BOROONDARA

Draft Outdoor Fitness and Active Recreation Policy

<Insert Policy month> 2026

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Responsible Directorate: Community Services
Authorised By: <Council or ELT>
Date of Adoption: <Date>
Review Date: <Date>

Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners

The City of Boroondara acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people as the Traditional Owners and original custodians of this land, and we pay our respects to their Elders past and present.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of the Outdoor Fitness and Active Recreation Policy (the Policy) is to provide a consistent and transparent framework for the management of outdoor fitness and active recreation activities within the City of Boroondara.

The Policy aims to:

- Support and enhance the mental and physical health of the Boroondara community by encouraging regular participation in outdoor fitness and active recreation.
- Create opportunities for the community to engage in outdoor exercise and a diverse range of health and wellbeing activities within their local neighbourhoods.
- Create opportunities for social connections and belonging.
- Support the delivery of services and programs that are accessible to people of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds.
- Support small business opportunities related to outdoor fitness and recreation, that contribute to local economic development.
- Maximise the use of community facilities and sporting infrastructure.
- Balance organised sport and recreational participation while minimising the impact on open space and public amenity.
- Encourage facility sharing and initiatives that maximise funding contributions and multi-functional use.
- Align the management of outdoor fitness and active recreation activities across different land management models.

1.2 Scope

This Policy applies to all structured outdoor fitness and active recreation activities conducted on Council-controlled land within the City of Boroondara.

Structured outdoor fitness and active recreation refers to any instructor led, physical or movement-based activity designed to enhance participants' health, wellbeing and fitness. Outdoor Fitness and Active Recreation training include, but is not limited to, activities such as personal training, exercise activities, structured running groups and dog training activities.

This Policy does not apply to:

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- Organised sport (including and not limited to Australian rules football, cricket, football (soccer) and rugby) which are managed under the Organised Sport Seasonal Allocation Policy.
- Access to community sporting pavilions and associated fees will be considered and managed under the Organised Sport Seasonal Allocation Policy.
- Unstructured outdoor fitness and active recreation activities, carried out by individuals, in open space.
- Trainers operating in Council's leisure and aquatic facilities and sporting assets used all year round (i.e. tennis, bowls clubs), who are managed under separate contractual arrangements.

1.3 Corporate framework

This Policy and the Outdoor Fitness and Active Recreation Guidelines support the implementation of the following Boroondara Community Plan 2025-2035 aims.

Theme 1: Our Community - Connected, safe and inclusive.

- Aim 1.1 Physical activity: Our community can participate in recreation, active leisure and sports opportunities.
- Aim 1.2 Health, Wellbeing and social connection: Our community enjoys lifelong health, wellbeing and social connection through accessible programs and activities that meet their needs at every stage of life.

Theme 2: Our places - Vibrant, accessible and thriving.

- Aim 2.1 Green and open spaces: Our places offer easy and increased access to green and open spaces that support recreation, relaxation and connection with nature.
- Aim 2.4 Community spaces and facilities: Our places form a network of well-designed, multi-purpose and highly utilised community facilities and infrastructure that enable connection and participation in community life.

This Policy and Guidelines support the implementation of the following health priorities from the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-29:

- Improve mental wellbeing and social inclusion
- Increase physical activity and active living

2 Background

Outdoor group fitness and personal training have become increasingly popular alternatives to traditional indoor health and fitness facilities. This shift became particularly

notable during and following the Covid-19 pandemic, when prolonged closures of indoor venues led to greater awareness and reliance on outdoor exercise options.

Outdoor fitness and active recreation activities provide significant health and wellbeing benefits to individuals and serve as a valuable community resource. Physical activity is well established as a contributor to improved physical and mental health, reducing the risk of chronic disease and promoting social connection and inclusion, particularly when undertaken in group settings.[1]

In-line with the Australian Bureau of Statistics Census, mental health ranks as the second most prevalent long term health condition in Boroondara, after asthma. Regular access to outdoor green spaces can be beneficial in improving mental health. Research indicates significant differences in disease prevalence between residents of highly green and less green environments, even after controlling for socioeconomic status[2].

Physical activity in green spaces has been defined as 'green exercise' and research has identified that:

- Individuals who use natural environments for physical activity at least once per week, halve their risk of poor mental health, and
- Each extra weekly use of the natural environment for physical activity reduces the risk of poor mental health by a further 6%.

Council manages an extensive range of open space that the community can access to be physically active, this includes both Council-owned and Council-managed Crown Land.

