
PCG Meetings and presentations		3

Twenty individuals representing a range of clubs, peak bodies and organisations were interviewed about the Birchip Recreation Reserve. (For a full list of groups interviewed see Appendix 1)

The consultation was designed to gain insight into how the clubs and user groups use the Reserve, what they like about the venue, what they would like improved and to understand their future needs and aspirations for the site.

Stakeholder interview summary

Interviews were conducted by telephone with representatives of user groups of the Reserve.

From the interviews, it appears that the Birchip Reserve meets the needs of the major user groups however a number of improvements are required to meet future needs.

Priorities raised by more than one user group included the following:

- Improve spectator viewing from Leisure Centre over the oval and provide shade and shelter in front of Leisure Centre and north to the canteen
- Improve spectator facilities for tennis and hockey by providing more shade and seating
- Improve the access/ entry arrangements of the main Reserve entry on game day, by moving the ticket box so cars don't que across the intersection
- Improving internal parking and car/pedestrian movement, particularly on south side of Leisure Centre
- Provide a play space for children close to spectators/players
- Utilise the tennis courts not in use to provide for children wheel and ball activities
- Provide a rabbit proof fence around oval to protect surface and retain balls
- Upgrade the function room in Leisure Centre
- Upgrade the south toilet block
- Remove Bulls Bar.

Other items raised by individual clubs included:

- Relocate the hockey pitch closer to Leisure Centre – allows players to utilise change rooms and toilets
- Provide tennis court lighting
- Upgrade the two tennis hard courts
- Upgrade irrigation to the golf course
- Provide lighting to netball court 2
- Upgrade oval lighting for night games.

New facilities requested include:

- Walking/ running track around the Reserve and connecting town and sports facilities.

More tree planting for natural shade and shelter.



Figure 13. Birchip Golf Club.

Image: @leisure Planners

2.5. Key trends

Figure 14. The following diagram illustrates key relevant trends relating to parks and sports.



2.6. Implications of demand

The data gathered from user groups, peak bodies and the community engagement show there is strong demand for local sports facilities as well as other activities.

Even though Birchip's population is small and aging, there is significant participation in sports across all age groups, and this trend is expected to continue.

The Loddon Mallee North region (includes Buloke Shire) has one of the highest membership rates (% of total population) for netball in regional Victoria. The membership rate is 3.8% compared to the Victorian Rural and Regional average of 3.2%.¹¹

AFL penetration rates for junior, youth and senior player categories sit well above Victorian country average penetration rates in the Buloke, Loddon and Gannawarra LGAs more than doubling those averages.¹²

A Birchip under 14 AFL girls' team was successfully established in 2022 in the Central Victorian Football League.

Data from Cricket Victoria is older but suggests similar high participation levels with a player to population penetration rate in the Western Country region (includes Buloke Shire) almost double that of Cricket Victoria's Country Region average (3.19% compared with 1.88%) and the second highest female participant base across the State, including

Metro Regions (333 total, 109 additional players between 2014/15 and 2016/17).¹³

The Birchip clubs conduct introductory programs including Net Set Go, AusKick, HookIn2Hockey, and junior tennis coaching to introduce juniors to sports and help establish a base for the existing clubs.

Existing facilities will require ongoing improvements and upgrades to cater for regular and growing usage. While demand for new non-sporting activities at the Reserve will also grow.

Development of off-road trails will allow others to do things at the Reserve that they may not usually do and attract more individuals. Expanded picnic facilities, walking trails and play equipment is likely to be well utilised.

¹¹ Netball Victoria Statewide Facilities Strategy

¹² AFL Central Victoria Regional Strategy. 2017

¹³ Cricket Victoria Infrastructure Strategy 2018-2028

3. Role and relationship with other sports facilities

With five sports clubs based at the Reserve, the site is the home of sport in the Birchip region. The Leisure Centre is the central facility, offering change facilities, toilets and social space for all clubs.

Other sports facilities in Birchip include:

Birchip P -12 School

The School draws students from the neighbouring districts of Berriwillcock, Culgoa, Nullawil, Beulah and Watchem. In 2021 some 170 students were enrolled at the school. Sports facilities at the school include an indoor stadium, marked for netball, basketball, volleyball and badminton, a cricket oval and a community gymnasium.

The Birchip Cricket Club use the school oval for junior cricket as the hard wicket which reduces wear on the turf wicket at the Recreation Reserve. The Netball club used the indoor stadium at the school while the Recreation Reserve outdoor courts were rebuilt in 2020/21.

The stadium has also hosted social competitions for basketball, mixed netball, indoor hockey, recreational mixed football, night bowls, table tennis and volleyball.

There is an outdoor exercise circuit on the perimeter of the school oval that is open to the community.

There are also rectangular grass fields at the school that could potentially host soccer, hockey or other small group outdoor sports, if surfaces were improved and there was demand for such sports.

Birchip Swimming Pool

Birchip Swimming Pool is located in Cumming Avenue. The pool is open seasonally from November to March each year. It is one of seven outdoor, seasonal pools in the Buloke Shire.

Swimming lessons are scheduled in January and during Terms 1 and 4 swimming squad, swimming lessons and water exercise classes are facilitated by the Birchip Neighbourhood House. Birchip P-12 School hold their annual carnival at the venue.

Tchum Lake

The Lake is 8km east of Birchip on the Birchip Wycheproof Rd and hosts a range of water sports and has a 3km walking track around the perimeter that links through native vegetation back into town. It is also connected by a walking/bike path. The lake caters for camping and boating activities, has a playground, BBQ and public toilet facilities.

Birchip Bowls Club

The bowls club is located 700m from the Reserve in Sherwood St. It has its own social facilities and has no direct relationship with the Reserve. Birchip bowlers compete in the Tyrell competition with a team in Division 1 and 2.

There has been some suggestion that the bowls club could move to the Reserve in the longer term.

Birchip Lifestyle and Fitness

Birchip Lifestyle and Fitness centre is based in the former Catholic Primary School and offers a range of exercise classes and is privately operated.

Birchip Neighbourhood House

Birchip Neighbourhood House also offers a range of programs and fitness activities.

Colocation, relocation, rationalisation?

The development of the Leisure Centre in the 1980s, the Management Committee and membership structure that was implemented at the time, has ensured that Birchip sports clubs have been able to benefit from pooling resources and maintaining good quality sporting infrastructure.

Hockey is the only sport at the Reserve that is not well served by support facilities or car parking, given its location west of the tennis courts. Relocating the hockey field nearer to the Leisure Centre would provide several benefits including:

- Easier access to change rooms/toilets
- Close proximity to social facilities
- Parking with direct street access close to field
- Greater spectator support with the field not as remote from other activities

If hockey was to relocate closer to the Leisure Centre, the final location is dependent on the long-term plans of the Birchip Bowling Club.

An area immediately west of the current Leisure Centre may accommodate the space required for bowls if they chose to relocate in the long term.



Figure 13. Image of George Cartwright Oval
Image from @leisure Planners

4. Birchip Recreation Reserve – The next 10 years

4.1. Vision

To provide a sustainable community space that promotes recreation, social and business opportunities.

4.2. Objectives for change

1. To function as a central hub for community sport and recreation in Birchip.
2. To maintain in balance: facilities that serve people from a broad range of age groups and abilities, for unorganised and club competition sport, recreation, and natural elements that provide shelter and shade, restorative values and habitat and high-quality landscape amenity.
3. To embrace environmental sustainability in relation to building and ground management, playing and traffic surfaces and asset development.
4. To support the growth and development of clubs and user groups.

4.3. Sustainability initiatives

Future developments at the Reserve will be expected to incorporate a range of environmental initiatives, as follows.

