

Acknowledgments

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Introduction

Competition in the leisure and sports market is fierce with today's members becoming more demanding. It is therefore in every club's best interest to provide and maintain its facilities.

Good management is essential for a successful tennis club/centre or association. Whether you are maintaining and improving existing facilities or developing new one's the management and administration involved can sometimes appear overwhelming.

Fortunately Tennis Australia, through its Member Associations, can provide guidance to help make the process as straightforward as possible. Regardless of what type of facility you are considering, be it a tennis court, a clubhouse, a practise wall, or other, there are numerous general considerations that should be taken into account before you decide to undertake the project.

Developing Club Facilities

1. **Define your criteria:** thoroughly, and realistically, consider your club's size and members and its long-term requirements with regard to facilities.

2. **Consider all the issues involved:** seek advice from solicitors, architects and your Local Council as well as your club's committee and members, and any other clubs you know that have gone through a similar process. For further information, refer to Table 1.

- **General considerations:** ensure the facilities are visually pleasing and as far as possible compliment the surrounding landscape in terms of colours, textures and materials.
- **Future development:** think ahead and ensure the facilities you are developing will allow for any expansion that your club may require in the future.
- **Planning permission:** for any facilities that you think may require planning permission please seek advise from your Member Association Technical Services representative, the Local Council (Shire) and, if necessary, a solicitor. Never underestimate the effectiveness of local opposition in blocking development proposals, and seriously consider the best way of communicating your ideas to club members and the local community. Allow plenty of time in your overall project development program for the planning process to take place.

3. **Develop a long-term business plan:** clubs need to develop at least a five year business plan targeting issues such as facility development, memberships, maintenance, financial planning, coaching, etc. This should always remain a working document, enabling a reference document when there are changes of committees. Clubs could receive assistance with this from Member Associations and State Sport and Recreation Departments. For further information, refer to the *Club Planning Module*.

4. **Develop a project development plan:** decide who will be responsible for managing the project and making decisions (it is suggested, where possible, for this to be handled by the Member Associations representative). Establish what you hope to achieve, why, when and how you want to do it, how you will pay for it, and how you will measure its success. Think long term and work to a realistic time scale.

5. **Consider your funding requirements:** if your club does not have sufficient resources to pay for the project, collate information from potential funding organisations, eg. Sport & Recreation and Local Council. Refer to the section on Tennis Australia Facility Loan Scheme, page 7.

6. **Make a start:** If you are happy you have satisfied all the above points and are ready to make a start, contact your Member Association representative for detailed advice on how best to commence your project. Developing and improving a club is always hard work, but the rewards are worth all the time and effort.

Facility Management Checklist

Table 1

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| Location | If you are considering some sort of construction, keep in mind the location. Is it prone to natural hazards? For example, flooding, tree roots, falling trees etc. Are the ground conditions suitable (refer to Foundations, Bases and Soils under Further Information pg 10). Is the construction sympathetic to local residents, visually and in terms of light and noise? |
| Materials | Spend time considering what type of facility is most suitable for your needs. Look into the benefits of various playing surfaces for tennis courts; consider which materials will be most hardwearing and low maintenance when building a clubhouse etc. |
| Equipment | Once your new facility is completed, remember to allow in your budget for any further equipment, fixtures or fittings required. I.e. Net posts, nets, umpire chair, etc. |
| Maintenance | Once it is up and running, what ongoing maintenance will the new facility require? Does your club have the resources, funds and knowledge to cater for this? |
| Services | Consider the changes and need for services such as water, gas and electricity. |
| Security | Consider the risk of vandals and provisions needed to deter break-ins, such as alarms, window-locks, security cameras etc. Ensure you satisfy all the requirements of your insurance company. |
| Access | Consider all the "access" issues that may be involved in the facility. Think about provision of steps, ramps and lifts, height of reception counters and doorways, access from car park and other areas of the club, width of corridors and doors to accommodate wheelchairs, adequate change room facilities for all members (young, old, disabled), as well as location of electrical switches, power points, taps, handles, etc. |
| Legal Issues | Look into all the legalities involved: length of tenure of land, covenants on access, health and safety issues, etc. Ensure also that the project adheres to the highest safety standards during the actual period of construction and make sure you have comprehensive insurance in place at all times. |
| Scheduling | Consider existing services, competitions and events. Look into peak usage time for courts. Ensure scheduling opportunities are maximised before committing to facility development. |

Maintaining Existing Facilities

1. General Maintenance: there is a great deal you can do to prolong the life of your existing facilities. Some facilities may require more dedicated or expert attention, but for day to day maintenance ensure your staff/committee are well trained and briefed on what needs doing. As well as a weekly, sometimes daily, cleaning routine, ensure courts and equipment have regular checks and that an expert carries out repairs. Some common items can include greasing the winding mechanism on net posts to facilitate their use and ensure tennis nets are not over tightened. Ensure trees and climbing plants are not sited too near facilities and paths, and that over hanging branches are chopped back to minimise interference to facilities.