Under Council's Amenity Local Law 2019-29 any person or organisation is required to hold a valid permit or licence prior to use Council-controlled land for the purpose of conducting a business or for any other commercial purpose which includes outdoor fitness and active recreation activities.

The Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978 regulates the licensing of commercial recreation activity on Crown Land in Victoria. The Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) is responsible for the Tour Operator Licence (TOL) Policy and setting associated fees. Delegated land managers of reserved Crown Land are responsible for granting licences and collecting fees directly with operators in accordance with the TOL Policy.

Council is a committee of management for ten Crown Land reserves within Boroondara which may be suitable for outdoor fitness and active recreation use, this includes four sportsgrounds and active recreation areas and six parks and reserves.

[1] Vic Health, Physical Activity Strategy, 2019-2023
[2] Maas, J., Verheij, R. A., De Vries, S., et al. (2000) Morbidity is related to a green living environment. Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health, 63, 967-973.

2.1 Policy environment

This Policy has also been informed by a range of Council policies and strategies which are listed in Section 6. One of the main documents that has informed this Policy is the Boroondara Sport and Recreation Strategy (BSRS) 2016.

The BSRS has a direct action to develop a Policy to effectively manage commercial trainers in Council's open spaces across the municipality (action 3.6).

The BSRS also identifies principles and priority areas for sport and recreation in Boroondara, with many of these directly relevant to the allocation of sporting assets.

3 Methodology

The following processes and information sources have informed this Policy:

- Boroondara sport participation, usage and allocation data
- Outdoor fitness and active recreation provider surveys on key requirements
- Benchmarking other Councils' approaches
- Community consultation survey and written submissions
- Related Council policy

4 Policy statement

Outdoor Fitness and Active Recreation activities are guided by the following strategic and operational policy principles.

4.1 Policy principles

Strategic Principles
These principles articulate the why, the outcomes, values, and overarching direction Council seeks to achieve.

1. Enhancing community participation, health and wellbeing:
Council encourages and creates opportunities for the community to be outside, play sport, exercise and/or keep fit to improve their health and wellbeing and social connection.

2. Facilitating community access:
Council will prioritise access for the Boroondara community to community owned assets which align with the role and character of open space. This will be a primary consideration when allocating facilities and resources.

3. Enhancing equity:

Equitable access and opportunities for underrepresented groups, emerging, diverse and minority sports and recreation activities are provided. This includes both access to and use of facilities in line with the Sport and Recreation Fair Access Policy 2024.

4. Enabling responsible resource management:
Council encourages facility sharing and encourages community partnership initiatives that maximise funding contributions and multi-functional use.

Operational Principles
These principles describe the how, the standards and processes that govern day to day administration and allocation.

1. Providing fairness and consistency:
Council applies clear, consistent processes for allocations, bookings and usage fees to ensure equitable access across different land management models.

2. Providing sustainable management and responsible use:
Council will manage capacity, intensity and impacts of use to protect environmental values, public amenity, Council assets and encourage shared use, multi-functional spaces and responsible resource management.

3. Promoting inclusive participation:
Council supports diverse, accessible programs across open space and facilities that encourage participation at all life stages.

4. Providing a clear and simple framework:
The allocation process and supporting Guidelines are simple to administer and easy for stakeholders to understand.

4.2 Allocation Approach

Council offers the following types of agreements to occupy Council managed assets, as outlined in the Community Lease and Licence Policy:

- Annual licence, and
- Casual bookings.

4.2.1 Annual licence

Outdoor fitness and active recreation providers conducting more than 26 sessions within a 12-month period, must apply for an annual licence. Allocations to sportsgrounds, parks and reserves will be determined with the aim of achieving the best overall outcome for the community.

Allocations will be determined in line with the priority order outlined in the Boroondara Organised Sport Seasonal Allocation Policy (section 4.3):

1. Local/community sports clubs, including not for profit groups

2. Boroondara public schools
3. Boroondara private schools and commercial/private operators (which includes outdoor fitness and active recreation providers)

4.2.2 Casual bookings

In line with our Community Lease and Licence Policy, providers conducting 26 sessions or less within a 12-month period may request casual bookings.

Casual bookings by any group, will be considered following the finalisation of seasonal and annual allocations.

Fees for annual and casual use of sportsgrounds, parks and reserves will be charged in accordance with the fees and charges set out in Council's annual budget.

4.3 Training sites

Outdoor Fitness and Active Recreation activities may be undertaken on Council-controlled land within the municipality, including sportsgrounds, parks and reserves on both Council-owned and Council managed Crown Land.