Water usage

- Consider irrigation technology that monitors soil moisture and adjusts irrigation system accordingly
- Monitor and record water meters and usage to ensure leakage and waste is minimised
- Upgrade old irrigation systems to reduce water loss and improve efficiency
- Primarily plant indigenous trees and vegetation suited to the climate and soils to increase survival rates and benefit local fauna
- Upgrade irrigation
- Limit the use of sports turf to only fields and play areas to reduce the need for watering
- Use other hardy grass species for any other lawn areas.
- Reduce paved surfaces, especially dark surfaces to allow rainwater to permeate the surface and help reduce the heat island affect
- Improve the soil condition of garden beds and the root zones of trees with mulch and compost.

Provide additional trees

Plant appropriate trees in different areas to increase comfort and attract use, especially in the hot weather, for:

- Shade
- Amenity value
- Wind protection, and
- Play value

Solar energy

- Install solar roof panels and a battery to Leisure Centre to reduce the centre's operational costs
- Install solar security and path lighting

Recycling

- Use sustainable building materials such as park benches that are made from recyclable materials and recycled rubber in playgrounds
- Install recycling bins to encourage visitors to recycle plastic paper and glass.

Other

- Ensure all lighting is converted to LED lighting.

4.4. Master Plan – Preferred option

There were four draft concepts presented to the Project Steering Committee (See Chapter 5). The preferred concept, Concept 3 below shows the hockey pitch relocated next to netball in a north south direction close to the Leisure Centre and a bowls green immediately west of the Leisure Centre. Hockey and bowls can fit in this configuration and meet minimum competition size standards and allow access to golf course. Note the bowling green shown below is approximately 4 metres narrower than the existing green in Sherwood St. (See Appendix 4 for enlarged concept Master Plan with actions and Pavilion Design)



Figure 16. Concept 3 of the 4 layouts presented to the Steering Committee
Image 106 Architects

5. Reserve facility layout options and benefits

There were four options presented to the Steering Committee for the long-term development of the Reserve. These were largely based on future location of hockey and bowls, should they choose to relocate to the Reserve in the long term.

Option 3 was chosen by the Steering Committee for further investigation. See Appendix 4.

Following are the draft layouts of each option as presented and the advantages and disadvantages of each.

Option 1: Potential hockey location with no bowls at Reserve



Figure 17. Option 1 draft showing potential location of hockey pitch at Birchip Recreation Reserve, without future bowls green

Advantages

- Allows hockey players and spectators easier access to Leisure Centre facilities such as toilets, canteen and social space
- North-south orientation aligns with preferred sports field layout that improves playing conditions
- Allows spectators to move more easily between all winter sports (netball, football and hockey)
- Closer to key Reserve entry point and existing hardstand car parking

Disadvantages

- Requires redesign of golf course and relocation of tees and holes
- Takes most suitable space for lawn bowls if relocated to Reserve
- Cuts off golf connection to Leisure Centre amenities and admin. (Mitigated by moving pitch to north)

Option 2: Potential hockey location allowing for bowls at Reserve



Figure 18. Option 2 draft showing potential location of hockey pitch at Birchip Recreation Reserve, with a future bowls green

Advantages

- Allows hockey players and spectators easier access to Leisure Centre facilities such as toilets, canteen and social space
- Allows spectators to move more easily between all winter sports (netball, football and hockey)
- Hockey closer to key Reserve entry point
- Allows bowls close access to LC, with parking south of Leisure Centre

Disadvantages

- Doesn't correct east-west alignment for hockey.
- No direct relationship between hockey and Leisure Centre Further walking distance from school and those walking from south/southwest of town
- Cuts off golf direct connection to Leisure Centre amenities and admin

Option 3: Potential hockey location allowing for bowls at Reserve



Figure 19. Option 3 draft showing potential location of hockey pitch at Birchchip Recreation Reserve, with a future bowls green

Advantages

- Allows hockey players and spectators easier access to Leisure Centre facilities such as toilets, canteen and social space
- North-south orientation aligns with preferred sports field layout that improves playing conditions
- Allows spectators to move more easily between all winter sports (netball, football and hockey)
- Hockey closer to key Reserve entry point

Disadvantages

- Requires redesign of golf course and relocation of tees and holes
- Cuts off golf connection to Leisure Centre amenities and admin. Limited space between components
- Bowls is not prominent from the street

Option 4: Potential hockey location allowing for bowls at Reserve



Figure 20. Option 4 draft showing potential location of hockey pitch at Birchip Recreation Reserve, with a future bowls green and additional parking

Advantages

- Allows hockey players and spectators easier access to Leisure Centre facilities such as toilets, canteen and social space. Could provide direct parking off the street without having to enter the Reserve
- Allows spectators to move more easily between all winter sports (netball, football and hockey)
- Closer to key Reserve entry point.
- North-south orientation aligns with preferred sports field layout that improves playing

Disadvantages

- No direct relationship between hockey and Leisure Centre
- Requires redesign of golf course and relocation of tees and holes
- Bowls some distance from Leisure Centre amenities - would mostly likely require toilet / and possible shelter overlooking the green

6. Recommendations including priority and lead organisation

The following table shows the priority for each recommendation in the plan, as considered by the Steering Committee based on requirements to meet current standards, best practice and club preferences.

Table 7. Recommendations and priority order

No.	Recommendations	Priority (Low/Medium/High)	Lead	Partners
Leisure Centre				
1	Provide new flooring in kitchen.	Medium	BLC	BSC
2	Upgrade the kitchen facilities to improve catering capacity.	High	BLC	BSC
3	Instal new window coverings (Roller blinds 18mx 2m)	High	BLC	BSC
4	Improve ventilation for downstairs change rooms.	Medium	BSC	BLC
5	Upgrade the golf and netball support facilities (changerooms) to accommodate bowls in long term	Low	BSC	BLC
6	Refurbish toilets and showers for netball and golf participants.	Medium	BSC	BLC
7	Provide a lift into level one of the building - allow for lift shaft, structural alterations	Medium	BSC	BLC
Spectator areas				
8	Upgrade concourse to include accessible ramps at each end to address non-compliant access	High	BSC	BLC
	Provide outside tiered seating to the oval edge for spectators [on grade]	High	BSC	BLC
	Provide outside tiered seating for spectators [suspended / balcony]	High	BSC	BLC
	New shade structures [assumes can have columns / not cantilevered]	High	BSC	BLC
	Improve entry/ exit from lower-level change rooms to the oval [player tunnel]	High	BSC	BLC
9	Future Stage 2. Multi-use area - redevelopment squash /golf to include gym and exercise including small pool and change facilities (Viewing Area): Elevated viewing area to complement existing netball viewing room	Low	BSC	BLC
Squash courts				

No.	Recommendations	Priority (Low/Medium/High)	Lead	Partners
10	Consider engineers report to rebuild or repair. Price includes demolition	High	BSC	BLC
11	Consider multi use - install moveable glass walls to allow for squash and flexible gym space.	High	BSC	BLC
Public toilets				
12	Remove existing toilet block located along fence line at Watson St entry once new public toilets are made available at Leisure Centre.	Low	BSC	BLC
13	Upgrade existing toilet block located on the southern side of the site.	High	BSC	BLC
Perimeter exercise trail				
14	Construct a 2m wide granitic sand walking/running track around Reserve, with connecting paths to existing facilities, following removal of obsolete tanks and other infrastructure.	High	BSC	BLC
15	Consider a fishing platform off golf dam.	Medium	BLC	BSC
16	Install lighting along walking track	Low	BSC	BLC
Golf course				
17	Upgrade watering system to the tees on the golf course.	Medium	BGC	BSC
Netball				
18	Additional lighting on court 2. Include underground infrastructure, pole, lights etc	High	BSC	BWNC
19	Increase fence height to 2200 at ends of courts (extra 1200H)	Medium	BWNC	BSC
20	Replace court 2 - assume synthetic rubber surface. (includes removal of existing, install new)	High	BSC	BWNC
21	Provide shade between netball courts and oval for those viewing both activities	High	BSC	BLC
22	Introduce lawn/grass area to soften landscape.	High	BSC	BLC
Hockey				
23	Relocate closer to Leisure Centre. New hockey pitch - 94m x 55m grass field with additional 3m & 5m runoff with irrigation and drainage	High	BSC	BWHC
24	New training lights	High	BSC	BWHC
25	Incorporate player facilities into Leisure Centre.	High	BSC	BWHC
Oval				

