



COUNCIL MAKES DIFFICULT DECISION TO REST APEX OVAL FOR MAJOR EVENT

On Monday night Councillors were faced with one of the tougher decisions during this Council term when they were asked to decide on the usage of Apex Oval over the next month.

The difficult choice to relocate the Junior Rugby League finals was made to ensure that Apex Oval is fully prepared for the A-League trial match between the Newcastle Jets and Sydney FC on Saturday, 21 September.

There was a lot of discussion, both during the meeting and in the lead-up, and I know all Councillors really wrestled with the decision. Nobody wanted to have to deprive young children of the chance to play their grand final on Apex Oval. We know that means a lot to them.

However in the end, Councillors had to weight up the importance of the A-League match to Dubbo and the region, and how our handling of this issue could impact the potential of other big matches coming to town.

The final vote was 8-1 in favour of relocating the junior games and focusing on preparation for the A-League. I think what finally swayed most Councillors was the knowledge that if the oval wasn't up to scratch and the A-League game didn't go ahead or a player was injured because the oval wasn't up to standard, Dubbo would be unlikely to host any major events for a long time to come.

When Council learned its bid to secure the A-League match was successful, staff began investigating to make sure Apex Oval met with the high standards required. Unfortunately, a busy season of sport and the drought has taken a toll.

That was why in late July staff suggested that more upkeep and less matches were what would be required to ensure Apex was ready. At the moment the field is quite bare on the halfway line and there are other patches where the grass has been destroyed.

This A-League match will be covered at a national level and we don't want to present an oval that looks patchy and unmaintained.

I know there will be a lot of children and parents who will be disappointed with Council's decision. But Council will work with both the junior rugby league and rugby union to ensure the finals and grand finals being played in Dubbo are still at great grounds, either at the outer Apex Park fields or Barden Park for league and Victoria Park No.1 for the rugby.

I also hope that some of those children or parents will enjoy a day watching A-League next month.

And it's not just this one trial match. The Jets have indicated they would be interested in bringing a full match to town, and I am really keen to see other sports such as the NRL also look at Dubbo. It has been too long since an NRL match was held here and it is clear there is an appetite within the community for one.

This was a tough decision, but ultimately the one that Council feels will pay off in the long term for the community and the region.

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