



Item 7.1 Petition - Basketball Court Lighting at Peanut Farm Reserve

A Petition containing 246 signatures, was received via Change.org.

The Petition states the following:-

We would like the lights to automatically come on at the peanut farm courts at 4:30PM during the winter months. The courts are beautiful but it is impossible to play past 530PM. This would benefit not only basketball fans, but netball and skating fans. A simple solution would bring happiness to a lot of people. Thanks.

OFFICER COMMENT

Peanut Farm Reserve is located in St Kilda. Approximately 90% of the local population in this area live in high-density housing which greatly contributes to demand for open space.

Peanut Farm Reserve includes a mixture of formal and informal sport and recreational facilities including:

- A sporting oval with lights - used primarily for AFL football, cricket and passive recreation
- 2 multi-purpose courts with lights - used for netball, basketball and informal recreation
- Cricket Nets - used by cricket clubs, casual users of cricket and other informal activities
- Tennis hit up wall
- Outdoor fitness station
- Pavilion with community room and kiosk, change rooms with amenities and public toilets

The multi-purpose courts were upgraded in 2019 including new lighting, which has greatly assisted the tenant netball clubs, St Kilda City Football Netball Club and the Elwood Netball Club. These clubs have a permit and pay a seasonal hire fee. Currently the lighting on the courts are activated for these sports clubs evening training. The lights have recently had a timer installed to activate for the times that the tenant clubs utilise the courts.

Council has developed an Outdoor Sports Lighting Guidelines to formalise standards and operations for sports lighting and other opportunities for the community, like dog walking on sports grounds and informal sporting activities on our courts. This guideline is seeking Council resolution to endorse the guidelines at the same meeting as this petition response.

Council has been gradually upgrading all our sports ground and courts with new modern lighting that has limited light spill outside the playing surface and utilises best technology for control and utilisation.

The sports lights at Peanut Farm Reserve courts have been manually operated by the sports clubs using a manual key system, with the activation switch mounted on the outside of the sports pavilion. However, some residents have been activating the lights for their own casual use by tampering with the key switch and forcing the lights on, subsequently damaging the light switch. There has also been multiple reports and resident complaints that the lights



have been left on overnight, as a result of the general public not turning the lights off after they have forced the lights on.

The preference is to manage all sports lighting via a timer and / or central controlled lighting system that helps increase non-sporting usage and protect the amenity of residents in close proximity to these facilities.

The recently upgraded Peanut Farm sports oval lights are operating on a timer to enable the sports clubs to access the lights for training, and also dog walking and other informal activities at night when sports clubs are not using the sports ground.

The popularity of the sports courts for increased casual community use has led to some challenges, especially in the evening:

- Improper use of the courts for skateboarding which can damage the surface
- Noise and amenity issues such as loud music and gatherings impacting local neighbours
- Lights being forced on by the public, resulting in a broken switch
- Lights being left on overnight, causing concern for local residents and additional utility costs

The impact of COVID-19 restrictions means more people are using informal recreational infrastructure more often for casual exercise and socialising.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

1. Thanks the community for their petition and acknowledges the community benefits and social connectiveness that informal recreation provides.
2. Notes that the use of the sports lighting at Peanut Farm netball courts has a primary purpose to support safe sporting club training and competitions.
3. Supports the use of these courts for informal recreation outside of permitted use by sporting clubs.
4. Notes that a timer has recently been installed on the lighting system that enables the lights to be turned on and off at programmed times, currently for the sports clubs bookings only, to eliminate the risk of lights not being turned off at night.
5. Programs the timer on the courts to activate Monday to Fridays between the hours of 5pm – 9pm for the community, when daylight savings is not available.
6. Notes in a normal winter season the courts are traditionally used 2 nights per week for sports club activities.
7. Notes that 'Outdoor Sports Lighting Guidelines' have been drafted to formalise standards for sports fields lighting and other opportunities for the community, such as dog walking and informal use of sporting facilities, and are being considered for endorsement at report number 9.1 of the 21 July Council meeting agenda.

ATTACHMENTS

Nil