No.	Recommendations	Priority (Low/Medium/High)	Lead	Partners
26	Rabbit proof fencing for the oval.	High	BWFC	BSC
27	Install goal netting at each end of oval.	Medium	BWFC	BSC
28	Extend seating around oval.	High	BWFC	BSC
Cricket				
29	Add sight screen at rear of cricket nets.	Medium	BCC	BSC
Tennis				
30	Upgrade the existing hard courts x 2.	High	BSC	BTC
31	Install light x 2 courts.	Medium	BSC	BTC
32	Install lights on existing lawn courts. Stage 1. Front 5 courts.	Medium	BSC	BTC
33	Install lights on existing lawn courts. Stage 2. Back 5 courts.	Medium		
34	Upgrade the fence in long term.	Medium	BTC	BSC
35	Install shade on west side of clubhouse and between courts 2 and 3.	High	BTC	BSC
36	Plant 3-4 shade trees between courts and the clubhouse.	High	BTC	BSC
37	Continues to maintain 10 grass courts.	High	BTC	BSC
38	Consider providing a temporary dividing net between the four courts and retaining a good base for future additional hard courts /synthetic grass courts or use of the space for children's ball and bike activities.	Low	BTC	BSC
Playground				
39	Develop a traditional fixed equipment playground at the southern end of the oval for year-round use by community and casual users of the Reserve	High	BSC	BLC
40	Soft fall mulch	High	BSC	BLC
41	Provide protected, shaded play space with portable equipment which can be transferred between netball and tennis in alternating seasons.	High	BSC	BLC
42	Provide protected, shaded space for a children's play area, where loose materials can be used.	High	BSC	BLC
Entries, traffic and parking				

No.	Recommendations	Priority (Low/Medium/High)	Lead	Partners
43	Seek to provide designated car parks for each facility with access off the street and minimise large areas for vehicle use.	Low	BSC	BLC
44	Formalise car parking bays between Leisure Centre and tennis courts and north of netball courts.	Medium	BSC	BLC
45	Redesign the entry on corner of Morrison and Johnson St, including new signage and move ticket box further into Reserve and use bollards to separate cars and pedestrians.	High	BSC	BLC
46	New bollards to separate pedestrians and vehicles in high traffic zones.	High	BSC	BLC
47	Install new speed humps as required.	High	BSC	BLC
Trees				
48	Develop a native garden at south end of oval, building on the current established plantings.	Medium	BLC	BSC
49	Develop a tree planting plan for the whole Reserve using a consistent pallet of appropriate species for a) shade, b) shelter and wind breaks, c) play and d) landscape and visual amenity.	High	BLC	BSC
Other				
50	Plan for relocation of bowls club to the Reserve in the long term. 31m x 31m	Low	BSC	BBC
51	Install outdoor gym equipment	Low	BLC	BSC

7. Funding options

How could it be funded?

Buloke Shire Council have indicated that they have limited means to contribute additional funding for projects at the Reserve given their long-term financial commitments. However, they can provide letters of support for grant applications, lobbying and continue their club support.

There are several sources of funds for recreation and sports facilities. Major facility upgrades commonly have multiple funding sources, including government, user groups and not-for-profit funds. Some grants may only be accessible to local government and others, not-for-profit groups, and sports and recreation clubs.

Typical sources of funds for facilities include:

- Federal and State Government grants and election commitments
- Council capital works budgeted funds
- Philanthropic trusts/Foundation grants etc.
- Sponsorship and naming rights
- Fundraising programs

Other sources include leases to telecommunication towers and advanced rental payments.

As funding opportunities change on a regular basis, examples only are listed below.

Government grant programs

State

- Regional Community Sports Infrastructure Fund
- Change Our Game Community Activation Grants
- Regional Community Sport Development Fund
- All Abilities Sport Fund
- Telstra Footy Country Grants

National

- Australian Sports Commission - AIS Research Grant Program
- Play Well Participation Grant Program
- Building Better Regions Fund
- National Stronger Regions Fund.

Election commitments

- Victoria - November 2026
- Federal – No later than September 2025

Philanthropic

- Australian Sports Foundation – Fundraising
- Scanlon Foundation Community Grant Scheme

Funding for the indicative costs outlined below are subject to successful application for various funding grants. See Appendix 6 - Funding Options

Costs are supplied by Turner and Townsend Quantity Surveyors.

8. Appendices

Appendix 1. Stakeholders consulted as part of this plan

Name of Club/Organisation	Position	Status of Interview
Birchip Cricket Club	Club representative	Completed
Birchip Watchem Football Club	Club representative	Completed
Birchip Watchem Netball Club	Club representative	Completed
Birchip Watchem Hockey Club	Club representative	Completed
Birchip Tennis Club	Club representative	Completed
Birchip Golf Club	Club representative	Completed
Birchip Bowls Club	Club representative	Completed
Ex Squash Club	Club representative	Completed
Birchip Leisure Centre	Club representative	Completed
Birchip Forum	Group representative	Completed
Birchip Lifestyle and Fitness	Instructor	Completed
Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning	Officer	Completed
Sport and Recreation Victoria	Manager Loddon Mallee	Completed
Netball Victoria	Northern Region Manager	Completed
Tennis Victoria	Club Development Officer - Country Central West	Completed
AFL Victoria	Region Manager	Completed
Cricket Victoria	Cricket Manager Western Country and Central Highlands	Completed
Bowls Victoria	Regional Manager	Completed

Appendix 2. Alignment with Council and other plans

Long- term Community Vision and Council Plan

The Buloke Shire Council long term community Vision and Council Plan outlines the priorities and goals of the Buloke region between 2021-2025. The Plan includes four priorities each with a vision and number of actions and directions. These are outlined in the figure below.

PRIORITY 1: OUR BUILT AND NATURAL ENVIRONMENT	The vision: Our future Buloke has quality, safe and accessible infrastructure valued by and responsive to the community alongside attractive streetscapes and a protected and celebrated natural environment reflecting Buloke pride.
PRIORITY 2: OUR COMMUNITY WELLBEING	The vision: Our future Buloke... is a welcoming, well-connected and inclusive community built around social connections for all age groups and backgrounds and access to, as well as ongoing advocacy for, vital services.
PRIORITY 3: OUR ECONOMY	The vision: Our future Buloke... is an innovative and strong economy with agriculture, small business and industry capitalising on new ideas to provide a range of employment and tourism opportunities backed by the services, connectivity and housing to achieve population stability.
PRIORITY 4: OUR COUNCIL AND COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP	The vision: Our future Buloke... is dynamically led by a council that informs community, has active partnerships, authentic advocacy and quality customer service delivering valued responsive community services in a responsible way.

Figure 21. Buloke Council Priorities 2021-2025

Source: Long Term Community Vision and Council Plan 2021-2025

Inclusiveness Plan – Buloke Shire Council

The Buloke Shire Inclusiveness Plan is about seeing and hearing residents whose voices are often unheard and contributions to their community often unseen. The Plan takes in the past Disability Action Plan and Positive Ageing Strategy to move these documents towards a genuine community approach.

- Actions from the plan to be considered as part of this Master Plan include:
- Address footpath access, accessible building and accessible entry for public buildings, use of microphones where possible
- Understand and promote that being physically and socially active can promote good mental health
- Specifically target programs and services within, leisure centres at socially isolated and lonely older people
- Investigate the opportunity of accessible playgrounds within the Shire and work towards a dedicated focus of footpath accessibility, working alongside those with mobility barriers
- Increase walkability and access of neighbourhoods for older people and people with disability and from a gender equity perspective with safer footpaths, street lighting, seating, public toilets

Birchip Community Plan

The Birchip Community Plan is a has been developed to describe the Birchip's community long term visions and aspirations. The Community Plan has been informed by the Long- term Community Vision and Council Plan and has identified strategies related to the four strategies identified above.

