



Supporting Strathfieldsaye Playing Fields

When communities, businesses and local councils work together, great things can be achieved.

The need - facilities for a growing community

Strathfieldsaye, on the outskirts of Bendigo, is one of the fastest growing communities in the area. Although it already had good existing sporting facilities based around soccer, cricket and basketball, they were stretched to capacity. Many junior sporting teams were forced to play their home games outside Strathfieldsaye.

The City of Greater Bendigo agreed that there was a need for more sporting facilities, but were investigating land outside the area. Strathfieldsaye residents did not want their sporting facilities to be out of town, particularly considering the growing number of junior participants.

Land was available close to existing sporting facilities, however it was zoned residential and hence expensive. The Council's limited funds precluded this much more suitable site, and existing plans did not meet local needs into the future.

The solution - a community comes together

The Strathfieldsaye community held a meeting to discuss how they could build their own new recreational facilities. 500 residents attended, along with representatives from Bendigo Bank, Bendigo Community Telco and the City of Greater Bendigo.

Together they worked on a solution that gave ultimate ownership of the project and the resulting facilities to the Strathfieldsaye community, with the support and backing of three key players in Bendigo - the Bank, the Telco and the Council.

The City of Greater Bendigo agreed that if the community contributed the extra cost of the now expanded new facility, then they would rezone and support the community preferred site. This site could be easily linked to the existing site via a creek reserve, without having to cross any roads.

To facilitate the project they formed a community company, Strathfieldsaye and Districts Community Enterprise (SDCE).

Both Bendigo Bank and Bendigo Community Telco entered into a referral agreement to deliver an ongoing income stream to SDCE. Local residents who used the services of either company could request a percentage of their spend go to the SDCE.

The SDCE then used the income stream to attract state and federal funding. This funding is usually based on a 'multi dollar

for every dollar' that the SDCE raised, which enabled the community to tackle such a large project.

In only four years the Strathfieldsaye community has built a multi-million dollar sporting facility that includes two sporting ovals, cricket nets, netball courts and a million-dollar community facility for everyone to use.

The gains - a stronger community

Along with the obvious benefits of local sporting facilities – healthier residents, greater sporting opportunities for local kids, and assets that make Strathfieldsaye a great place to live – there were many less tangible but equally important benefits.

The community worked together to create a lasting legacy, and the input from schools, students, residents and businesses was a highlight of this successful community project.

Community pride was clearly evident, with owners of adjoining residential-zoned land contributing to gifting the land back to the council for passive recreation (the land was purchased by the SDCE, then gifted it back to the council). This could only happen in a community fully committed to such a project.

The future

The Strathfieldsaye Jets Cricket Club began formal competition 2008/09 season, with their home ground at the new sporting grounds.

A new senior football team, the Strathfieldsaye Storm, debuted in the 2009 season of the Bendigo Football and Netball League.

We hold high hopes for their success.