2. Safety Checks: Given an increasing number of insurance claims for injuries at Tennis Clubs, the Technical Services Advisory Group at Tennis Victoria has produced a list of Potential Hazards that may exist in and around a facility. It is suggested that a Club should:

- Study the list of Potential Hazards, Table 2
- Adopt a regular cycle (eg once a quarter) for committee inspections of facilities, using the "Hazard Inspection Report," Table 3 to record findings
- Encourage all members to report any potential problems (eg lifting line) they may observe. Give members a number to ring if they identify a problem.

3. Members: make it clear to members that they should care for the club's facilities in order to keep them in prime condition. This can be done by strategic placement of signs that ask for their cooperation. Ensure there is adequate shading in place around the facility and that members are adhering to SunSmart regulations.

4. Harmful Substances: be aware of what substances are damaging to your club facilities. Provide plenty of bins and ashtrays and if necessary put up signs asking members to dispose of cigarettes, chewing gum and litter appropriately. If possible, try and provide a smoke-free environment for your members.

5. Maintenance Budget: all clubs need to ensure that their annual budgets allow a realistic allocation for maintenance of facilities. This amount will vary dependant upon court surfaces and the type of the facilities and should be monitored and controlled by a special Grounds Committee.

6. Refurbishment Fund: all clubs should allocate provisions for refurbishment of facilities

Potential Hazards

Table 2

Court Enclosures

| | |
|------------------------------|--|
| Limited baseline area | A baseline less than 3.05m (10ft) from a rear fence is deemed a serious hazard that must be immediately addressed. If less than 4.88m (16ft) it is less than desirable for the game of tennis but is not considered a hazard to players. <i>Solution: Extend the courts' enclosure or introduce curtain screens.</i> |
| Limited sideline area | A sideline less than 2.13m (7ft) from a side fence is deemed a serious hazard that must be immediately addressed. If less than 3.66m (12ft) it is less than desirable for the game of tennis but is not considered a hazard to players. <i>Solution: Extend the courts' enclosure, adjust distances between courts'</i> |

or introduce curtain screens.

Limited gap between courts

A gap of less than 2.44m (8ft) between unfenced courts is deemed a serious hazard that must be immediately addressed. If less than 4.27m (14ft) it is less than desirable for the game of tennis but is not considered a hazard to players.

Solution: Extend the courts' enclosure or introduce curtain screens.

Internal open drain (trip hazard)

Any open drain within the courts' enclosure offers a potential hazard. This includes drains that may be well away from the playing area eg. Next to a back fence. Players have been known to sustain injuries when retrieving balls.

Solution: Reconstruct top of drainage, pit - replace rusted grate covers.

Surfaces not extended to surround

Some court playing surfaces do not extend fully to the court surround or fence. Grass verges, or verges with loose material, present slip hazards.

Solution: extend court surfaces, seal verges eg with asphalt.

Different adjoining surfaces

Different adjoining surfaces (ie without an intervening barrier) can prevent a slip hazard to players - noting that each type of surface has different slip/grip characteristics.

Solution: Adopt common surfaces or construct appropriate barriers if space permits.

Poor positioning or securing of accessories

A common hazard with many courts is the poor location of accessories such as heavy rollers or drying rollers.

Solution: Store and secure (to prevent movement) in safe places outside court enclosures or on side fences at the net line.

Unsafe umpire chairs/seating

There is a broad range of such equipment, in many instances home made. Such equipment must be stable (suggesting broad based) and maintained in good repair. Loose broken or ill-fitting seats are hazardous. Protruding or rusting metal is hazardous.

Solution: Repair or replace unsafe chairs/seats.

Court Surfaces

Potential trip hazard

Deep depressions or raised areas (eg from breaks in pavements or tree root intrusion) are trip hazards.

Solution: Maintain a level, even surface by whatever means necessary.

Remove any trees or large bushes within 3 metres of fencelines.

Potential slip hazard

Foreign materials (leaves, twigs, other debris) on court surfaces can create slip hazards. Poorly drained or poorly maintained surfaces (eg presence of moss or algae) can also be slippery.

Solution: Regularly remove foreign materials and keep surfaces well maintained. Remove origin of foreign materials.