Objectives in the Birchip Community Plan that relate to Birchip Recreation Reserve, include:

- Review built community assets and explore opportunities for shared facilities and resources
- Maintain, enhance and plan for the future use of key community assets (e.g., BELC, Tchum Lake, Leisure Park, Park)
- Create a shade plan and actively seek funding for the installation and built and natural shade
- Maintain trees and control weeds on Council, Crown and private land
- Support young people to plan and deliver a broader range of recreation activities for children and young people that are not 'sport specific' (e.g., movie nights, BYO blow up to the pool, music events, drama)
- Seek opportunities to promote Birchip as a visitor destination
- Explore opportunities to strengthen strategic planning, partnering, communication and meeting skills amongst volunteers and community leaders
- Encourage the involvement of new volunteers and support and recognise existing volunteers.

Birchip Community Leisure Centre Master Plan 2010-2019

A 10 year Master Plan for the Reserve was completed in 2010 by the Birchip Community Leisure Centre Committee of Management in partnership with the Buloke Shire.

The following table summarises the progress of works recommended in the previous plan.

Table 8. Action Plan from the Birchip Community Leisure Centre Master Plan 2010 to 2019

Facility	Works	Completed Yes/No
Netball Courts	Construct a fence alongside the courts to prevent the balls from entering the car park area	Yes – prefer higher at north end
Children's play area	Develop a play space for young people near the netball courts.	No
Birchip Bowls Club	Set aside a space for a possible future location of the bowls facility from its location in town to the leisure centre, either behind the leisure centre or over the existing car park, next to the netball courts (Option). If a relocation is agreed to in the future, sell the land on which the Birchip Bowls Club is located and use this to help fund redevelopment of the Bowls Club at the Leisure Centre site	No
Leisure Centre	Upgrade plumbing throughout the Leisure Centre to improve water pressure	Hot water remains issue

Facility	Works	Completed Yes/No
	Upgrade audio visual capacity of the Centre for functions and events	Yes
	Upgrade the kitchen and all appliances to allow it to continue to cater for community events and functions	No
	Upgrade the leisure Centre to increase the size of change facilities and to extend upstairs function room - Stage one (netball court end if redevelopment)	Yes
	Install a ramp at the appropriate gradient as described in AS1428.1 Disabled Access Code, to allow access to upstairs function room for the people with mobility issues	No
	Upgrade air conditioning in function area	No
	Upgrade the Leisure Centre to improve balcony viewing - Stage Two (front of centre redevelopment)	No
	Upgrade downstairs disabled toilet. To be compliant with AS1428.1 Disabled Access Code and instal baby change facilities	No
	Develop a disabled toilet upstairs to be compliant with a AS1428.1 Disabled Access Code and install baby change facilities	Yes

Facility	Works	Completed Yes/No
Scoreboard/kiosk	Upgrade stairs on the scoreboard building to ensure that they are not so steep	No
Spectator shelter	Extend shelter for spectators from Leisure Centre to kiosk/scoreboard area	No
Sportsground	Plant with drought tolerant grass is an installed subsurface irrigation system	Yes
Tennis	Retain the Tennis Club pavilion until the facility reaches the end of its lifespan and review its use at that point in time	Yes - new
	Renovate two synthetic grass courts.	No
Hockey/tennis	Renovate the tennis pavilion so that it can be used as a change social facility for hockey players over winter	No
Entrance	Council traffic engineers to redesign entrance to site to improve safety and construct a new ticket box if required	No
Landscape	Improve landscaping throughout the whole site	No
Old kiosk	Remove old kiosk and relocate power supply	Yes
Outdoor toilet block near tennis courts	Install a new public toilet block near tennis courts	No
BBQ/Picnic area	Develop shade over the BBQ/picnic area through planting of five mature trays	No

Facility	Works	Completed Yes/No
Carparking	Mark parking days for people with disabilities, kitchen deliveries and emergency access	Yes
	Formalise car parking in both car parks and around the sports grounds	No
Mallee Bull Bar	Demolish Mallee Bull Bar	Yes
Sheep pavilion	Retain sheep pavilion as a storage shed	Yes
Horse stable	Offer horse stables to Birchip Racing Club for removal at their cost	Yes
Management/ Administration	Review management structure to provide better benefits for members and to increase revenue for members	TBC
	Committee of Management to continue to develop policies and strategies (e.g., risk management strategy) to ensure effective operations of the facility	TBC
	Committee of Management to undertake succession planning and governance training to ensure continued effective operations of the Committee	TBC
Operations	Subject to a positive feasibility, trial the employment of a chief to provide meals on weekends or on training nights	TBC

Facility	Works	Completed Yes/No
Maintenance	Continue to maintain and repair kitchen equipment	TBC
Marketing	Install signage at both entrances to the site	No
	Produce a quarterly newsletter (in both hardcopy and electronic format) outlining events at the Centre, bar opening hours, membership benefits, etc.	TBC

AFL Central Victoria Facilities Strategy – September 2017

The AFL Central Victoria Regional Strategy provides the principles and strategic framework to support the future development, governance and growth of football and netball throughout the Central Victoria Region. It also provides key regional strategic directions and recommendations, as well as identifying critical priorities and actions for AFL Central Victoria, AFL Victoria, Netball Victoria, AFL Central Victoria Leagues, Clubs and Netball Associations and project partner LGAs.

26% of the Central Victoria Regions' population aged over 18 participate in football (well above the Victorian country average penetration rate of 10%). Similarly junior and youth participation averages sit well above the State country penetration averages for these two age cohorts.

The penetration rates for football and netball in the Central Victorian Region showed that the Buloke Shire were well above the average in all five age categories compared to the other 8 LGAs in the Central Region.

Audits completed in February - May 2016 identified that there were gaps in facility amenities at the George Cartwright Oval in relation to changerooms, umpire rooms, football lighting and netball lighting. Facility condition ratings were marked low in relation to female suitability and shower facility design in umpires, home and away change rooms. These aspects have since been addressed.

The netball court surface and lighting were also rated poorly. These aspects have also been addressed.

Night competition football capable lighting is generally well catered for across the Region with all project partner LGAs, except Buloke, Gannawarra and Northern Grampians Shires having at least one venue with lighting to this level (150 lux).