Suitability of sportsgrounds, parks and reserves for Outdoor Fitness and Active Recreation activities will be determined by factors such as level of maintenance, ground surface/gradient, open space character classification, level and type of use from other user groups and general public, proximity to residents, size of the space and site amenities (parking, lighting, toilets, drinking fountains).

5 Implementation and monitoring

5.1 Implementation

This Policy provides the foundation to manage Outdoor Fitness and Active Recreation activities and is applied alongside the Outdoor Fitness and Active Recreation Guidelines. The Policy and Guidelines set the operational framework to define when and how an annual licence and casual booking will be issued.

5.2 Evaluation

This Policy will be reviewed five years following endorsement. The operational Outdoor Fitness and Active Recreation Guidelines will be updated on an annual basis or as required.

5.3 Accountabilities

For all queries or feedback regarding this Policy, please use the contact details for the responsible department below.

Position title	Contact number	Contact department email
Sport and Recreation Team	(03) 9278 4444	sport@boroondara.vic.gov.au

6 References

6.1 Related documents

Documents referenced in the development of this Policy include:

- *Boroondara Community Plan (BCP) 2025-2035*
- *Boroondara Open Space Strategy (BOSS) 2013*
- *Boroondara Sport and Recreation Strategy (BSRS) 2016*
- *Boroondara Community Lease and Licence Policy 2025*
- *Boroondara Organised Sport Seasonal Allocation Policy 2024*
- *Boroondara Sport and Recreation Fair Access Policy 2024*
- *Boroondara Annual Budget – Fees and Charges Schedule*

A number of laws and regulations govern the use of Council-controlled land for outdoor fitness and active recreation activities. These instruments inform Council's approach to issuing licences and managing casual bookings. The following legislation is of particular relevance to this Policy:

- **Boroondara Amenity Local Law 2019-29** requires any person or organisation to hold a valid permit or licence prior to use Council-controlled land for the purpose of conducting a business or for any other commercial purpose.
- **Domestic Animals Act 1994** provides the primary legislation governing pet ownership, animal businesses, and public safety in the City of Boroondara.
- **Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978** regulates the licensing of commercial recreation activity on Crown Land in Victoria. The Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action is responsible for the Tour Operator Licence (TOL) Policy and setting associated fees. Delegated land managers of reserved Crown Land are responsible for granting licences and collecting fees directly with operators in accordance with the TOL Policy.

Definitions

Term	Definition
Annual Licence	Agreement with Council that grants the non-exclusive right to occupy a defined area for the period set out in the Licence for providers conducting more than 26 sessions within a 12-month period.
Casual booking/ casual hire agreement	Agreement with Council that permits use of Council controlled assets on a casual basis, for ad-hoc sessions or bookings of 26 sessions or less in a 12-month period.
Commercial outdoor fitness and active recreation provider	Defined as any individual, business, or organisation that provides services on a fee-for-service basis, with the primary objective of generating profit. This may include sole traders, private instructors and registered businesses or companies.
Community outdoor fitness and active recreation provider	A not-for-profit organisation that does not operate for the profit, personal gain or other benefit of particular people. Any surplus income is used solely to further the organisations stated objectives. This may include incorporated community groups, charitable organisations, volunteer run clubs or associations.
Council	Refers to the City of Boroondara
Council officer or 'officer'	Staff members appointed by the City of Boroondara to carry out Council's functions.
Open space	Council-controlled land that is primarily for recreation, nature conservation and passive outdoor enjoyment. This includes parks, gardens, reserves and waterways.
Organised Sport	Refers to structured physical activities that are governed by formal rules and regulations, typically facilitated by recognised clubs, associations, or organisations. These activities involve scheduled training sessions and competitions and are conducted under the supervision of coaches, officials or administrators.
Outdoor fitness and active recreation provider or 'provider'	A qualified fitness or active recreation instructor who conducts structured outdoor fitness or active recreation activities and participation is by becoming a member of the club or on a fee-paying basis to a private provider.

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Term	Definition
Personal training	An individual or organisation conducting an activity such as circuit training, boxing, pad training and running drills.
Allocation	A reoccurring schedule of days and times (over a maximum of 12-months) at a specified training site(s), where a provider is permitted to operate.
Sportsground carrying capacity	The amount of use a sportsground can withstand without significant degradation of the surface, typically expressed as hours per week.
Structured outdoor fitness and active recreation activities	Any instructor led physical or movement-based activity aimed at improving health, wellbeing and/or fitness. Includes, but not limited to, activities such as personal training, exercise activities, structured running groups and dog training activities.
Training sites	Parks, reserves and sportsgrounds in Boroondara where structured outdoor fitness training and active recreation activities are permitted.

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