WHYALLA CRICKET ASSOCIATION
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Deputation Statement – Special Whyalla Council Meeting – 26th August, 2024.

First and foremost, the Whyalla Cricket Association would like to thank Council for allowing us to present here tonight as well as to acknowledge the support that council have given us over many years. Ours is a mutually respectful relationship and we are grateful for this.

We would also like to make it clear that as an association, we fully support all community sporting codes to develop & grow their competitions. We acknowledge that one size doesn't fit all when it comes to sport, but that having multiple thriving codes in regional communities is what makes us want to stay a part of the community and love where we live.

Wherever possible, cricket strives to co-exist and support other sporting associations & Leagues.

This was the basis for our decision in 2023/24 to welcome the WWFL to temporarily play at Memorial Oval while the changeroom facilities at Jubilee Oval were being completed. It is our understanding that Council have made a significant investment into the Jubilee Park facility in order to provide a quality multi-use venue, available for sports to utilize outside of their seasonal tenancies.

Hundreds of years of tradition across the country have dictated that there is a season for cricket, and there is a season for football – for the most part, working complimentary of one another utilizing shared facilities. However, in this instance the WWFL have made the decision to play outside of traditional football season and within cricket season. Cricket simply is not played outside of cricket season and certainly does not infringe on football's season. Even so, we feel we have been more than compromising to facilitate womens football and the non traditional season they have come up with, despite this not being ideal for cricket.

We would like to make some key points that we feel are pertinent to the matter before Council:

1. **Historical Context**
2. **Joint Capital Funding - SACA and SANFL**
3. **The importance of cricket to new Australians**
4. **Cricket's willingness to compromise**
5. **Negative impacts to cricket & our community**

1. ***Historical Context***

   a. The Whyalla Cricket Association have primarily played at Memorial Oval for over 70 years – for much of this time, this was the only turf wicket available in the region. Since 2020, thanks to the generosity of both Council and the South Australian Cricket Association, we have been able to play on turf wickets both at Bennett and Memorial Ovals, with Memorial Oval still very much remaining the heartland of cricket in Whyalla, and Bennett Oval widely considered the home of football.

b. The WCA have actively utilized both facilities over the past three seasons in order to provide value in maintaining both turf wickets across the two ovals for cricket. This has included hosting T20 Competition finals, the 2022 Super-League Final and the 2023/24 A Grade Final at Bennett Oval, mainly due to the condition of Memorial Oval after 9 months of football being played on the site up until December 2023. Enough emphasis cannot be placed on the detrimental effects of football too a highly crated turf wicket during cricket season.

2. ***Joint Capital Funding – SACA and SANFL***

a. The South Australian Cricket Association (SACA), in conjunction with the South Australian National Football League and the State Government, have contributed in excess of $1Million in capital funding for the Bennett Oval/Memorial Oval redevelopment project.
b. This joint funding venture included the proviso that a new turf wicket be installed for future development of cricket in the region. To further aid this development, SACA provided the complimentary services of world class turf consultant Trent Kelly, to train and advise council staff on turf management at council venues.
c. Thanks to this investment, Whyalla now has two turf wickets which are the best within the Spencer Gulf. For over 5 years the Whyalla Cricket Association along with the Port Augusta Cricket Association have been working towards a joint competition to ensure the long-term strength of cricket within the Spencer Gulf region. This has just been agreed to in the last month, with a full 14 round home and away season with 8 clubs planning to compete in this coming season.

3. The importance of cricket to new Australians

Rural cities such as Whyalla and Port Augusta have long been the destination for new Australians, many of South Asian heritage. Our Association recognizes the invaluable role that cricket plays in helping new Australians to feel a part of our local community.

a. Local soccer and cricket have been integral to new families feeling a sense of belonging in our community.
b. Indeed both the WCA and the PACA feature clubs participating in the A Grade Super League, consisting entirely of proud new Australian players, who have requested to play their home games as day/night fixtures utilizing both Memorial and Bennett Ovals.
c. Available data supports this – local cricket has seen an increase of junior participants with South Asian heritage from 8% to 14% of total participants, and 15% from 8% of senior participants of South Asian heritage.

4. Cricket's willingness to compromise

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The WCA have every desire to see women's football prosper within our community. This is why we have proposed several solutions and compromises to share facilities after having met with Council and the WWFL on Wednesday the 31st of July.

We proposed that the WWFL use Memorial Oval for their first 2 rounds, followed by Jubilee Park for their round 2-10 fixtures with the potential to return to Memorial Oval for their finals post November 30th – This compromise was not accepted by football.

Following last week's Council meeting, the WCA offered football a further compromise - a structured program whereby cricket and football would share facilities across Memorial and Bennett. This was a generous proposition and one that would have been detrimental to both cricket and the turf wickets so carefully curated by council staff.

These compromises by cricket were collectively supported by council, Women's Football Coordinator Scott Leverington, and President of the WFL, Keith Sichler. Still, this was not supported by the football clubs.

We can see no reason why this is the case. If this refusal to compromise lies in the size of the ovals, we can provide measurements that show the size differences to be minimal and of no serious consequence to the game of football.

4. ***Negative impacts to cricket & our community***

Ultimately, sharing facilities with football during the cricket season will negatively impact the fixturing of our games. Notwithstanding, we have discussed a shared use solution with our partners and governing bodies and believe we can manage this compromise.

However, not having access to Memorial Oval for the period of October through to December will severely compromise the development of Cricket in our region, both this season and in the long term.

We therefore implore the elected members here tonight to vote on this matter in a way that protects the sport of cricket and the vital role it plays within our local community.

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Only if asked in question time:

Memorial Oval - 168m goal to goal – boundary width 117m

Bennett Oval - 171m goal to goal – boundary width 123 m (it has already been discussed with Scott Leverington that the width is easily fixed by bring boundary lines in, creating further grass space for spectators to use = increased crowd capacity).

May it be noted, that U/15 grade (Mixed), is used for Finals games and determined to be appropriately sized – this grade consists of Ages 12-15 Boys and Girls.