Appendix 3. Site Services

Drainage – Watson St

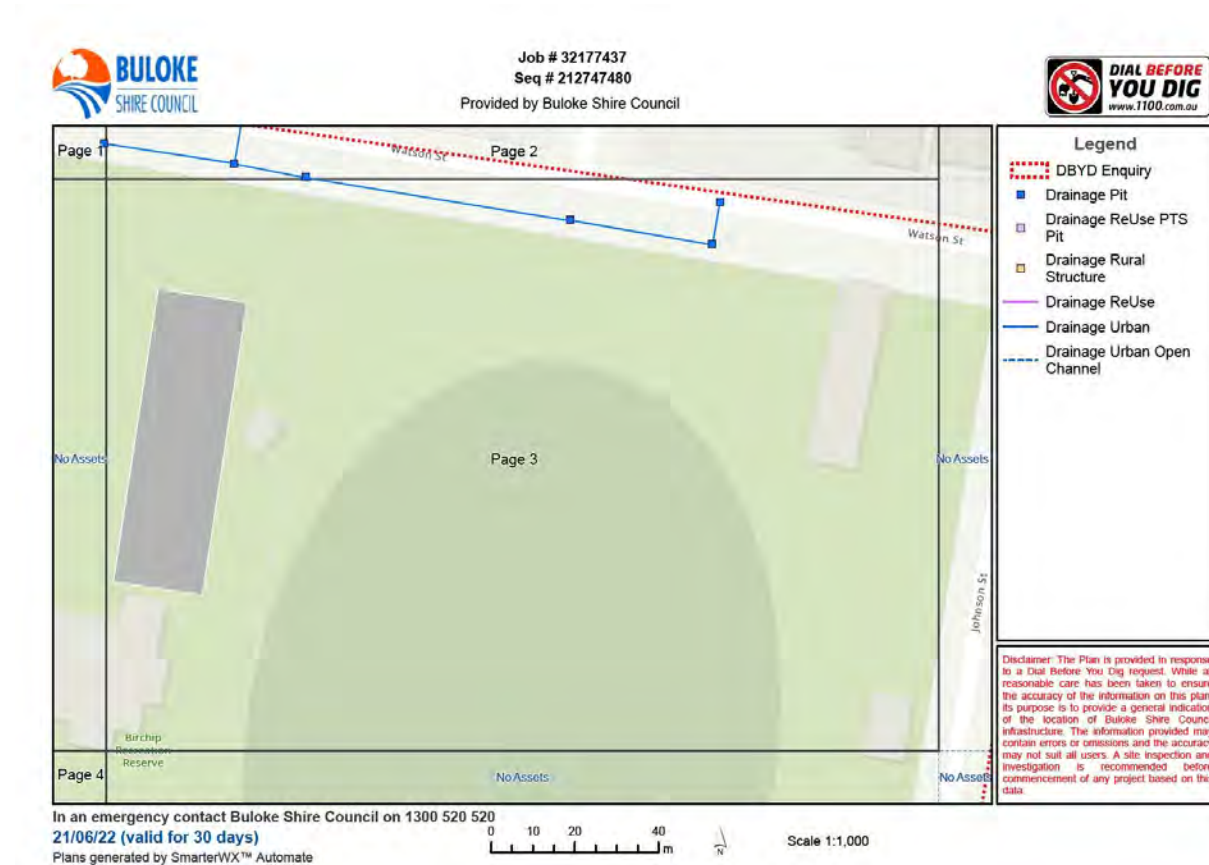


Figure 22. Drainage and pit location, Watson St Birchip, north of Reserve

Source: Buloke Shire Council

Electricity



Figure 23. Site Locality Map for electrical cables at Birchip Recreation Reserve and location of low voltage cable at Oval
Source: Dial Before You Dig

Water and sewerage

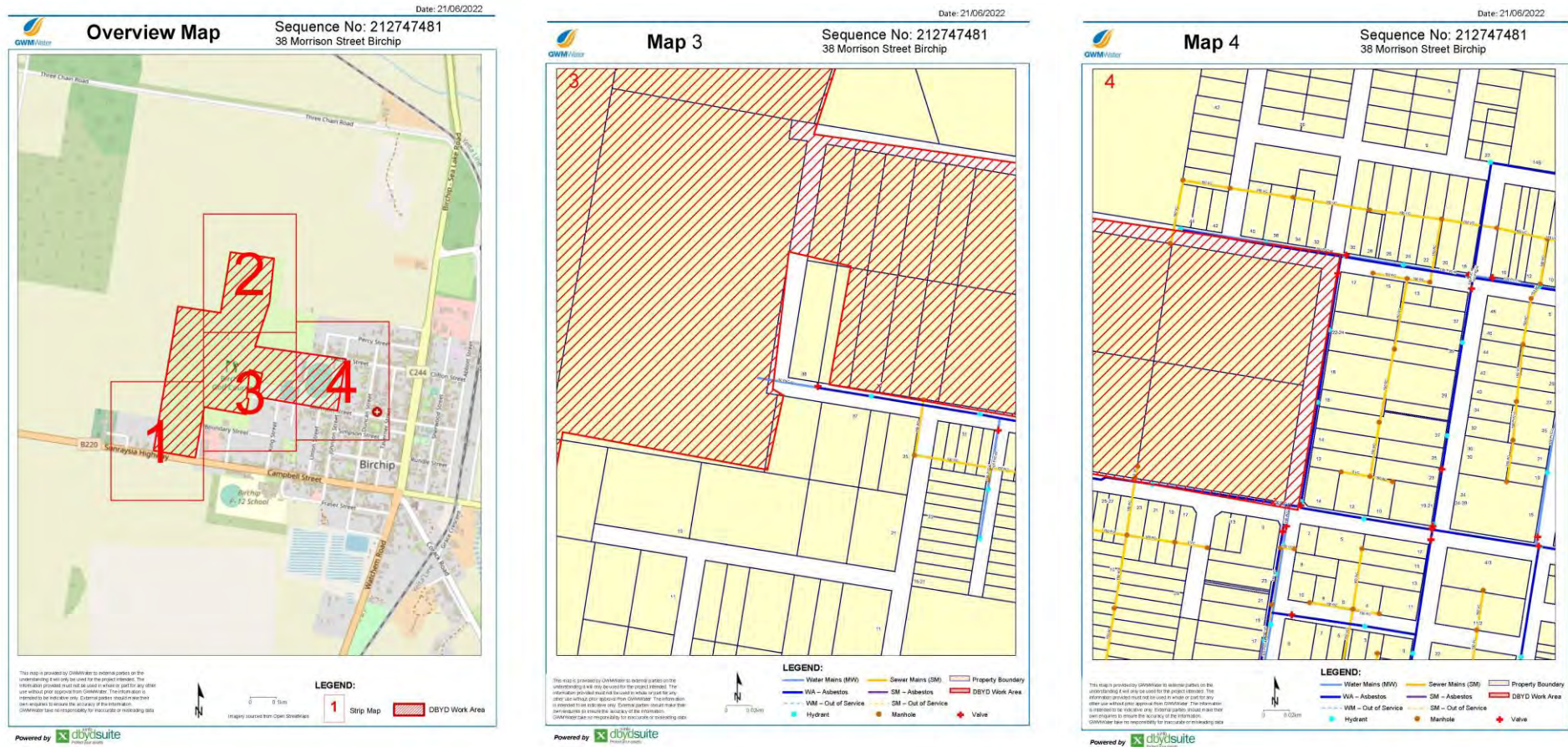


Figure 24. Overview Map of Birchip Recreation Reserve showing water and sewer mains
Source: Dial Before You Dig

Appendix 4. Pavilion Frontage Refurbishment and Master Plan

Birchip Recreation Reserve.

Birchip Community Leisure Centre.
Frontage Refurbishment.



Morrison Street
Birchip, Vic. 3483

Preliminary Concept – PC02 - **FINAL**

December 2023

106
Architects

 **leisure**
PLANNERS

Contents

EXISTING CONDITIONS

EXISTING SITE

PROJECT OVERVIEW

BRIEF

MASTERPLAN CONCEPT FLOOR

PLANS REFERENCE IMAGES

3D IMAGES

Prepared for
Buloke Shire Council

Birchip Community Leisure Centre Pavilion
Frontage Refurbishment

Concept

Revision

06.04.2023

01

Reference. A22135

Prepared by
Dion Gosling

Reviewed by
Dion Gosling
On behalf of Studio106 Architecture Pty Ltd
T/A 106 Architects

Cover Image

Birchip Community Leisure Centre



Existing Conditions



Existing Site



View from terrace to carpark



Hardcourt Change Room Access



Oval Change Room Access

Existing Site



Project Overview.

Project Scope

- Leisure Centre frontage upgrade
- Rationalise existing accessible ramps & balustrades
- Better use of spectator mound, bench seating
- Site accessibility upgrades
- Landscape overlay
- New covered structures
- Back of house / servicing upgrade
- Enhance connections & integration of existing amenities



Brief.

