Fields of thought over future of sporting ovals

- Facilities

**BY KATE MURPHY**

Perth is facing a shortage of active open space according to a State Government commissioned report that found Perth had a shortfall of 51.6 hectares, equivalent to 23 AFL ovals or 72 soccer pitches.

Curtin University researchers completed the report and under their guidelines 1.4 per cent of each residential area should be set aside for active open space.

Curtin department of urban and regional planning associate professor Dr Garry Middle was one of the authors and said a number of local governments, including the cities of Armadale and Gosnells allowed access to mapping data to identify public open space.

"The State Government has been working with local governments on a whole range of sport and recreation issues and there has been a perception for a long time that in the new suburbs of Perth there are fewer and fewer active playing fields," he said.

"If you look at all the new suburbs, for example in Gosnells like Canning Vale and Southern River they are well and truly below our guideline, Canning Vale has only 0.24 per cent of active open space while Southern River has none. "In Armadale new suburbs like Wungong, Champion Lakes and Harrisdale all have zero per cent and Seville Grove has about 0.75 per cent."

Dr Middle said the report was about looking to the future and rethinking how more active open space could be provided in new suburbs.

Town of Victoria Park mayor Trevor Vaughan said active open space in the town was used to capacity.

"In time there will be an increase in open space within the town as part of future plans including the Burswood Peninsula development," he said.

Member for Southern River Peter Abetz said the findings came as no surprise after campaigning to address the issue in his electorate for years.

Mr Abetz campaigned for a sports field on Clifton Road in Canning Vale, which had been appointed funding while feasibility work on the site was expected to be complete by June.

"I was delighted that my request for $1 million initial funding was granted in the last state budget, as part of more than $100 million of funding for grass-roots community sport and infrastructure projects," he said.

Planning Minister John Day said the need to provide public open space through the planning system was recognised with a longstanding planning policy requiring 10 per cent of gross sub-divisible areas provided free of cost for public open space by developers when land was subdivided for residential use.

"This policy, implemented by the Western Australian Planning Commission (WAPC) and its predecessors, has been successful in ensuring that new residential estates include public open space for a variety of uses, not just playing fields," he said.

Mr Day said the WAPC had commenced a review of its livable neighbourhoods policy.

"Livable neighbourhoods is an operational policy of the WAPC for the design and assessment of structure plans and subdivision for new urban areas in the Perth metropolitan area and country centres, on greenfield and large urban infill sites," he said.

"The review will consider current and emerging issues, including the provision of active open spaces/sports playing fields."

Is there a shortage of ovals or overcrowding in your area? Email editorial@examinernewspapers.com.au.