

## 10.1. Park Lighting and Utilisation - response to Council Resolution

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<b>ATTACHMENTS</b>	Nil
<b>CSP LINK</b>	2. Our Built Infrastructure 2.1 Infrastructure and assets meet diverse community needs

### PURPOSE:

This report responds to a Council resolution of 26 May 2025, regarding lighting in Council's sports fields, parks, and reserves during evening hours.

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

- Lighting at sports fields, parks, and reserves requires Council to balance community expectations, safety and recreation needs, environmental impacts, and regulatory compliance, while often mediating between residents and external asset owners.
- The lights at Council's parks and reserves operate from approximately sunset to sunrise. They are triggered using automatic light sensors and there can be some confusion with lighting transitions as the seasons change, and the lights come on at different times.
- Although streetlighting is outside the scope of this report, outages in Ausgrid-managed assets may influence community perceptions of inadequate lighting in areas with Council-owned infrastructure. In addition, some locations are currently impacted by Transport for NSW (TfNSW) site disruptions.
- Following Council's resolution, Council Officers:
  - o completed an immediate audit of lighting across parks and reserves, identifying several previously unreported faults (see Table 1 in this report);
  - o assessed the cost of extending sports field lighting to 8pm during winter, estimated at \$21,780–\$29,040, with bookings at Forsyth, Primrose, and Waverton Parks often extending to 9pm (see Tables 2 and 3); and
  - o examined the feasibility and costs of trialling additional lighting for the Anderson Park exercise equipment and St Leonards Park Playground.
- It should also be noted that, to the best of Council's knowledge, only four requests were received from the public regarding increasing operating hours or increased lighting at Council's parks, reserves, playgrounds or sports fields in the 12 months preceding the Matter of Urgency raised at Council meeting of 26 May 2025. Council also received complaints from residents about sports field lighting operation during the same period.

### RECOMMENDATION:

**1. THAT,** based on the identification of several previously unreported lighting faults, no changes be made to current light timing for Council-owned lights at its parks and reserves.

- 2. THAT**, based on Council's assessment of current bookings and additional lighting operation costs, no changes be made to the arrangements for lighting of Council's sports fields.
- 3. THAT** the Council approve a reallocation of \$5,224 from lighting maintenance towards a lighting trial at Anderson Park to be undertaken for three months, with the results to be reported to Council at a future meeting.
- 4. THAT** Council consider not proceeding with a lighting trial at the St Leonards Park Playground and include consideration of playground lighting in the St Leonards Park Masterplan.

## **BACKGROUND:**

At its meeting of 26 May 2025, Council resolved:

*1. THAT, consistent with the Strategic Direction in the Open Space and Recreation Strategy, specifically Action 2.8, which states:*

*Develop and implement a program for increasing the capacity and utilisation of sports fields and courts through infrastructure improvements*

*Council prepare a report on actions that can be taken to increase the utilisation and capacity and safety of sports fields, parks, and other public domain/open space areas for safe, passive recreation through increased hours of lighting.*

*2. THAT Council implement a three-month trial as soon as practicably possible over the 2025 winter period in the first instance to gauge community support and feedback of the following:*

*a) lighting of the play equipment in St Leonards Park until 8pm in the evening;*

*b) lighting of the fitness equipment station(s) in Anderson Park from 5am to sunrise and sunset to 8pm (depending on lighting through existing bookings);*

*c) trial lighting in Primrose Park, Upper Forsyth Park, and Waverton Oval for an hour after the last booking or until 8pm;*

*3. THAT the report include the cost of the increased hours of lighting, installation of infrastructure, environmental impacts on flora and fauna, and funding options, along with and other recommendations for locations where Council could increase and improve the capacity, safety, and utilisation of sport fields, parks, and playgrounds in the most cost-effective manner.*

*4. THAT the report also include details of the responsible entity for lighting infrastructure in parks, pathways, and in other public areas.*

## **REPORT:**

Lighting across Council's sports fields, parks, and reserves involves balancing community expectations for recreation and safety with the need to minimise impacts on both residents and local fauna, while ensuring compliance with regulations and conditions of use. Not all lighting within the LGA is Council-owned; many assets belong to Ausgrid, TfNSW, other State authorities, or private owners. Council often acts as an intermediary due to the common perception that all public lighting is Council-managed.

Council-owned parks and reserves lighting operates via automatic sensors, activating around sunset and deactivating at sunrise. Seasonal changes can cause variation in activation times. Sensors can be adjusted for longer operating periods; however, based on fixing the previously unidentified lighting faults (see Table 1) and lighting disruptions from TfNSW worksites, Council Officers believe the current lighting is sufficient for accommodating recreational community use, especially in the provided list of suitable locations for evening recreation. It is therefore, not recommended that Council alter sensor thresholds or increase the number of lights.

Ausgrid streetlighting operates on similar sensors. While outside the scope of this report, outages in Ausgrid assets may affect perceptions of insufficient lighting near Council-managed areas. TfNSW site works are also temporarily affecting lighting in some locations.