Facilities:

- Viewing platforms & terrace
- Public viewing areas & seating
- Events concourse

Key Considerations:

- Drop-off for deliveries
- Safe pedestrian movement between clubrooms, hardcourts & oval
- Covered spectator shelter – for sun & wind
- Standing room
- Unimpeded views from inside social spaces to the oval
- Enable fully accessible entry points – ramps & stairs
- Adaptive reuse of space – events & day-to-day activities
- Event & spectator zone
- Larger terrace/deck area required

Design Challenges + Constraints:

- Excavation / cut-to-fill
- Integration with existing leisure centre
- Levels across embankment
- Access priorities

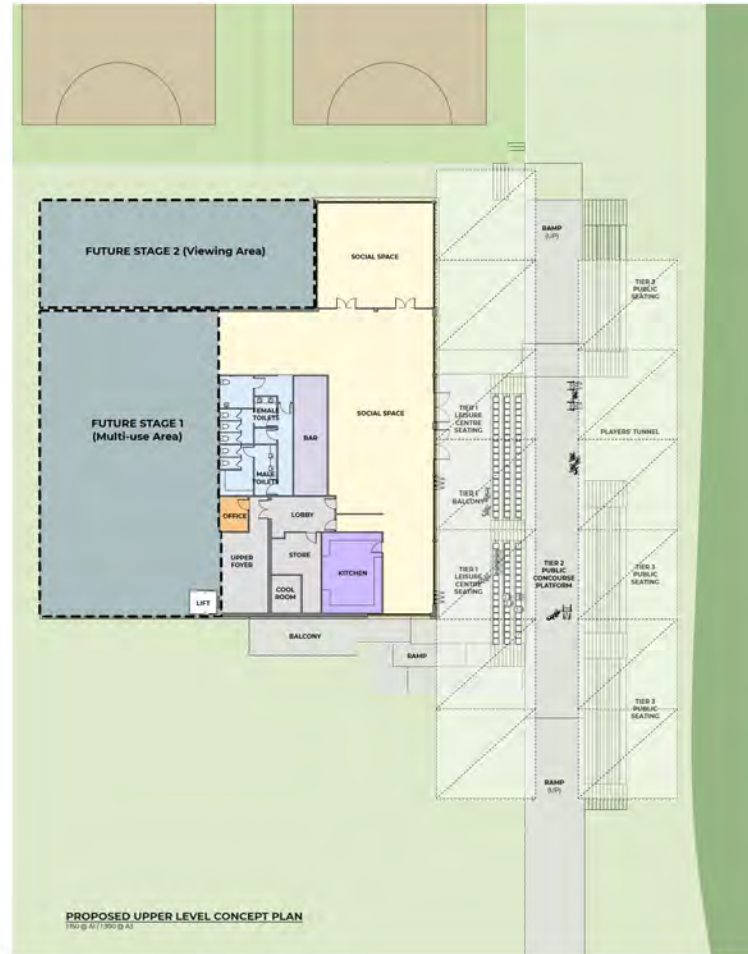
Design Opportunities:

- Soften area w/ landscape treatment
- Create shelter structures
- Potential canteen servicing the terrace
- External connections with landscape & oval
- Lightweight structures to compliment solidity of existing Centre materials

Masterplan



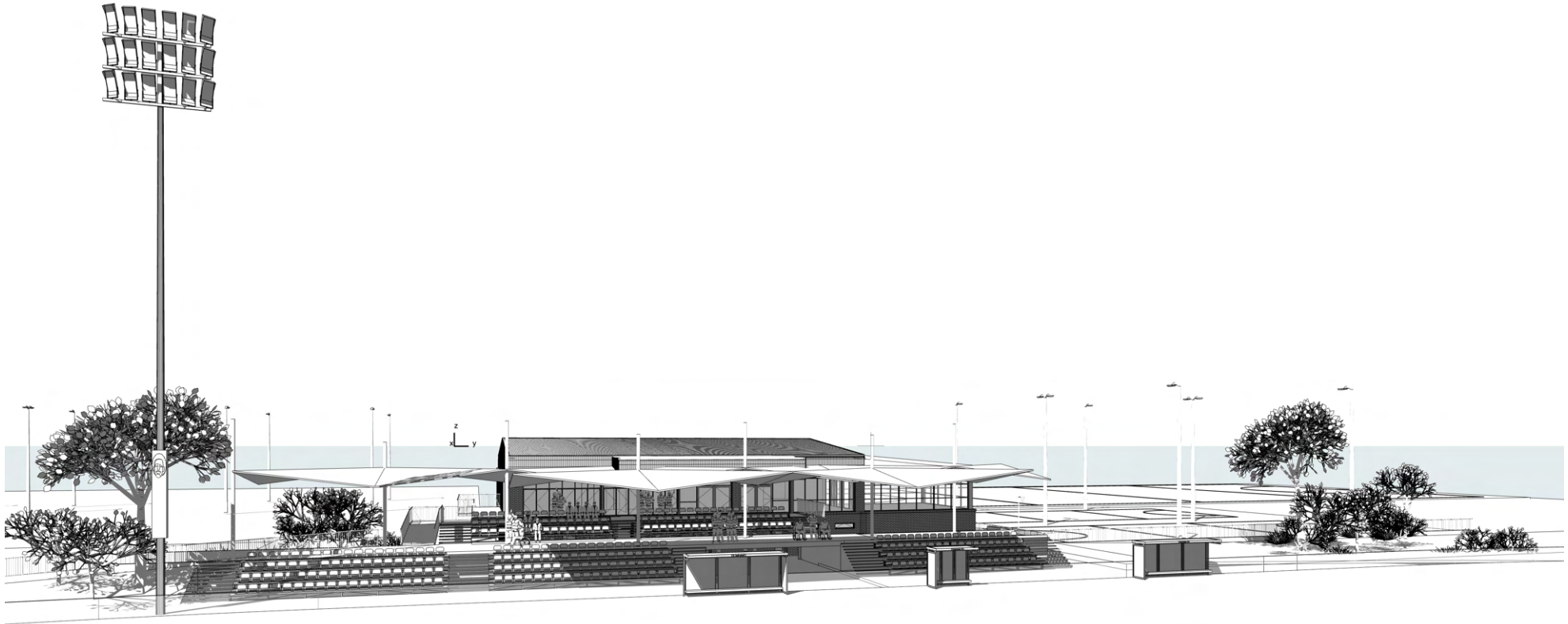
Concept Floor Plans.



Reference Images.



3D.



3D.



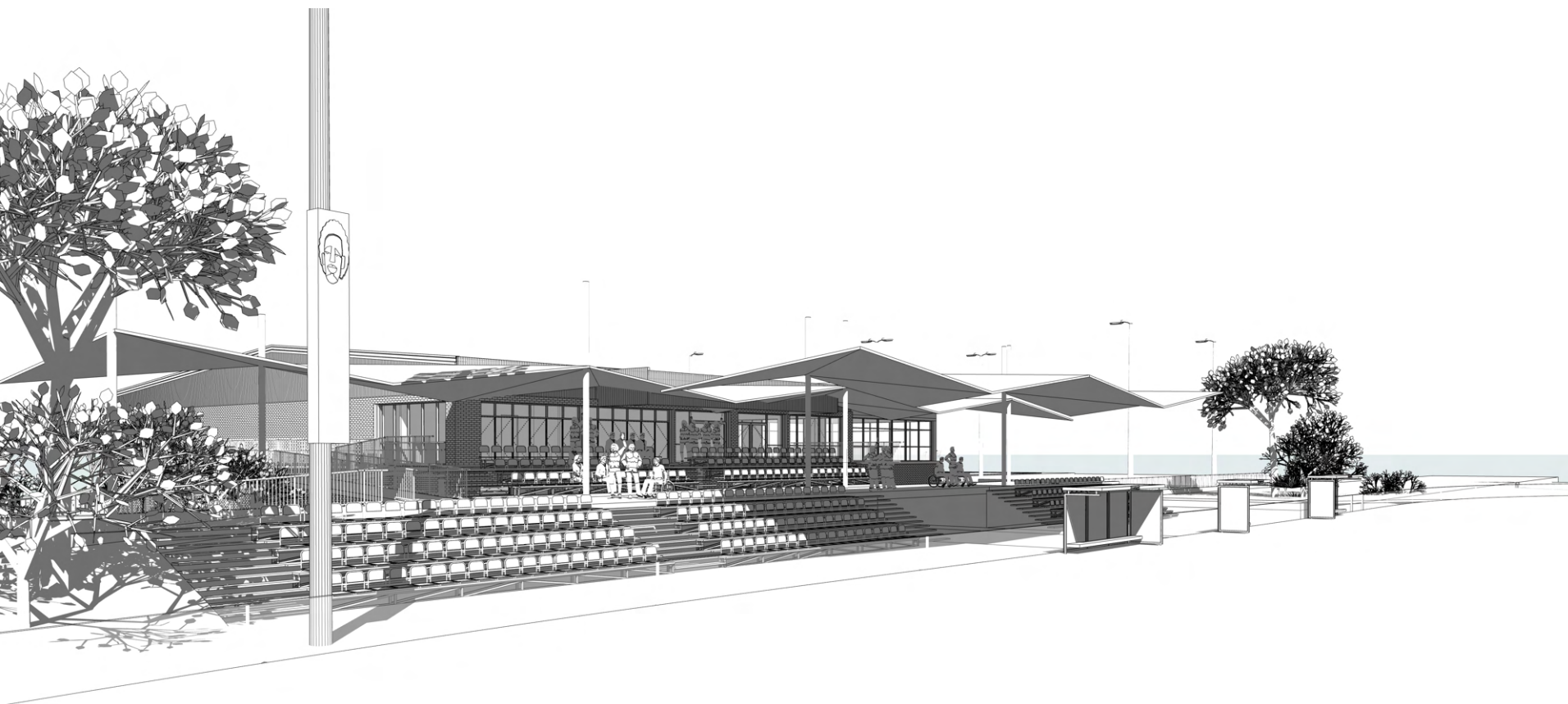
3D.