Court Lines

Broken, raised, or chipped lines and/or

A chipped, broken or raised line on porous courts represents a trip hazard.

protruding nails

Solution: Regularly maintain lines to remove underlying build-up and flatten line. Replace chipped or broken lines.

Nets

Holes in nets, broken tapes, hems, not secured at ends

To most people, a net seems an unlikely source of injury, but not so. Injuries have occurred with players catching themselves on a net (perhaps as it has blown up with wind gusts) which, in turn, can cause a fall.
Solution: Repair or replace defective nets

No centre net strap

Centre net straps are part of the Rules of Tennis and minimise the possibility of players becoming entangled in the net.

Frayed net wire ends

Exposed wire ends can be a minor hazard with people changing ends.
Solution: Cut off and/or tape frayed ends and secure the ends.

Net Posts

External winders

For some older external net winders, the protective knobs have disappeared. This will sometimes leave a jagged stem.
Solution: Check the net winder handles and if hazardous repair or replace.

Not stable or leaning

A non-stable or leaning net post in itself is not likely to cause injury. However, it may inhibit the Club from properly tensioning the net with a centre net strap. This in turn can lead to injuries as previously described.
Solution: Replace net posting footing.

Fencing

Curled fence bottoms

A common occurrence at most clubs is the curled fence bottom. This results in the jagged bottom edge of the chain-mesh extending into the enclosure.
Solution: Lift and re-tension the fence, cut the knuckle excess at the bottom, install a bottom rail and secure fence to it or install a wooden plinth inside the fence at its bottom.

Breaks/holes/rust

Rusty chain-mesh is a sign of weakening that will sooner or later lead to breaks and holes. These, in turn, create a potential for injury eg catching on jagged ends.
Solution: Repair breaks or holes, replace ageing fence wire.

Projections or attachments

Attachments such as sponsorship signs can become a potential for injury if not firmly secured. Attachments that project more than 50mm into an enclosure (eg large hooks for hanging drag mats, unattached windscreens flapping in the wind) can also be dangerous.
Solution: Regularly check all fence attachments.

Gates not easily secured

Most cyclone gates use padbolts but a number are difficult to operate eg. you have to lift the gate to engage the padbolt. The potential for injury is for a player to run into the edge of an open gate or to have the gate

| | |
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| | <p>give way unexpectedly. <i>Solution: Adjust the gate hinges or use an alternative locking mechanism.</i></p> |
| Internal brick or other surrounds | <p>Some fences are not flush with internal court surrounds (brick or other). A gap of more than 150mm is hazardous. <i>Solution: Such gaps should be filled or covered.</i></p> |
| Internal Retaining walls | <p>Some sites have exposed retaining walls sometimes with fencing extended from the top of the wall (often to save money). <i>Solution: Install cyclone mesh fences to court level inside retaining walls.</i></p> |

Light Poles

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|-------------------------------------|---|
| Poorly positioned-not padded | <p>Light poles should desirably be located outside the fenceline or integrated into it. <i>Solution: Either have the light poles moved or install protective padding.</i></p> |
| Evidence of movement | <p>Some light poles have been known to fall unexpectedly. With wooden poles you cannot see that portion which is below ground level. <i>Solution: Regularly inspect light poles for signs of any abnormal movement and, if found, initiate appropriate corrective action.</i></p> |
| Signs of rust | <p>Any signs of rust should be immediately addressed for the previously stated reason.</p> |
| Concealed footing | <p>Light pole footings covered over by red porous, dirt, grass etc are more susceptible to rusting given the held moisture content of the surrounding material. See above for potential outcomes. <i>Solution: Ensure that the tops of the footings for any "bolted" light poles are exposed.</i></p> |
| Insecure locking mechanism | <p>The locking mechanisms for cantilever types poles should be regularly checked to ensure there are no problems.</p> |
| Possible overloading | <p>Light poles (and their footings) are constructed to carry specific loads eg one light fitting. If additional fittings are to be added, the rating of the pole should be checked.</p> |

Club house & Surrounds

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|--------------------------------|---|
| Unstable high objects | <p>Any high objects located more than 2.5m above the ground (eg promotional club signs) should be regularly checked to ensure they are securely fastened.</p> |
| No security lighting | <p>Permanent or sensor initiated lights are needed to allow players to enter and leave the Club premises at night. There should also be some form of safety lighting (eg ground installed garden lights) to provide light for players to leave courts safely after automatic timers suddenly turn off court lights.</p> |
| Lack of safety railings | <p>Safety railing is needed at the top of any retaining wall, or elevated verandah, where an accidental fall could cause injury. Railings should also be available where they are five or more steps or stairs.</p> |

