

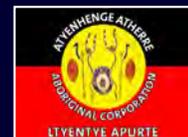


THE MCG OF THE DESERT
GRASSING THE SANTA TERESA OVAL
PROJECT OVERVIEW



**RED & BLUE
FOUNDATION**

Australian
Sports
Foundation



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Melbourne Football Club acknowledge the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation, the Traditional Owners of the land on which we reside.

We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.



INTRODUCTION



Neville Jetta with former Melbourne Football Club players Aaron Davey, Liam Jurrah and Austin Wonaemirri



Melbourne Football Club players in the Northern Territory

The Melbourne Football Club began playing football matches in the Northern Territory in 2010 and has since expanded its involvement by playing AFLW and VFLW games there as well. The Club's connection to NT communities is greatly valued as it aims to engage in meaningful and long-lasting relationships with everyone involved. Melbourne looks to use its involvement in Australian Rules football to promote better health and social outcomes in Indigenous communities.

The Club is proud of its Indigenous community involvement in the Northern Territory to date. In recent years, Melbourne has worked in conjunction with Melbourne University's Indigenous Eye Health, using football and the Club's brand to support health promotion activities. Whilst proud of this work, the Club also recognises the need to continue to expand its reach in this space and it now employs a full-time Indigenous Programs Officer in former Melbourne player Matthew Whelan.

In acknowledgment, the AFL has assigned the Alice Springs region to the Melbourne Football Club as an AFL Academy zone. The Club in turn relishes the responsibility to foster and grow the game from a community level through to more formal pathways and talent tracking.

In 2017 Melbourne launched its inaugural Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) to formalise its commitment to reconciliation in Australia. The RAP working group worked in conjunction with the Atyenhenge Atherre Aboriginal Corporation (AAAC) and Santa Teresa community to complete a 'Cultural Immersion Program', designed to educate staff members to increase their understanding of Indigenous history and culture by learning first

hand. This program has now expanded to include newly listed players and is run regularly in the Santa Teresa community.

The stunning Santa Teresa Oval is currently a red dirt pitch consisting of a clay sandy loam. As such, the ground can be hard and unstable which increases risk of injury and also severely restricts participation – a stark example of this is that there is no women's side in Santa Teresa. The oval can also pose a hazard to the community through its dust storms. Its central location in the community and close proximity to the primary school makes it a legitimate threat when the wind picks up.

At the request of the community, the Melbourne Football Club is proud to announce its commitment to re-grassing the Santa Teresa Oval. After completing a feasibility study, and a design and project scope, the Club secured a Sports and Recreation grant from the NT government, with plans in place to have irrigation installed and the oval fully grassed by February 2020.

As outlined throughout this document, the Santa Teresa Oval project demonstrates the Club's commitment to improving the lifestyle of Indigenous people and it looks forward to continuing its work with the Santa Teresa community in the future.

We are now calling on our established and committed networks of partners and supporters. Together we can create 'The MCG of the Desert' and bring about sustainable change that will have a positive impact in Santa Teresa and the central desert regions far beyond the oval itself.



PROJECT OUTLINE

By the conclusion of this project, Santa Teresa will be a regional sports hub of Alice Springs and the Central Desert. With complete grass coverage, the Santa Teresa Oval will be an inviting space for all members of the community to participate in sport, enabling them to engage in a healthier lifestyle.

The Melbourne Football Club has embarked on a long journey in order to bring the Santa Teresa project to life and is committed to its completion.

This concept was first developed in 2017 when AAAC approached the Melbourne Football Club to fund a feasibility study into the prospect of re-grassing the Santa Teresa Oval.

Once the feasibility study was completed, the next step involved the design and scope for the oval, which was conducted by Melbourne in consultation with local builders in Alice Springs throughout 2018.

Finally, all of this information was lodged as the Club applied for a Northern Territory Sports and Recreation Facilities Grant.

In December 2018, an NT Government Sports Grant was successfully approved with the Club receiving a \$100,000 sum to contribute to project costs. The Club is committed to completing this project and is investing its own money, expertise and resources, as well as seeking partners and donors, to secure the remaining funds.

Following this approval, all of the intricate details have been finalised, and the re-grassing of the oval is ready to commence.

This project will comprise of three key stages along the journey. Firstly, a pop-up sprinkler irrigation system will be installed, while the water tanks and pumps on-site will be brought back into commission. After this process is complete the surface will be graded and prepared, with Kikuyu grass being sewn.