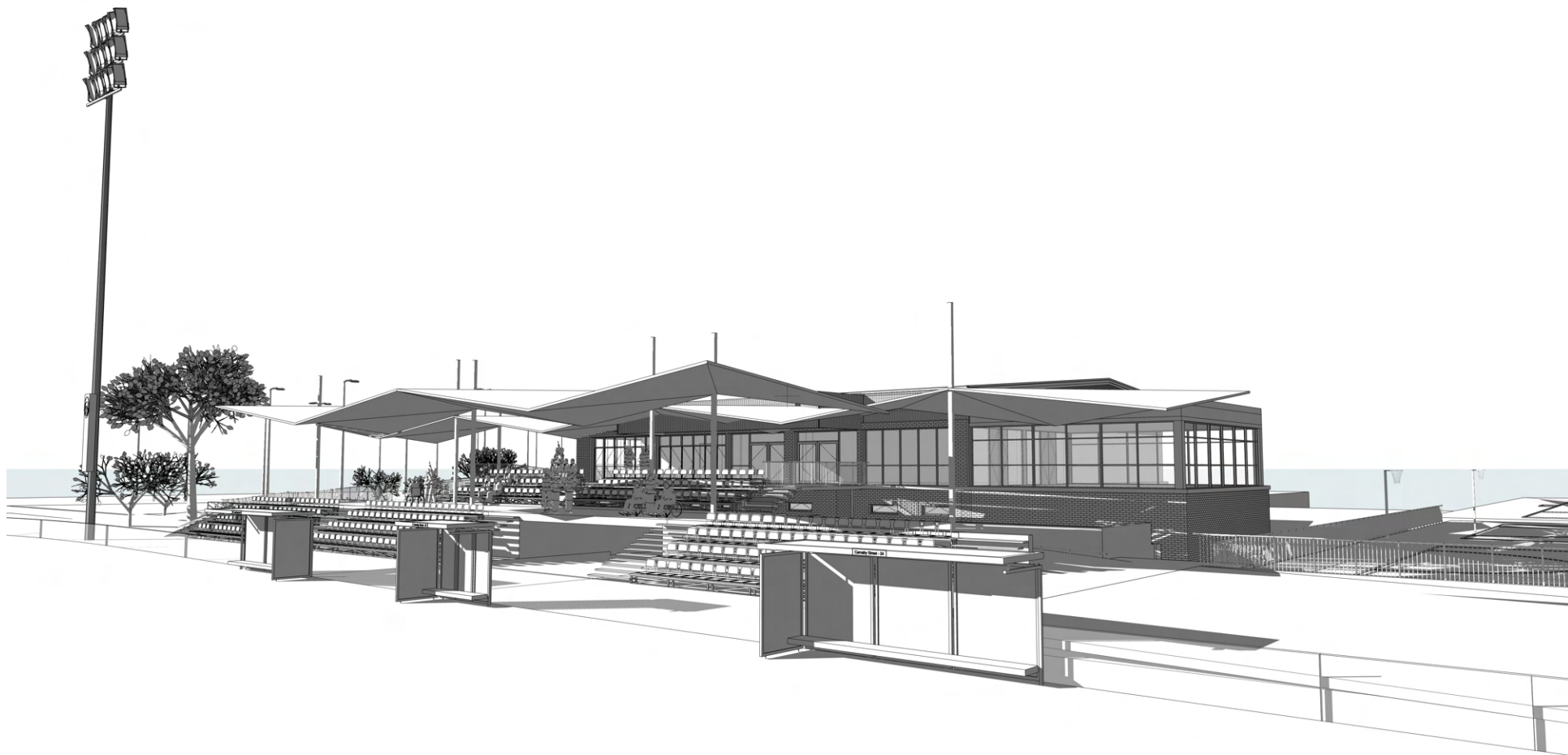
3D.



3D.



3D.



Summary

Indicative Cost Plan - R1

@Leisure

Birchip Recreational Reserve R1

making the **difference**



@Leisure

Indicative Cost Plan - R1

Birchip Recreational Reserve R1

Item	Description	Quantity	Unit	Rate	Total (AUD)
1	Birchip Recreational Reserve				
2	Indicative Cost Plan				
3	30/08/2024				
4					
5	Notes/Exclusions				0
6					
7	Leisure Centre				3,982,036
8	External Sports				4,026,385
9	Playground				175,000
10	Site Works				977,902
11	Site Services				280,000
12	Subtotal				9,441,323
13					
14	ESD Initiatives	3	%		283,240
15	Preliminaries	12	%		1,166,948
16	Locality Allowance	5	%		544,576
17	Subtotal				11,436,086
18					
19	Design Contingency	15	%		1,715,413
20	Cost Escalation to Tender	5	% pa	12 mths	657,575
21	Construction Total				13,809,074
22					
23	Construction Contingency	10	%		1,380,907
24	Professional Fees	10	%		138,091
25	Authority Fees & Charges	1.5	%		207,928
26	Loose Furniture, Fittings & Equipment (FF&E)	Allow			50,000
27	AV / IT equipment	Allow			100,000
28	Internal Council Costs				Excluded
29	Decanting, relocation, temporary facilities				Excluded
30	Project Total				15,686,000

Detail

Indicative Cost Plan - R1

@Leisure

Birchip Recreational Reserve R1

making the **difference**

@Leisure		Indicative Cost Plan - R1			
Birchip Recreational Reserve R1					
Item	Description	Quantity	Unit	Rate	Total (AUD)
	Notes/Exclusions - Elemental Summary				
5.1	COST PLAN NOTES				
5.2	Cost plan assumes a competitively bid tender process to 4 or more suitably sized contractors		note		
5.3	DOCUMENTATION				
5.4	Concept designs prepared by 106 Architects received 13 August 2024		note		
5.5	Birchip recommendations, details and info dated 310724 from @Leisure		note		
5.6	EXCLUSIONS				
5.7	GST		note		
5.8	Land, legal, marketing and finance costs		note		
5.9	Removal and disposal off-site of contaminated soil		note		
5.10	Adverse soil conditions including rock excavation and replacement of soft spots		note		
5.11	Latent conditions		note		
5.12	Asbestos and hazardous materials removal		note		
5.13	Staging costs		note		
5.14	Works outside site boundary		note		
5.15	Scope included is strictly in accordance with concept and recommendations - no allowance for scope not referred in these documents.		note		
5.16	Upgrade to Authority Mains		note		
5.17	Assume electrical power source from existing connection and no upgrade is required.		note		
5.18	Graphic art / public art		note		
5.19	Works to the park not specifically noted as part of the scope		note		
5.20	Items noted as Excluded in the cost plan detail		note		
	Total - Notes/Exclusions				0



