

# Building for the Future? Sports infrastructure and stadia development

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With the announcement on the major stadia for Perth it is interesting to briefly look at what really makes stadia work. True, the initial capital outlay is \$1.1 billion will be dwarfed by the costs of running the stadium over the decades of its life; however the benefits could be substantial if planned correctly. For example, the income potential off-site can provide significant spin offs to local businesses and the facility itself has the potential to enhance the environment providing local community resource for both employment and sports participation.

In short the issue is not about committing to build the stadium but to ensure that the long term viability is effectively planned.

Throughout the world stadia have been developed to facilitate individual club growth and to provide the necessary infrastructure to bid for, or deliver, major events including the Football World Cup, Olympics and Commonwealth Games. The demand is now for state of the art facilities which meet the high demands of consumers (competitors, the business and spectators) whilst also providing a cost neutral or profitable long term investment.

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Unfortunately the nature of major one off sporting events and annual league competitions means that for the vast majority of the time the principle asset remains vacant or unused. These periods of vacancy can restrict opportunities for full-time

employment, severely limit the community identification with the facility and can often detract from investment in other complimentary facilities.

Often stadia's have provided disappointing regeneration returns and a number of lessons should be heeded if the new stadium at Subiaco is not to befall the same problems. Much has been written on the financial viability of the two major stadia built to service the Sydney Olympics, considered to be one of, if not the, most successful modern Olympiad.

The reclamation and regeneration of an industrial wasteland was a key aim and there is little doubt that this has been achieved with ongoing development since the Games were held in 2000. However the long term business plan did not materialise and the facilities have lost money. It would be little surprise to find out that the new national stadium and sporting precinct being constructed in Durban to support South Africa's FIFA World Cup in 2010 experiences similar problems. It is intended to leave a legacy for multi-disciplinary codes including football, rugby and athletics and is referred to as a hard working and an easy to maintain asset for Durban that provides the potential to host most of the Olympic disciplines. This is a laudable aspiration, but will come at a cost if the pre-planning and partnership development across key delivery partners is not robust and well advanced and the euphoria during and after the event is not met by the realisation that the hard work is not necessarily for the event itself.



Existing Subiaco Oval



Subiaco Stadium - Stage 1



Subiaco Stadium - Stage 2



Completed new Subiaco stadium