We will then enter the final phase of the project in August – that being a six-month establishment period where the ground won't be in use. This will allow the grass to grow without disruption, in the hope for the ground to be complete by February 2020.

The Central Land Council Santa Teresa Lease Money Working Group is working concurrent to us in support of Santa Teresa Oval. This group is funding a lighting system at a cost of \$353,000 with a further \$55,000 allocated to asset management. The light installation is underway and will allow the Santa Teresa Oval to be an exceptional sporting facility, day and night.

The AAAC is responsible for various other operations to help the development of the oval, firstly by investing in water efficiency measures at the ground. They will aim to reduce ongoing water use and associated costs including an automatic

weather station to shut off irrigation during effective rainfall events. Additionally, they have reached a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the MacDonnell Regional Council to conduct ongoing routine maintenance of the oval.

In a boost for the Santa Teresa community, contractors will be required to employ at least three local staff for irrigation installation and surface establishment, providing working opportunities for locals. They will also receive water efficiency training delivered by the curator at Traeger Park, as well as ongoing support from Arid Edge in Alice Springs.

This project seeks to harness the passion for sports in Santa Teresa and Central Australia, with the hope to increase participation and physical activity in the area. Extensive research confirms that developing an active lifestyle supports the prevention and management of lifestyle diseases such as diabetes, obesity, respiratory and eye disease, and significantly impacts mental health and substance abuse. Therefore, the Melbourne Football Club has made it a priority to develop this oval and improve the lifestyle of all members within the community.



A COMMUNITY PRIORITY PROJECT



This project addresses some key concerns for the Santa Teresa Community and has received overwhelming support. It is focused on increasing participation in sport and can demonstrate improved environmental outcomes.

CEO of AAAC (the Indigenous corporation responsible for Santa Teresa), Susie Low, is a key advocate of the re-grassing project and says it will do wonders for the community.

“The current oval is a clayey red sand loam, common in Central Australia, and limits the use and potential of the space,” Low said.

“The school would like to use the oval every day for their students exercise activities, but the dust is hazardous to children with breathing difficulties and has been anecdotally linked to the increasing incidence of eye disease in Santa Teresa children. As the school is situated adjacent to the oval, the use of the oval as a normal part of a school day will increase significantly and have a positive impact on levels of attendance and concentration in school.

“The state of the oval has also made programs such as Auskick or athletics impossible to implement with any consistency. A good surface will enable the community to increase participation of young girls and boys in such programs.

“A healthy lifestyle starts with young children and sets a pattern for fitness and healthy life decisions throughout their lives.

“Women will not train on the oval given the surface, and this has hampered our efforts to start our own women’s football team. While some players will travel into Alice Springs to play, they cannot safely train at our oval during the week. The new surface will allow us to build the skills and fitness of local women, addressing many poor lifestyle health conditions such as obesity and diabetes.

“We do not have the luxury of regular rainfalls and can only expect dust-settling rain for one to three weeks once a year. The oval is situated in the centre of the community and the dust generated is harmful to community members. Many of our community suffer from breathing problems. Grassing of such a large central area will significantly reduce dust pollution in the community and the overall health of all ages.”

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT



AFLNT's Remote Development Managers provide weekly football themed programs to the Santa Teresa community.

The Santa Teresa community has many members who use the oval daily for health and recreational activities and are seeking support to provide grass to their oval.

They hope that this project will not only meet the needs of the community but also help Santa Teresa to become a regional hub for Central Australian football.



Redtails Central Australia has been a massive support of the Melbourne Football Club's and will seek direct benefits from the grassing of the Santa Teresa Oval.

Since 2017, The Redtails and the Melbourne Football Club have enjoyed a mutually beneficial partnership. Redtails Central Australian is a representative football team which also seeks to achieve social engagement outcomes through providing health and education programs for Aboriginal footballers in the Red Centre.



Indigenous Eye Health (IEH) at the University of Melbourne partnered with Melbourne Football Club in 2009 and has been a great support ever since. The IEH looks to promote health activities around both trachoma and diabetes throughout the Northern Territory.

A fully grassed oval will be complementary of the IEH's programs and goals, as the exercise and community participation are crucial for individuals' health and wellbeing. The Santa Teresa Oval is a central place the community can come together to participate in sport and to watch community games.



