
Westgate Basketball Association

Budget Submission — Maribyrnong City Council Annual Budget 2026/27

On behalf of the 5,500 basketball participants across the Inner West of Melbourne, Westgate Basketball Association (WBA) submits this formal response to the Maribyrnong City Council 2026/27 Draft Budget.

We make two requests: a specific budget amendment for the Mclvor Reserve Indoor Sports Stadium, and immediate capital funding to upgrade facilities at RecWest Braybrook. Both requests go to the same fundamental question, whether Maribyrnong City Council is prepared to fund the social infrastructure required for a growing, young, diverse and active Inner West community.

1. Mclvor Reserve Indoor Sports Stadium

**Put Mclvor in the Budget.
Fund the courts.
Show us you are on our side.**

Budgets are choices. This budget should choose this community.

The 2026/27 Budget is not merely a financial document. It is a statement of what this Council values — which communities it invests in, which projects it prioritises, and which groups it asks to keep waiting. Budgets reveal priorities. They show what is funded, what is deferred, and who bears the cost of deferral.

If Council values healthy communities, young people, inclusion, women and girls in sport, social cohesion and community participation — and we believe it does — then investment in indoor court infrastructure must be visible in this Budget. Not deferred. Not merely noted in an advocacy document. Visible, funded and accountable.

The Mclvor Reserve Indoor Sports Stadium is not a discretionary nice-to-have. It is a test of whether Maribyrnong City Council and the Victorian Government are prepared to fund the social infrastructure this community needs. We are asking Council to pass that test.

The specific budget amendment we are requesting

Requested Budget Amendment

That Maribyrnong City Council include a contingent capital works line item in the 2026/27 Budget for the Mclvor Reserve Indoor Sports Stadium, identifying Council's commitment to co-fund the project subject to a matching funding commitment from the Victorian Government.

This line item should make clear that Council supports delivery of the new six-court indoor sports stadium and is prepared to allocate its matched contribution from the capital fund once State Government funding is secured.

A contingent line item would not require Council to immediately commit the full cost of the project. That is the point. It would simply make Council's stated commitment visible, recorded and accountable. Verbal support is welcome — but verbal support is not the same as a budget commitment. If Council is prepared to fund its share when State Government funding arrives, it should be prepared to say so now, in the Budget, where it counts.

A visible budget commitment would also serve a direct practical purpose: State and Federal grant programs require evidence of Council co-investment as a prerequisite for applications. Without it, no amount of advocacy will unlock external funding. Council putting a line in the Budget is, quite literally, the trigger that makes the rest of the funding possible. It's as simple as putting your money where your mouth is.

Where the project stands

The Mclvor Reserve Master Plan — including the six-court indoor sports stadium — was endorsed by Council in April 2023 after exhaustive community engagement. The site is confirmed. The planning is done. Council has earmarked \$2.5 million in matching funds for detailed design. The project appears in Council's own Advocacy Priorities document as a named priority. And yet the project has not moved in three years.

We were disappointed that the budget funding submission for the facility sponsored and supported by Katie Hall MP and Melissa Horne MP was not funded in the recent 2026-27 Victorian Budget. But the State Government's decision does not diminish Council's own obligation to act. We acknowledge and credit the \$50,000 allocated in the 2025/26 budget for quantity surveying, project collateral and establishment of working groups with State Government. We ask for a written update on the outcomes of this work and how they will be used in the next phase.

Maribyrnong is the only one that has not acted

Maribyrnong has never constructed a purpose-built indoor sports stadium. Every surrounding council has. The table below sets out what neighbouring communities have built — and what Maribyrnong's young people are still waiting for.

Council	Facility	Courts / scale	Status
Hobsons Bay	Altona Sports Centre expansion	10 indoor courts; 1,000-seat show court	Completed 2020
Wyndham	Eagle Stadium expansion; Tarneit Indoor Sports Facility (planned)	12 indoor courts at Eagle Stadium; further facility in design	Eagle Stadium expanded 2016; Tarneit in planning
Brimbank	Keilor Basketball Netball Stadium	6 basketball courts; 3 netball; 4 badminton; 200-seat grandstand	Built 1986; expanded 2015

City of Melbourne	Kensington Community Aquatic and Recreation Centre (redeveloped)	3 full-sized multipurpose courts (basketball, netball, futsal); \$68m investment	Opened September 2025
Moonee Valley	Quinn Grove 6-court highball stadium (planned)	6-court facility; master plan adopted; design underway	In planning — not yet built
Maribyrnong	Mclvor Reserve 6-court Indoor Sports Stadium	6 courts proposed. No indoor stadium has ever been built in Maribyrnong.	Advocacy phase only — design not yet funded

Note: Moonee Valley is included to illustrate that even a council in an identical position to Maribyrnong — no stadium built, significant unmet demand — has progressed further by adopting a master plan and commencing design. Maribyrnong's Mclvor Reserve Master Plan is adopted, but detailed design has not been funded. That is the gap this submission asks Council to close.