@Leisure

Indicative Cost Plan - R1

Birchip Recreational Reserve R1

Item	Description	Quantity	Unit	Rate	Total (AUD)
	Leisure Centre - Elemental Summary				
7.1	<u>Level 1</u>				
7.2	New flooring to kitchen incl remove existing	35	m2	300.00	10,500
7.3	Upgrade kitchen facilities to improve capacity	PROV SUM			75,000
7.4	Revise cool room configuration and install new beer lines	8	m2	4,800.00	36,000
7.5	New roller blinds [extent as nominated - 18m x 2m]	36	m2	180.00	6,480
7.6	<u>Ground floor</u>				
7.7	Improve ventilation for downstairs change rooms - replace motor of existing A/C	224	m2	150.00	33,600
7.8	Upgrade the golf support facilities (changerooms) to accomodate bowls in long term	118	m2	2,000.00	236,000
7.9	Refurbish toilets and showers for netball and golf	30	m2	4,000.00	120,000
7.10	Provide a lift into level one of the building	1	no		
7.11	- allow for lift	1	no	100,000.00	100,000
7.12	- allow for lift shaft, structural alterations	PROV SUM			120,000
7.13	<u>Future Area</u>				
7.14	Future Multi-use area - redevelopment squash / golf to include gym and exercise incl small pool and change facilities				Excluded
7.15	Future Stage 2 viewing area - elevated viewing area				Excluded
7.16	<u>Squash Courts</u>				
7.17	Rebuild squash court incl demo existing	1	crt	200,000.00	200,000
7.18	Install movable glass walls	Allow			75,000
7.19	No works to court 2		note		Excluded
7.20	<u>Spectator area</u>				
7.21	Upgrade concourse to include accessible ramps at each end to address non- compliant access	290	m2	1,000.00	290,000
7.22	Provide outside tiered seating to the oval edge for spectators [on grade]	137	m2	2,000.00	274,000
7.23	- Extra for steps	5	no	10,000.00	50,000
7.24	Provide outside tiered seating for spectators [suspended / balcony]	152	m2	3,000.00	456,810
7.25	- Extra for steps	3	no	15,000.00	45,000
7.26	New shade structures [assumes can have columns / not cantilevered]	743	m2	1,500.00	1,114,500
7.27	Improve entry/ exit from lower level change rooms to the oval [player tunnel]	PROV SUM			100,000
7.28	Allow for paved area surrounding seating	382	m2	300.00	114,546
7.29	- Allow for tiered planters to side of ramps	PROV SUM			50,000

@Leisure		Indicative Cost Plan - R1			
Birchip Recreational Reserve R1					
7.30	New shade between netball and oval (6m x 10m no seating)	Allow			100,000
7.31	- assume paved area with seats is existing		note		Excluded
7.32	New lawn / grass area (40m x 8m)	320	m2	30.00	9,600
7.33	<u>Public Toilet</u>				
7.34	Remove existing toilet block at Watson St entry	Allow			15,000
7.35	Refurbish existing toilet block to south side of site incl new roof	PROV SUM			350,000
	Total - Leisure Centre				3,982,036



@Leisure

Indicative Cost Plan - R1

Birchip Recreational Reserve R1

Item	Description	Quantity	Unit	Rate	Total (AUD)
	External Sports - Elemental Summary				
8.1	<u>Perimeter exercise trail</u>				
8.2	New 2m wide granitic sand walking / running track	4,629	m	75.00	347,175
8.3	Allow for fishing platform off golf dam	Allow			30,000
8.4	<u>Golf course</u>				
8.5	Upgrade watering system to tees on golf course	1,500	m	65.00	97,500
8.6	<u>Netball</u>				
8.7	Additional lights to court 2 incl lights, poles and cabling	2	no	50,000.00	100,000
8.8	Increase fence height to 2200 at ends of courts (extg 1200H)	100	m	360.00	36,000
8.9	- assumes remove existing and provide new		note		
8.10	Replace / resurface court 2 - assume synthetic rubber surface	Allow			400,000
8.11	- includes removal of existing, install new		note		
8.12	<u>Hockey</u>				
8.13	New hockey pitch - 94m x 55m grass field with additional 3m & 5m runoff with irrigation and drainage	Allow			677,710
8.14	New training lights to field	Allow			300,000
8.15	<u>Oval</u>				
8.16	Rabbit proof fencing to the oval	536	m	400.00	214,400
8.17	Install goal netting at each end	Allow			160,000
8.18	Extend seating around oval [assume 50% existing retained]	Allow			174,200
8.19	<u>Cricket</u>				
8.20	Add sight screen to rear of cricket nets	Allow			30,000
8.21	<u>Tennis</u>				
8.22	Upgrade existing hard courts	2	no	180,000.00	360,000
8.23	- new lighting	Allow			100,000
8.24	Install new lights to existing grass courts				
8.25	stage 1 - front x 5 courts	Allow			200,000
8.26	stage 2 - back x 5 courts	Allow			200,000
8.27	Upgrade perimeter tennis court fence	340	m	360.00	122,400
8.28	- assumes remove existing and provide new		note		
8.29	New shade sail on west side of clubhouse	Allow			25,000

@Leisure		Indicative Cost Plan - R1			
Birchip Recreational Reserve R1					
8.30	- assume over existing paved/seating area		note		
8.31	New shade trees between courts and clubhouse (assume 45L pots)	4	no	500.00	2,000
8.32	Maintain grass courts	8	no		Excluded
8.33	Temporary dividing net between front and back courts	Allow			50,000
8.34	<u>Bowling Green</u>				
8.35	New bowling green - 31m x 31m	1	no	400,000.00	400,000
Total - External Sports					4,026,385

@Leisure Birchip Recreational Reserve R1				Indicative Cost Plan - R1	
Item	Description	Quantity	Unit	Rate	Total (AUD)
	Playground - Elemental Summary				
9.1	New traditional fixed equipment playground at the south end of the oval	Allow			100,000
9.2	- extra for soft fall mulch	Allow			15,000
9.3	New protected play space with portable equipment	Allow			30,000
9.4	- Extra for temporary shade structures / market umbrellas etc	Allow			30,000
9.5	- no allowance for soft fall for portable play space		note		Excluded
	Total - Playground				175,000

@Leisure Birchip Recreational Reserve R1			Indicative Cost Plan - R1		
Item	Description	Quantity	Unit	Rate	Total (AUD)
	Site Works - Elemental Summary				
10.1	Site clearance	18,650	m2	8.00	149,200
10.2	Earthworks to outdoor seating / concourse areas	870	m2	90.00	78,300
10.3	- extra for batters	Allow			45,000
10.4	Entries, traffic and parking				
10.5	Dedicated carparks for each facility				Included
10.6	Formalise carparking bays between Leisure Centre and tennis courts and north of netball courts	Allow			536,402
10.7	Redesign entry on cnr of Morrison and Johnson St incl new bollards	Allow			100,000
10.8	- allow to relocate ticket box	PROV SUM			10,000
10.9	New bollards to separate pedestrian and vehicles in high traffic zone	12	m	1,000.00	12,000
10.10	New speed humps	60	m	450.00	27,000
10.11	Trees				
10.12	New native garden at south end of oval	100	m2	150.00	15,000
10.13	Develop tree planting plan for the whole reserve	Allow			5,000
10.14	- no allowance for actual trees		note		
	Total - Site Works				977,902

@LeisureIndicative Cost Plan - R1

Birchip Recreational Reserve R1

Item	Description	Quantity	Unit	Rate	Total (AUD)
	Site Services - Elemental Summary				
11.1	Allow for stormwater	1	item	250,000.10	250,000
11.2	Allow for sewer - assume existing - no works				N/A
11.3	Allow for water	Allow			30,000
11.4	Allow for fire - assume existing - no works				N/A
11.5	Allow for electrical / comms - assume existing - no allowance for upgrade				Excluded
	Total - Site Services				280,000