



STEP Inc

Community-based Environmental Conservation since 1978

17 September 2019

The General Manager,
Ku-ring-gai Council
Locked Bag 1006
Gordon NSW 2072

Dear Sir

Re Proposed Rofe Park, Turramurra Synthetic turf upgrade, S02617

STEP Inc is a local community-based environmental group, with a membership of over 400 in the Hornsby/Ku-ring-gai area. Our main objective is to preserve natural bushland in northern Sydney from alienation or degradation and ensuring proper management of this bushland including ensuring its role as habitat for animal species. Our group has considerable experience in environmental issues and regenerating and preserving natural bushland and native vegetation.

STEP is seriously concerned about the possible risks from synthetic turf being installed at Rofe Park. Given its location being surrounded by bushland, most of which is a biobanking site, we consider that the environmental impacts of this artificial surface will be inconsistent with the management objectives of the area.

These include the following:

1. During heavy rain additional water run off will be generated that will flow to the east of the park into the biobanking site unless the flow is carefully controlled with ongoing management.
2. The chemicals that may leach from the synthetic turf and breakdown of the plastics and rubber may pollute surrounding areas
3. There are many factors that need to be considered in analyzing whether synthetic turf or grass has a greater carbon footprint. Natural grass acts as a carbon sink but requires mowing and fertilizer use. On the other hand, synthetic turf is made from petrochemical materials so the manufacturing process involves energy use. It requires ongoing cleaning and has a limited life so will need to be disposed of and replaced after 8 to 10 years depending on the level of use.
4. Synthetic turf has a significantly higher surface temperature than natural grass. The West Pennant Hills Valley Progress Association, in testing the potential impact of another synthetic turf proposal, measured surface temperatures at a field in Kellyville. On a very hot day (39°C) the temperature was over 81°C. On a more moderate summer day (29°C) the temperature was 69°C. The increased heat generated by the synthetic turf is likely to affect the nearby bushland that is already under stress from more variable rainfall and increased temperatures.
5. The synthetic turf surface will lead to compaction of the soil underneath and the loss of the microorganisms and insects that normally live in grassed areas.
6. Natural grass fields provide a food source for birds such as magpies, lapwings and cockatoos. Grass areas in suburban areas are reducing as larger houses are built. Synthetic turf in larger parks will add to this problem. The reduction in foraging areas for these birds will have impacts further up the foodchain as top predators, such as the Powerful Owl, will lose a foraging opportunity.

In addition to the direct environmental impacts of synthetic turf, it will also have a number of adverse consequences, such as limiting the use of the park for recreation by the general community especially in summer because the surface will be too hot. The surface is harder and more abrasive than grass so players, including soccer players, may experience more injuries.

We appreciate the need for playing fields that can be used for longer periods and during wet weather but, in this case, STEP believes that the disadvantages outweigh this solution.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jill Green". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first letters of each name being capitalized and prominent.

Jill Green
President