



# Hunter Sports and Entertainment Precinct

---

Venues NSW

November 2017

Suite 1, Level 1  
165 Lambton Road  
Broadmeadow, NSW 2292

Phone: 02 49699 600

[www.hunterbusinesschamber.com.au](http://www.hunterbusinesschamber.com.au)

## Introduction

Established in 1886, the Hunter Business Chamber is the largest regional business chamber in Australia. The Chamber independently represents over 2,000 member organisations to all levels of government and is the peak industry association in the region, reflecting the interests of all business sectors.

The Hunter Business Chamber works as an integral part of the NSW Business Chamber network and represents business at local, state and federal level to advocate for an improved operational climate for businesses in this region.

## Key points

The Chamber recognises a Hunter Sports and Entertainment Precinct to be an important part of the growth of Greater Newcastle and the wider regional economy with the capacity and capability to be a truly regional facility. It will have the ability to not only appeal to and meet the needs of the regional community, but also State, national and international interests if done properly.

The Chamber believes there are some important steps to be taken before a plan is finalised. The region must fully understand not only the point it has reached in terms of the provision and quality of existing sports and entertainment facilities, but also what it needs to provide in order to accommodate the broad ambit of needs for the region and potentially beyond. With the latest Regional Strategy as a backdrop, this will lead to a clearer understanding of how Broadmeadow would contribute to or complement other existing and new facilities.

To achieve this there needs to be a high-level audit of existing sports and entertainment facilities across the region. Once completed, the facilities should be ordered in a hierarchy allocated to each discipline or stream. The region can ill-afford to have competing facilities, which cannibalise each other and potentially dilute the business case and risk future funding applications and opportunities.

Completing a 'Sports and Entertainment facilities hierarchy' would require a robust stakeholder engagement process to build an agreed position across respective local government areas (LGAs) and the region as a whole.

-----

The Plan needs to provide detail on specific components such as the Multipurpose Arena and Event Plaza and what their development would mean for the existing Entertainment Centre and Showground. It needs to be recognised that these existing spaces and facilities are regularly used and any plans for alternate development must demonstrate that it would not only meet current facility demands but also improve on what is already being delivered.

-----

Priority should be given to planned and future developments and improvements that are understood to have received funding for facilities development. This includes the Hockey Centre and Basketball Stadium. It is also understood the District Park Tennis Club has commenced a process for planning to provide foundation state of the art facilities with 'beyond the region appeal' similar to the Hockey Centre and Basketball Stadium. Together and once completed, these facilities will provide unrivalled internal precincts that will border the overall precinct.

-----

The Chamber is also aware that there have been a number of proposals and other strategies in the past that suggest the Broadmeadow precinct would support hotel accommodation, quasi retail and other land uses potentially ancillary to the current and proposed core sporting uses. These are also potential elements of the new masterplan.

Where relevant, consideration should be given to how the current concept plan reconciles with these other studies, for example a Convention Centre at Honeysuckle and how this meets the needs of the region in the long term. Similar to the hierarchy of the sports facilities, this exercise should be considered for other elements of the Plan to ensure respective component and overall plan viability.

-----

The Chamber recognises that the delivery of the final masterplan will be heavily reliant on government funding. Whilst it is understood and supported that the private sector will be invited to participate, it is unlikely their interest will extend to the extensive community and sports facilities proposed under the masterplan.

Furthermore, it is presumed that in order to attract government funding, elements of the plan will need to satisfy business case and benefit cost return thresholds.

Consequently, it is imperative that the masterplan process include some consideration of the pre-feasibility of the proposed elements of the plan so there is a clear understanding of the project viability either as individual components or as a whole. Without this, unrealistic expectations concerning delivery of the full masterplan could be generated in the community where elements fail to achieve funding criteria and are never realised.

It will not be good enough to simply pick off the more economically attractive components and fail to deliver the entire project given the likelihood of strong linkages between respective facilities even for the most basic elements such as car parking.

-----

In close proximity to the Broadmeadow precinct are the existing retail, commercial and industrial areas of Georgetown, Broadmeadow, New Lambton/Lambton and Hamilton. Some parts of these areas are in transition and the pulses emanating from existing and potential activity at the Broadmeadow Sports and Entertainment Precinct will have significant impact on these areas, in both positive and negative ways.

What consideration has been given to this and how will the precinct plans link with neighbouring areas? What will the land use interface around the precinct look like, what are the potential impacts on other areas and how will they be considered?

-----

The Broadmeadow land is a very big site and careful and strategic planning is required to ensure facilities end up in the right place. The principles of 'highest and best use' must be considered in the placement of elements. Subject to the outcomes of the hierarchy exercise placement will be vital so that where relevant, returns are optimised to assist in the underwriting of provision of elements that are less financially attractive. We note discussions for example, concerning the possibility to use surplus land for residential use. The Chamber supports this principle and the approach in the context of the masterplan but would caution that the non-core uses do not compromise the provision and operation of the sports and entertainment facilities.

-----

It is highly likely the project development result will be a mixed-use precinct. Given the modus operandi of Venues NSW, the Chamber would like to see the proposed governance model and seeks assurances Venues has the capability to deliver the Plan. Articulation of the implementation process will be important and this needs to identify where and with whom responsibility will lie to assist or manage processes where Venues does not have the necessary expertise. We note the Hunter Development Corporation has assisted with a range of tasks in the past and would support a similar arrangement across the Precinct for the future.

## Summary Recommendations

1. Undertake a high-level audit and produce a regional Sports and Entertainment facilities hierarchy before the plan is finalised.
2. Prioritise delivery of the Hockey and Basketball facilities given they already have funding.
3. Reconcile the current plan to existing strategies and studies to ensure the needs of the region are appropriately met.
4. Undertake and produce pre-feasibility assessments of the individual components and the entire project when presenting the final plan.
5. Take into account the impact of the potential development of the Precinct on existing neighbouring retail, commercial, industrial and residential areas.
6. The principle of including non-core uses such as residential is supported but not at the expense of compromising the viability of core sporting and entertainment elements.

7. Support for Venues NSW utilising skills of organisations such as the Hunter Development Corporation in instances where Venues lacks specific expertise to deliver the Plan.

## Conclusion

The Chamber supports the wider development of this precinct to deliver a sporting, leisure and entertainment destination that provides vibrant and active facilities, contributing to the visitor economy and growth of this region.

We look forward to further details around a proposal for this area and would welcome future engagement in relation to this site.

## Contact

For further information, please contact:

Anita Hugo  
Policy & Public Affairs Manager  
02 4969 9600  
[info@hunterbusinesschamber.com.au](mailto:info@hunterbusinesschamber.com.au)