Central Land Council's Santa Teresa Lease Money Working Group is well aware of the role football plays in its community. The sport assists the health and wellbeing of the citizens and will directly assist the development of people within the area.

A crucial aspect of the Santa Teresa Oval upgrade is the installation of lights, which the Central Land Council has funded. The Council has allocated over \$400,000 to allow evening games to be played, which will drastically increase the usability of the oval.

Nick Hayes, skateboarder and member of the group, says this lighting system will add substantial value to the project in a tangible way.

"Football provides a lot of benefits for the young people - activities, fitness, family fun - it's really important," Hayes said.

PROJECT TIMELINE

WORK SO FAR

AUGUST 2017

Club funds a feasibility study to assess the options available to re-grass the oval

DECEMBER 2017

Feasibility study completed, water sources confirmed, design commences

FEBRUARY 2018

MOU in place for ongoing maintenance

APRIL 2018

New fence installed to deter pests and protect the surface

MAY 2018

Oval design completed, plans finalised

AUGUST 2018

Final Grant submission completed and returned to NT Government

DECEMBER 2018

Grant application returned and approved for maximum amount of \$100,000

JANUARY 2019

Santa Teresa Oval Project Working Group Established between MFC & AAAC

NEXT STEPS

JUNE 2019

Stage 1 Construction Works

- ▶ Primary building work to be completed
- ▶ Irrigation trenches and system installation
- ▶ Tank and pump system commissioning

AUGUST 2019

Stage 2 Construction

- ▶ Oval re-surfacing and grading to ensure water coverage
- ▶ Kikiyu grass sown, six-month establishment period begins

MARCH 2020

Oval Launch For Use

- ▶ Funds raised contribute to the ongoing upkeep and maintenance of the oval for four years
- ▶ MFC and AAAC working group continue work to grow revenue of local enterprises, ensuring the long term viability of the oval and creating local jobs



\$200,000 REQUIRED TO REACH OUR GOAL

WHAT'S IT ALL FOR

The Santa Teresa Oval project is a long-term commitment, demonstrating Melbourne's investment in Santa Teresa and the broader Central Desert community.

All of the money raised throughout this process will directly assist the growth of the Santa Teresa community, with the benefits impacting citizens far beyond those making use of the ground.

Melbourne is investing not only money, but expertise as well. Plans are in place with Santa Teresa Enterprises to help them grow their local businesses to provide more jobs and ensure the sustainability of the project after four years.

Club staff are volunteering their time to help these local businesses grow, with traditional craft stores, retail precincts and cultural education programs all benefiting from the support. This is designed to increase revenue and create local jobs of cultural significance.

From a sporting perspective, a revamped oval will increase the standard of football played in the area. Melbourne Football Club's General Manager of Football Operations Josh Mahoney is a big supporter of the project.

"As it stands only a small minority of AFL players are recruited from Central Australia, largely due to the lack of opportunity for the local talent to showcase their skills," Mahoney said.

"It is a priority for the Melbourne Football Club through our academy to work with the region's communities to provide great opportunities for people to play football and to foster the talent via development pathways and programs."

The current facilities fail to allow aspiring footballers to practice their game, thus a fully grassed oval will help the standard of junior footy increase dramatically.

Melbourne hopes to not only increase participation in the sport through the grassing of this oval, but to help create a pathway to professional football.

Once the Santa Teresa Oval redevelopment is complete and sustainable, the Melbourne Football Club desires to continue its work with partners in the Northern Territory to redevelop and improve other facilities in the region.



HOW YOU CAN HELP

The Melbourne Football Club is seeking to collaborate with our loyal supporters and networks to reach our goal of \$200,000.

Funds raised will go directly towards creating the 'MCG of the desert'. Through the club's fundraising partnership with the Australian Sports Foundation, all donations to this project are fully tax deductible when made to the Red & Blue Foundation.

The Melbourne Football Club is committed to working with AAAC and the Santa Teresa community to grow their enterprises to become self-sufficient and ensure this project is sustainable.

All donors who contribute more than \$1,000 to the project will be recognised on an honour board to be located at Santa Teresa Oval and on the Santa Teresa Oval project page on the Melbourne Football Club website page.

We hope that you can join us by supporting this exciting project.

DONATE HERE

Or visit mfcde.es/santateresa





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