

# Essential service: Local Government

Local Government is the biggest provider of recreation, play and sport providing essential physical and social infrastructure.

## Key roles

The value of local government's contribution often goes unrecognised: \$1.3 billion per annum, half the total funding of the sector. Central government's contributing 17% in comparison.

Local government is a provider, and a key enabler of the sport system, community health and wellbeing, and environmental protection.

Through their community engagement, they balance long term plans against short term needs. In addition to providing significant investment into spaces and places, and delivering programmes and services in local communities, they partner with regional sports trusts.

They are also key partners with national government, implementing policy and programmes which target environmental management, urban development, education, health, transport etc.

### The role of the LTP

- Describes Council's activities and sets strategic direction over 10 years. See Local Government Act 2002 [here](#).
- Promotes the wellbeing of their communities.
- Consults with community is compulsory.
- Articulates the value of play, active recreation and sport.
- Provides data and information on people, places, and participation.

<sup>1</sup> Sport NZ has a facilities database which can be accessed through the [Sport NZ Facilities Planning Tool](#)



Figure 1 Foster Park, Rolleston, Selwyn District Council

## The value of local government

Local governments understand the value proposition of providing for play, active recreation and sport. This includes:

Facilities provision and management – 1,075 indoor facilities<sup>1</sup> (recreation centres/stadia), open space, sports fields, 1,641 aquatic facilities, playgrounds, wharves and beaches, roads and footpaths.

Intergenerational investor and long-term developer of play, active recreation and sport places and spaces which meet the needs of communities.

Engagement with mana whenua as Treaty partners.

Local delivery in response to community engagement, needs assessment and partnerships including with clubs and groups.

Wellbeing focus balancing social, environmental, cultural, spiritual and physical dimensions, aligned with the Local Government Act.

Build equity into policy decisions through network of provision and fees and charges.

Employment of about 37,000 people; a significant workforce engaged in planning, facility management and programme delivery (eg learn to swim, sports leagues, and exercise classes).

Hosting local, regional, national and international sport and recreation events.

*Research into the Social Return on Investment conservatively identified that for every \$1 spent, there was a social return of \$2.12 to New Zealand, meaning that the value of the wellbeing outcomes for New Zealand is greater than the costs of providing these opportunities, making recreational physical activity a potentially cost-effective investment.*

## Challenges

Local government faces significant challenges and makes positive contributions, some of which were identified in the [Future for Local Government Review](#):

- Infrastructure investment is limited by constrained revenue and debt ceilings
- Climate change adaptation and mitigation is costly
- Securing insurance is difficult and expensive
- Partnerships with mana whenua require time and resource
- Collaborating across local boundaries and with national agencies is challenging.

Recreation Aotearoa recently hosted a webinar on the Future for Local Government Review which can be viewed [here](#).

### Case Study one

#### Multi-use spaces and hub: Foster Recreation Park, Rolleston

Developed and funded by Selwyn District Council, [Foster Park](#) is co-located with Rolleston High School. This multi-use space meets the needs of a wide range of users across the generations.

- Key sport infrastructure with: stadium sportsfields, artificial softball and hockey turfs
- Educational and play space: swimming pool, playground
- Active transport and physical activity: shared pathways for walking, running and biking
- Activities for different community users: Youthzone (2023/24), club rooms for 5 sports, Selwyn Sports Trust.

This accessible recreation resource contributes to community-building through its partnered approach to planning and delivery.



Figure 2 Riding for the Disabled, Ambury Park, The Kelliher

### Case Study Two

#### Ambury Regional Park

##### Recipient of the Green Flag

Award winning [Ambury Regional Park](#) tells stories of social and environmental heritage and its significance to mana whenua.

*Ambury is a giant outdoor classroom and opportunities flourish for outdoor play and a chance to learn with all the senses. Simple innovations include leaving branches in plantings for children to build huts, a huge grassy mound for games, and places to find frogs, worms and insects.*

Protection of significant sites is balanced against a diverse range of recreation opportunities such as walking, mountain biking, picnicking, camping and education. A working farm, it is also home to a range of user groups.

- Geologically unique and historically significant, with Māori stone structures on public land.
- A [biodiversity focused area](#) with native fauna and related eco-systems
- Educational opportunities with tailored programmes that foster outdoor play.

**Local government is a fundamental and crucial contributor to New Zealand's play, active recreation and sport systems, underpinned by the following principles:**

- Long term horizon focused on intergenerational wellbeing
- Sustainable development
- Equity of provision and access
- Partnership with mana whenua and others
- Integrated provision at a national, regional and community level.