Mclvor Reserve is the only viable location for an indoor facility in this municipality, as Council's own 2018 Indoor Sports Stadium Strategy confirmed. There is no alternative site. There is no alternative plan. There is only Mclvor, or there is nothing.

The window to act is now

Basketball Victoria has listed Mclvor Reserve as one of its top facility investment priorities for the upcoming state election. WBA, Basketball Victoria and Maribyrnong Council are now aligned in a way that has not previously existed. WBA is committed to mobilising the 5,500+ Maribyrnong basketball participants to ensure our voices are heard at the state election.

What we are asking Council to do

- Include a **contingent capital works line item in the 2026/27 Budget for the Mclvor Reserve Indoor Sports Stadium, committing Council to co-fund delivery subject to State Government matching funding.**
- Activate the \$2.5 million in committed matching funds for detailed design, with procurement commencing no later than Q1 2027.
- Provide WBA with a written update on the outcomes of the \$50,000 advocacy allocation.
- Have the Mayor and CEO formally write to the Victorian Minister for Community Sport and relevant Federal ministers, citing Basketball Victoria's prioritisation and the 5,500+ affected participants.
- Co-develop a joint advocacy plan with WBA for the state election period with clear milestones, agreed messaging and coordinated community mobilisation.
- Formally engage WBA as a community partner in any grant applications relating to Mclvor Reserve.

2. The Human Cost: Our Members' Lived Experience

Council and the State Government already have strategies, reports and budget papers documenting the court shortage. What decision-makers also need to hear is what that shortage

actually means for real people — the child training late at night, the family driving past the municipal boundary for a game, the volunteer trying to build a schedule from too few courts, and the player who simply wants the same access to local sport that every other community around her already has.

Our members are not just supporters of this campaign. Their stories are its evidence base. The following themes reflect what we hear consistently from across our 5,500-strong membership. Where individual accounts are quoted or summarised, names have been withheld unless permission to publish has been given.

Late-night training for junior players

Court scarcity means WBA and its clubs are forced to schedule junior training sessions at times that no family should have to accept. Children aged eight, nine and ten years old are regularly finishing training at 9pm or later on school nights — not because clubs prefer it that way, but because there is no earlier slot available. Parents face the choice of accepting these hours or withdrawing their child from the sport. Many withdraw.

Families travelling outside Maribyrnong

Because Maribyrnong has no purpose-built indoor stadium, WBA operates across multiple venues including facilities in neighbouring municipalities. For families in Footscray, Braybrook and Yarraville — many of them from communities where car ownership is not universal and public transport to suburban sports venues is limited — travelling outside the municipality for training or games is a real participation barrier. It is also a daily reminder that their community has not received the same investment as the ones next door.

Teams capped, players missing out

WBA cannot grow. Not because of a lack of interest, but because we have no more courts to offer. We maintain waiting lists. We have had to cap our Under 8 competition — which means the children most likely to develop a lifelong love of the game are the ones we cannot yet reach. Clubs turn away new teams. Coaches turn away new players. Every refusal is a child who went looking for a sport and found a closed door.

The pressure on coaches, referees and volunteers

WBA is held together by volunteers. The committee, the coaches, the team managers, the referees — all of them give their time because they believe in what basketball does for this community. The court shortage makes their work harder every season. Scheduling becomes an exercise in impossibility. Referees are asked to cover back-to-back shifts across multiple venues. Coaches cannot book training time that suits their players. Volunteers burn out managing a system that was not designed to carry this load.

Girls, younger players and families with multiple children

Female participation at WBA has doubled since 2020. Our girls' programs and women's competitions are among the fastest-growing parts of our association. But court scarcity disproportionately affects the teams and programs with the least scheduling leverage — which too often means girls' teams, younger age groups and all-abilities programs. A purpose-built facility with dedicated court allocation would change this. It would give these programs the certainty and visibility they deserve, not the time slots that are left over.

Conditions at existing facilities

The facilities WBA currently operates from are ageing. RecWest Braybrook — our primary competition venue, owned by Maribyrnong City Council — it was opened by Cr. George Parnis then Mayor of the City of Sunshine in July 1994. It is more than 30 years old and operating well beyond its original design capacity. Court surfaces, lighting, seating, change rooms and amenities all require attention. For many of our members, the condition of the facility is the most immediate and tangible expression of how much their participation is valued by the institutions responsible for it.