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| Lack of safety glass | All Clubhouses windows and glass doors should be fitted with safety glass. |
| Unsatisfactory pathways | Any unevenness in pathways or paved areas should be eliminated. This can occur through tree root intrusion - tree root barriers should be installed to prevent re-occurrences. |
| Lack of off-street parking | A major safety hazard relates to parking. Every effort should be made to secure and maintain well-organised off-street parking or, as minimum off-street drop off areas. |

Hazard Inspection Report

Table 3 - Best Practice Hazard Inspection Report

| HAZARD INSPECTION REPORT | | Date: |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------|
| Club | Inspected By (name) | |
| Court Enclosures | Light Poles | |
| Clearances to fences between courts | Hazardous positioning – not padded | |
| Internal Open Drains (trip hazards) | Evidence of movement | |
| Surfaces not extended to fences | Signs of rust | |
| Different surfaces | Concealed footing | |
| Poor positioning of accessories | Insecure locking mechanism | |
| Umpire chairs/internal seating | Possible overloading | |
| Court Surfaces | Court Lines | |
| Potential trip hazards | Broken/chipped/raised lines | |
| Potential slip hazards | Protruding Nails | |
| Net Posts | Nets | |

| | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| External Winders or other protrusions | Dangerous disrepair |
| Non-standard attachments | Not secured |
| Not firm | Exposed wire ends |
| Fencing | Clubhouse and Surrounds |
| Curled-up bottoms | High objects |
| Breaks/holes/rust | No security lighting |
| Projections/attachments | Lack of railings (walkways, patios, verandahs) |
| Gates not secured (padbolts) | Lack of safety glass where needed |
| Internal brick or other surrounds | Other Clubhouse |
| Internal retaining walls | |
| Other | Other |

Capital Reserve Fund

One of the most important requirements for a successful tennis club is financial viability. In order to ensure your long term security, it is essential that your club sets aside an annual fund to allow for the improvement of existing facilities and to make provision for new facilities – courts, court surfaces, lights etc – when required.

Each club should calculate its required capital reserve fund according to the number and type of courts, lighting, etc. You will need to make assumptions about the life expectancy of facilities, their anticipated future cost of replacement and the rates of inflation and interest that will apply. It is always difficult to be totally accurate, but it is important to be realistic and try to anticipate every eventuality to avoid ending up with a shortfall. Your Member Association Technical Services representative will be able to help with some of this information.

Once the above figures have been calculated and the required capital reserve fund determined, then an annual amount should be invested in a totally separate fund, independent of your club's day to day bank account.

Tennis Australia Facility Loan Scheme

Financial support is available to affiliated tennis clubs and associations through Member Associations. The Tennis Australia Facility Loan Scheme is a low interest loan, payable over eight years up to a maximum of \$80,000.

To be eligible for a loan the club or association must complete a loan application form, club assessment document, financial documents and a purchasing specification. Forms and assistance are available from your Member Association. (www.tennisaustralia.com.au).

These loans are only available for upgrading of a tennis facility or new capital works and will not be granted for maintenance or repair programs.

Facility Support

Tennis Australia and its Member Associations have Facility Development business units, which are available to guide and assist clubs, centres, associations, schools and government (both State and Local).

The roles of these business units is to:

- Provide technical information and advice on all aspects of the construction, installation and maintenance of tennis facilities
- Liaise and advise State government and Local Government bodies regarding tennis facilities, funding and future developments
- Closely liaise with the tennis industry regarding new developments, standardisation of tendering, contract procedures and purchasing specifications
- Work closely with the ITF, USTA and LTA in matters such as new developments in tennis surfaces, performance standards for tennis court surfaces and the latest global technical advances
- Provide assistance and advice to other countries in the Asia/Oceania region Clubs and associations should seek advice and assistance from their Member Association committee on any matter relating the construction, installation, maintenance, reliability or longevity associated with your club's existing or proposed tennis facilities

Further Information

For more detailed advice the following papers are available through Facility Development at Tennis Australia.

Foundations, Bases and Soils : Addresses problems areas, correct testing and design principles and procedures.

Purchasing Specification: Explains what it is, which projects it is needed for and why it is required.

Tennis Lights: Deals with design, development and construction of lighting for outdoor courts. Provides information on lighting terminology, lighting levels, types of systems, environmental considerations and approximate running costs.

Tennis Surfaces: Covers synthetic grass, acrylic (hardcourt), and red porous courts.

National Technical Manual: Two volume manual, also available on cd, which deals with also facets of a technical nature, including sample purchasing specifications. Is available through Member Associations.