While acknowledging Council's resolution to undertake trials of extended or additional lighting at selected locations as soon as practical over the 2025 winter period, it was necessary for Council to investigate and provide further information on undertaking these trials prior to proceeding.

There is currently no funding allocated to undertake new lighting trial projects in Council's 2025/26 Budget, and it is recommended that Council limit the trials to one location to reduce the costs, given Council's financial position.

Based on the investigations, Anderson Park is the most feasible location to proceed with a trial of additional lighting. Consideration should also be given to the following matters.

#### St Leonards Park Playground

Incorporation of a lighting design as part of a St Leonards Park Masterplan and not proceeding with a trial of additional lighting. It is unlikely that parents would seek to make use of children's playground equipment in cold evening conditions over the winter months. There is considerable tree canopy cover overhanging the playground, and St Leonards Park is also a known roosting location for a population of native Microbats; the environmental impact of any additional lighting would need further consideration of this, and other, native species.

The costing for a trial at St Leonards Park requires further investigation and is likely to be higher than the trial at Anderson Park given the larger area, lack of existing poles, and additional environmental considerations.

#### Sports Fields

Extending lighting outside of existing bookings is not recommended, as the significant cost to operate high intensity floodlighting without a revenue offset has not been factored into Council's 2025/26 Operational Budget. This may also lead to increased deterioration of playing surfaces due to community use and unauthorised use by sporting clubs or teams for practice, which would be challenging for Council to enforce.

#### Anderson Park Fitness Equipment

Approve the transfer of funds from Council's lighting maintenance budget to undertake this three-month trial, preceded by a two-week baseline data collection period. Estimated costs are detailed in the Financial/Resourcing Implications section of this report. Given the Council Resolution to undertake this trial over the winter months of 2025 (which have now passed), Council may also wish to consider deferring this trial to commence at the onset of winter in 2026.

Council received four requests from residents to increase lighting in specific parks, reserves, playgrounds, or sports fields, in the 12 months preceding the Council Resolution of 26 May 2025. Council also received complaints from residents in relation to operation of sports field lighting in the evenings.

Following Council’s resolution of 26 May 2025, an immediate audit was undertaken of lighting in and around Council’s parks and reserves. Council Officers inspected 55 locations with Council-owned lighting and found faults or outages at 21 locations (including 10 locations with Ausgrid/TfNSW-owned lighting or minor, single-light faults). Lighting is generally inspected based on ad-hoc reports of lighting faults from the community, and Council has conducted a significant audit of its lighting assets every two years. Several previously unreported faults were identified and are detailed in Table 1, including asset ownership and current status. Faults have been referred to the relevant authority or scheduled for repair if Council-owned. With these repairs, lighting levels in Council’s main parks and reserves are considered adequate for recreational use.

Council-owned lights are identifiable by a Council asset label. Streetlighting is primarily the responsibility of Ausgrid or TfNSW, with Ausgrid assets able to be reported via the [Ausgrid website](#).

<b>Area name</b>	<b>Lighting owner(s)</b>	<b>Fault status</b>
Bay Road Reserve	Council	Reported
Blues Point Rd Shops	Council	Reported
Blues Point Reserve	Council	Fixed
Bradfield Park (North, Central and South)	Multiple	TfNSW Disruptions
Cairo St to Pine St - Stairs	Council	Reported
Cammeray Park (sports field)	Council	Reported
Cammeray Rd - shops	Council	Reported
Cremorne Plaza	Council	Reported
Cremorne Point Reserve	Ausgrid	Fixed
Cremorne Point Wharf	Multiple	Reported
East Crescent Street Garden	Council	Reported
Elizabeth Plaza	Council	Reported
Ernest Place	Council	Reported
Henry Lawson Reserve	Ausgrid	Reported
Ibery Park	Multiple	Fixed
Jefferson Jackson Reserve	Council	TfNSW Disruptions
Kirribilli Wharf	TfNSW	Reported
Langley Place	Council	Reported
May Gibbs Place	Council	Fixed
North Sydney Olympic Pool foreshore	Council	Site under development
Olympic Drive	Multiple	Reported
Primrose Park - Carpark	Council	Reported
Quibaree Park	Council	Reported

Area name	Lighting owner(s)	Fault status
Smoothey Park	Multiple	Fixed
St Leonards Park	Council	Fixed
Tunks Park Foreshore (Car Park)	Council	Reported
Weaver Park	Multiple	Reported

Table 1 – Lighting faults identified in Council’s audit

Other areas recommended for night-time recreational use

The following areas are highlighted as places for recreational activities within the LGA that have sufficient existing lighting from sunset to sunrise:

- Primrose Park
- Ted Mack Park
- The Coal Loader
- Cremorne Reserve
- Lavender Bay Boardwalk
- Blues Point Reserve
- St Leonards Park
- Crows Nest – Hume Street to Hume Lane Reserve
- Bradfield Plaza

Extending lighting at Council’s main sports fields

Council Officers reviewed the current booking arrangements for its main sports fields including Forsyth Park, Primrose Park, and Waverton Park. These fields often have evening bookings until 9pm, with the lights remaining on for 15 minutes after a booking is completed.