Member story

My son was recently at RecWest attending one of the Westgate Big V Games, he was very excited to watch the club's senior team play. Before the game he was shooting around on court 2 with his teammates, when chasing after a loose ball, he caught his leg on the old padding on the netball rings near the court. This resulted in a very nasty fall, the ambulance called, and my son breaking both his radius and ulna bones. Not only did he miss the game, but he will also miss playing basketball for a significant amount of time due to the nature of the break. His mental wellbeing is also suffering from the trauma of the bad arm break and missing so much of the sport he loves.

What Mclvor Reserve would change

For all the statistics in this submission — 270% growth, 330+ junior team teams, 5,500+ participants — the most important number is the one we cannot yet count: the players who would join if we had the space to take them. The children who would play Under 8s for the first time. The girls' teams that would get a court at a reasonable hour. The families who would stay in Maribyrnong for their basketball rather than travelling to a neighbouring council with better facilities. The volunteers whose schedules would stop being a weekly act of triage.

3. RecWest Braybrook — Immediate Facility Upgrade Funding

RecWest Braybrook at 39 Lily Street, Braybrook is owned by Maribyrnong City Council and managed in partnership with YMCA Victoria. It is WBA's primary competition venue and the community home of basketball in the Inner West. The facility is more than 30 years old and operating well beyond its original design capacity. As asset owner, Council carries the maintenance, safety and renewal obligation for this facility.

The same principle that applies to Mclvor applies here: if the 2026/27 Budget reflects Council's values around healthy communities, youth participation and social cohesion, then maintaining the community sport facility that thousands of Inner West families use every week must be visible in that budget.

What we are asking Council to fund

- Upgrade and resurface court floors across the main four-court stadium and single-court secondary stadium, to a standard appropriate for the level of junior and senior competition being conducted.
- Replace existing lighting with LED systems across all courts and the external car park.
- Modernise scoreboard and competition technology systems across all courts.

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- Improve seating, spectator and canteen areas to accommodate the volume of families attending junior, senior and Big V competition days.
 - Review and upgrade change rooms and amenities to meet current standards for a multi-sport community venue of this usage level.
 - Improve DDA-compliant access throughout the facility.

WBA formally offers its endorsement, participation data and community support for any such application to relevant Victorian or Commonwealth Government Funds that would assist these improvements.

4. Our Ask of the Victorian Government

In her budget speech on 5th May the Victorian Treasurer committed to restoring the basic deal — that if you work hard, you deserve a decent life — and said government should step in and ease pressure for working families. She closed by saying: *"if people are working hard to build a decent life, they deserve a government working just as hard to make sure they have it."*

For thousands of families in the Inner West, real help means a local court their child can train and play at — not a series of round trips to a neighbouring municipality. The families who make up Westgate Basketball Association are doing exactly what the Treasurer described: working hard, doing the right thing, and trying to build a decent life. They deserve the same access to local sports infrastructure that every surrounding community already has.

The Treasurer also stated that government investment should not live on a balance sheet — it should make life work better for people, and be felt and seen in the communities people call home. We are not asking for more than that standard.

It is of note that the Victorian Budget makes significant targeted investments in western suburbs health infrastructure, explicitly recognising the needs of growing, young and diverse communities in Melbourne's west. We ask the State Government to extend that same recognition to community sport infrastructure — which is itself a health investment. The evidence base is clear: accessible local sport reduces chronic disease, supports mental health, and builds the connected communities that keep people well. A commitment to Mclvor Reserve is a health investment in the same western suburbs communities this Budget has already identified as a priority.

We are asking for a modern indoor multi court facility that the Inner West desperately needs — and that every surrounding community already has. Mclvor Reserve is the local project that would be a source of pride for our community. A tangible, physical expression of the difference good governments can make locally. An investment felt and seen by many thousands of participants and their families across Maribyrnong.

This submission is directed primarily at Council. But WBA places on record our clear ask of the Victorian Government:

- Commit funding for the Mclvor Reserve Indoor Sports Stadium as part of community sport, youth participation, women and girls in sport, health, inclusion and western suburbs infrastructure priorities.
- Work with Maribyrnong City Council on a co-funded delivery package aligned to Basketball Victoria's election commitment list.

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- Recognise that an indoor court shortage is a participation barrier — not merely a scheduling inconvenience — with real and compounding health, social and economic costs for the community.
 - Provide funding certainty before the project remains in an advocacy holding pattern for another year, and before costs escalate further.

Closing

Council's leadership to date on the Mclvor Reserve Master Plan is appreciated. The community of basketball players, coaches, referees, volunteers and families across the Inner West is watching closely, and we are ready to work alongside Council to make these projects a reality.

The ask is not unreasonable. A contingent line-item costs Council nothing until State Government funding is secured. An upgrade to RecWest Braybrook is a routine asset maintenance obligation. What both ask is that Council choose — visibly, in the Budget — to be on the side of the community that has been waiting.

WBA welcomes the opportunity to present this submission at the Hearing and to meet with officers and Councillors to discuss any aspect of these requests.

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