

Policy

Sports Field Wet Weather Closure

Version 1.1

Adopted by Council at its meeting on 17 September 2015

Division:	Sustainable Communities and Environment
Section:	Parks and Active Communities
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Sports Field Wet Weather closure

1 Policy Objective

This policy acknowledges the need for licensed sports field users to have access to Council sports fields to undertake their sport and participate in structured competition. The benefits to individuals and the community from participation in sport are well documented and widely acknowledged. Council's role in facilitating participation in sport in Tweed Shire is through the provision of well maintained and accessible facilities.

To ensure the sustainability of the facilities and long term viability of the playing surfaces, Council needs to manage the use and access of the sports fields through periods of wet weather. The sports fields wet weather policy will clearly describe the process, communications and considerations when making decisions of field closures during periods of wet weather.

2 Policy Background

Tweed Shire Council manages 111ha of land categorised as sports fields across 37 sites. The sports fields cater to a diverse range of sports played at varying levels. Council invests significant funding into the maintenance and development of sports fields and facilities to ensure they meet the requirements of the various sports and the community.

To ensure equity of access and sustainability of the sports fields, Council has developed a range of policies in consultation with sports field user and the community.

3 Policy

3.1 Policy Principles

It is acknowledged that a variety of circumstances require consideration in determining field closure during periods of wet weather. Tweed Shire is located in a sub tropical zone where typical weather patterns include wet summers and dry winters. Heavy traffic on wet playing surfaces can have long term effects on the playing surface due to compaction resulting in drainage problems, hard and uneven surfaces and reduced grass coverage.

Wet conditions on playing surfaces can also present concerns with safety of participants, however the decision on whether a field is safe for play is the responsibility of officials associated with the sport and not directly a decision of Council.

It is also acknowledged that in most circumstances, clubs and associations prefer early advice on field closures to enable them to communicate with other clubs and make alternative arrangements if available.

Often fields are closed on Friday afternoon with the weather clearing on the weekend. As referred to above, the fields are closed due to the surface condition, not the prevailing weather conditions. Decisions will not be reconsidered on weekends.

Council will manage wet weather sports field closures in accordance with the principles outlined below.

Stakeholder engagement - Council will liaise with representatives of clubs and associations when considering field closures. Council will keep the 'sports field closures' section on the website updated on filed closure status.

Field characteristics – The physical characteristics of the individual fields will be considered when making a field closure determination. Coastal sand based fields will disperse surface water and be less susceptible to long term damage than clay based fields.

Nature of sport being played – Junior competition and single games will have less potential for damage than senior competition and multiple games through a day.

Other users of a field – Consideration to the impact of potential damage to a field as a result of play on a wet field on other licences field users.

Progress of the season – Generally Council is more inclined to close fields due to wet weather in the early stages of a season to avoid the compounding effect of early season damage which can create long term issues and to ensure the fields last the full season. There are also better opportunities to catch games up from early in the season.

Games take precedence over training - Fields may be closed for training in order to preserve the fields for competition.

Clubs can elect to close fields for their use - Should Council determine to leave a field open, the licensed club or association can still exercise their discretion to close the field to their use should circumstances require e.g. safety concerns, preference to protect a field for future games or deterioration of weather conditions.

3.2 Management of wet weather field closures by Tweed Shire Council

Tweed Shire Council will seek to minimise inconvenience due to uncertainty with wet weather field closures by following the procedures outlined below.

- Council sports field maintenance staff will undertake regular inspections to assess field conditions during periods of wet weather.
- Information regarding filed closures and scheduled inspections will be maintained on Council's website.
- Council's Sports Fields Officer will communicate with club and association officials when required and feasible.

Decisions to close fields for weekend play will be made on Friday afternoon and not reviewed open for review on the weekend.

4 Compliance

Through a process of consultation and communication, it is anticipated that in most circumstances Council, clubs and associations will agree on wet weather field closures. The decision to close fields is for the long term benefit of the fields and the sports and while clubs may not always agree with Council's decision, it is anticipated that by understanding the process and considerations, clubs will abide by the decisions.

In circumstances where clubs ignore ground closures, Council may consider punitive actions including:

- Withdrawal of access to funding support,
- Removal of field from future upgrade programs
- Ineligibility for access to the Sports field assets reserve fund
- Non-renewal of field use licence.

5 Review Period

This policy will be reviewed annually.

Version Control:

Version History		
Version #	Summary of changes made	Date changes made
1.0	Adopted by Council Minute No. 522	17/09/2015
1.1	Updated to current template format. Reviewed as part of Policies Review and no changes required.	16/06/2022