

5 December 2025

Councillor Clover Moore AO
Lord Mayor
City of Sydney
GPO Box 1591
Sydney NSW 2001

By email: cmoore@cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au

Subject: Request for Review of Synthetic Sports Field Proposal at Alexandra Canal

Dear Lord Mayor,

On behalf of the Cooks River Alliance, I am writing to express our concern regarding the proposed construction of a synthetic sports field over Alexandra Canal, a tributary of the Cooks River. The Cooks River is a vital urban waterway that our Alliance and community partners have worked tirelessly to restore and protect. Given that this ecosystem is already highly disturbed, it is important that we don't make things worse. Accordingly, any development that could introduce further pollutants must be approached with great caution.

Recent scientific reviews and community monitoring have highlighted the growing environmental risks associated with synthetic turf installations, particularly the release of microplastics and rubber crumb infill into stormwater systems. The NSW Chief Scientist's independent review into synthetic turf in public spaces found significant knowledge gaps and identified potential environmental and human health risks, including microplastic pollution, chemical leaching, and stormwater contamination from synthetic surfaces¹.

Further, research by the Australian Microplastic Assessment Project (AUSMAP)² has documented sustained inputs of synthetic grass fragments and rubber crumb into waterways across NSW, including Sydney. Their studies show that synthetic turf fields are a major source of microplastic pollution, with particles escaping into stormwater and ultimately reaching rivers and coastal environments.

The location of this proposed field—directly above Alexandra Canal—presents an elevated risk. Stormwater runoff from synthetic surfaces can carry plastic fragments and infill into the canal, which ultimately flows into the Cooks River and Botany Bay. This is contrary to the shared objectives of improving water quality and ecological resilience in our catchment.

¹ NSW Chief Scientist & Engineer. (2022). *Independent Review into the design, use and impacts of synthetic turf in public open spaces*. Final Report. Office of the NSW Chief Scientist & Engineer.

² AUSMP (2023). *Mounting Evidence for Problematic Synthetic Turf Rubber Crumb*. <https://www.ausmap.org/post/synthetic-turf-rubber-crumb-nsw-government-action>

We acknowledge the City's commitment to providing high-quality recreational facilities and understand the pressures to increase playable hours for sports fields. However, we urge Council to consider alternative solutions that do not compromise waterway health, such as natural turf improvements or hybrid systems that minimize environmental impact.

Accordingly, we respectfully request that the City of Sydney undertake a comprehensive review of the environmental risks of synthetic fields, including an assessment of potential microplastics pollution and stormwater impacts, particularly as they pertain to the proposed use of synthetic turf within the catchment of Alexandar Canal prior to their approval.

We look forward to your response

Yours sincerely,



Clr Clare Raffan
Chair
Cooks River Alliance.