Sports field light	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
<b>Forsyth Park - 1 (top field)</b>	21:00	17:45	21:00	17:45	-	-	-
<b>Waverton Park</b>	21:00	21:00	21:00	21:00	-	-	-
<b>Primrose Park - 1</b>	-	21:00	21:00	21:00	-	-	-
<b>Primrose Park - 2</b>	21:00	21:00	21:00	21:00	-	-	-
<b>Primrose Park - 3</b>	-	21:00	21:00	21:00	-	-	-

Table 2 – Current booking end-times for Council’s main sports fields

Based on an assumed lighting on-time of 5pm (in winter), an additional 55 hours per week of lighting would be required to light these fields until 8pm. This equates to 660 additional hours of lighting operation across the listed fields, at an estimated total cost of between \$21,780 – \$29,040 for the proposed three months (12 weeks), based on Council’s fees & charges for lighting use. A breakdown of this lighting cost for each sports field is provided Table 3 on the next page.

Sports field	No. of hours extended (per week)	Estimated cost to extend (per month)
Forsyth Park - 1 (top field)	13	\$1,716 - \$2,288
Waverton Park	9	\$1,188 - \$1,584
Primrose Park - 1	12	\$1,584 - \$2,112
Primrose Park - 2	9	\$1,188 - \$1,584
Primrose Park - 3	12	\$1,584 - \$2,112

Table 3 – Estimated cost of extending lighting to 8pm on Council's main sports fields

### Anderson Park – Outdoor exercise area lighting trial

Council Officers investigated the feasibility of undertaking a three month lighting trial for the outdoor exercise area in Anderson Park, Neutral Bay.

Two lighting configurations were explored using existing poles. One location was ruled out as it would result in light shining directly into a resident's home. The preferred locations for installing trial spotlighting are identified by the red circles in the image below.

To assess the relative success of the trial, it is also recommended that people-counting sensors are installed to monitor equipment use, with a baseline data capture of at least two-weeks prior to the activation of evening lighting.



Photo of the Anderson Park outdoor exercise area – proposed lighting trial location

### Environmental impacts of increased lighting

Council's Bushland Rehabilitation Plans identify the potential impacts of artificial light pollution on nocturnal fauna and recommend strategies that reduce existing light sources whilst minimising the installation of new/additional lighting – particularly in ecologically

sensitive areas such as in and around Council's bushland reserve network. To this end, Council's Bushland Team have provided input on Ausgrid's street lighting improvement program and several internal open space lighting upgrade projects. Planning is also underway to trial motion sensor technology linked to low (2,200K) temperature streetlights along the Balls Head Reserve loop road. Council should carefully consider any proposals to extend sports field lighting duration, particularly where those fields adjoin bushland.

With respect to the proposed fitness equipment lighting in Anderson Park; providing that unnecessary light spill can be ameliorated with good design/shrouding, etc., the potential impacts for nocturnal native wildlife are considered low. This assessment is based on the location of Anderson Park in relation to remnant bushland, the location of fitness equipment in the park, the presence of existing park lighting near-by, and habitat requirements of light-sensitive species.

### **Consultation requirements**

Prior to making any permanent lighting changes or adjustments, community feedback should be sought via a survey on Have Your Say.

DA conditions for use of lighting at each of Council's Sports fields, Parks and Reserves would also require consideration as part of any proposed changes.

### **Financial/Resource Implications**

#### Anderson Park – Outdoor exercise area lighting trial

To undertake a trial of lighting at the Anderson Park exercise equipment for three months, and capturing baseline data prior to the trial, Council will need to install two new spotlights as well as two people-counting sensors. The following costs have been estimated for undertaking this trial:

- spotlights (x2): \$73 + GST ea.
- bi-directional people-counter wireless sensors (x 2): \$499 + GST; +\$10 per month subscription: \$539 + GST per sensor
- mounting spotlights and sensors (on existing poles): \$1,000 + GST per mounting

The funding for this trial will need to be transferred from Council's 2025/26 Budget. The estimated total cost for this trial is \$5,224 + GST. It is recommended that these funds are transferred from Council's Public Presentation Street Lighting Maintenance Operating Budget.

Should Council approve the reallocation of funding to proceed with the trial, this will reduce Council's lighting maintenance budget for 2025/26.

#### Extending lighting operational hours at Council's main sports fields

To extend lighting at Council's main sports fields until 8pm would require an additional 55 hours of extra lighting hours per week, with an assumed lighting on-time of 5pm in winter

months. This equates to 660 additional hours of lighting operation across the listed fields at an estimated total cost of between \$7,260 and \$9,680 per month, or between \$21,780 – \$29,040 for three months (12 weeks), based on Council’s fees & charges for lighting use.

There may also be additional costs associated with maintaining Council’s sports fields, depending on relative deconditioning from any additional recreational use. These costs cannot be estimated at this time.