



Setting a Benchmark for Sports Turf Consultancy

BY MATT ROCHE, DIRECTOR AND PRINCIPAL TURF CONSULTANT, AUSTRALIAN SPORTS TURF CONSULTANTS (ASTC)

At Australian Sports Turf Consultants (ASTC), our team of experts is made up of experienced turf professionals who have a deep understanding of the complexities of constructing, redeveloping managing, and maintaining natural turf playing surfaces. Our services are designed to provide our clients with the information, advice, and tools they need to achieve optimal playing surfaces for their sports, recreation, community, or multi-use stadium facilities.

Our clients are spread across many key turf-related industries and facilities. Our business clients include some of the biggest names in sports, such as sports stadiums and elite sporting codes. We also serve many councils and government bodies, community sports

clubs, horse racing tracks, golf and bowling clubs, and schools and universities. In addition, we work with turf suppliers and maintenance, commercial construction companies, architects, engineers, developers, builders, and landscapers, as well as with turf producers and peak industry bodies. We take pride in delivering high-quality expert advice and customised and sustainable solutions that meet the unique needs of each of our clients.

ASTC has worked with Lawn Solutions Australia (LSA) over the years accessing turf production facilities to ensure adequate steps are in place to comply with the AusGAP (Australian Genetic Assurance Program for Turfgrass) Certification Process.

It is important that farm audits are managed to ensure compliance. ASTC is also commissioned to check turf grass health and purity for specific products that LSA Members supply.

LSA also work closely with ASTC on turf grass evaluation and sampling for Plant Breeder's Rights (PBR) submissions – with work currently underway with four varieties.

Some of the key services ASTC offers include:

Project management

Project management plays a crucial role in the success of any turf management, redevelopment, and construction project. Our team work to produce high-quality



delivery which involves developing and implementing comprehensive redevelopment or reconstruction plan that outlines the scope of work, project timeline, budget, resource allocation, and risk management strategies. Active communication and collaboration between stakeholders, including The Principal (client), the Contractor and subcontractors, often including sports turf construction and irrigation companies etc., is vital in successfully delivering a project. By ensuring that all aspects of the project are well-coordinated and documented, project management helps ensure that the final product meets the specifications and client's expectations.

When a sports field is being redeveloped, ASTC will conduct a detailed site investigation. This will typically include (i) an agronomic assessment of the turf surface and rootzone, (ii) soil nutrition and physical testing e.g. particle size analysis, bulk density, hydraulic conductivity etc., (iii) an assessment of existing features, environmental hazards and access and exit points, (iv) an irrigation audit and (v) surveying to identify the existing gradients and visible features. The site investigation report helps ASTC prepares detailed current technical specifications that are site and project specific and include a series of Hold Points, Witness Points, and request for documentation to be provided as

evidence of completed work that meets the specification and aligns with the detailed BOQ which is also provided by ASTC.

As for new or construction projects, the same effort and detail is required, it usually just means that more information is to be conveyed to the stakeholders during the early concept and design stage to ensure the intent is still achieved, without compromising on the quality of the sports turf surface.

Quality assurance

Quality assurance is a key component in any turf management, redevelopment, or construction project. This follows on from the design and production of clear, black-



and-white detailed technical specifications where ASTC regularly conducts quality assurance checks to make sure companies are following the technical specifications. ASTC acts as an independent auditor to ensure the standard is being followed and high standards are being met on site. Quality assurance checks are vital in ensuring that proposed materials meet the specifications before they are delivered to the site; ensure that construction techniques and equipment used meet specifications or best practices; and ensure turf maintenance is conducted by qualified turf professionals to a high standard. This is to ensure the client's expectations are met and to ensure player safety is not compromised. With regular quality assurance checks, any issues can be addressed early and avoid costly repairs and rework in the future.

Auditing and benchmarking (routine testing) of sports turf surfaces and open space

recreational areas are critical initiatives in turf management and decision-making. Auditing plays a significant role in identifying areas that require attention, such as those that are vulnerable to wear and tear, erosion, pest infestation, and other issues that could compromise the turf's quality or strength. Benchmarking, on the other hand, involves comparing the performance data over time at a single facility or comparing one sports facility against another (maintained by the same client) and/or best practice. Benchmarking data provides insights into the facility's strengths and weaknesses, enabling stakeholders to identify areas to focus on to improve overall performance. By carrying out auditing and benchmarking, facility managers can identify areas that require attention and adjust their management plans accordingly to optimise performance. They can also use their data to assist with fine-tuning annual turf maintenance plans and budgeting.

ASTC has audited sports fields across numerous councils across Australia which has allowed them to increase their annual turf maintenance budget enabling them to maintain safe and playable sports fields for their community. The data and subsequent recommendations provided by ASTC highlighted areas that were under-budgeted and where greater resources or planning was needed for the sports fields or facilities to meet best practices.

At ASTC, we are committed to providing our clients with the highest quality independent turf consultancy services beyond those listed in this article. Please visit our website www.ASTCs.com.au or contact us today to find out how we can help you achieve the optimal turf surface for your facility.