

Funding go-ahead for sport precinct

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THE Centennial Park Sporting Precinct development is to proceed after nearly 50 years of discussion.

This follows the City of Albany receiving \$8.25 million this week from round four of the Regional Development Australia Fund after a failed attempt in the previous round.

Albany Mayor Dennis Wellington said the funding announcement ensured the \$27.15m project was fully funded.

He expected the "first shovels in the ground" in October.

"This is straight out good news for Albany and the region," he said. "This project is going to happen."

"We can now go to heritage discussion and public consultation."

"We have been talking about this for at least 50 years."

Mr Wellington said delays in gaining the final funding required had helped greater community consultation with the 12 sporting groups and the Albany Agricultural Society.

As a result, they have already signing off on plans for the 80-hectare facility which have been under consideration since 2006.

The RDA money adds to \$4m from the Department of Sport and Recreation and \$4m to be provided by the City, most through on-site work.

The project began when the Community Sporting and Recreation Facilities Fund provided \$8m in 2008 which went towards an initial study, the Albany Leisure and Aquatic Centre and the upgrade to the North Road soccer fields.

Stage two of the area's redevelopment began recently when \$608,000 was provided.

This helped the City solve major drainage problems, with work recently completed at the precinct.

Added to this is the Living Stream Project that converted a stormwater channel to mimic the characteristics of a natural stream capable of safely conveying large flows as part of the precinct project.

This was funded with help by a grant of \$195,000 from the Regional and Local Community Infrastructure Program Round Three.

Mr Wellington said the Centennial Park Precinct project would transform community sport and recreation facilities in Albany.

It would encourage greater participation in outside activities and provide a much-needed space for hosting elite sporting events, some-

thing not available in the region.

The redeveloped facility could be completed in time for the beginning of the Anzac Centenary commemorations and assist in the region's capacity to host the expected influx of visitors.

The three-precinct project includes:

- A new centrepiece oval with a grandstand and purpose-built community facility capable of hosting a range of sporting, cultural and community events;
- Repositioning of soccer, football and cricket ovals;
- Power and lighting upgrades;
- New multi-user clubroom for cricket and soccer;
- Public amenities, cycle and walking paths, car parking and landscaping upgrades to improve the amenity of the park; and
- Children's playgrounds and community park.

Other components already completed are the hockey turf, youth centre and its precinct comprising an open BMX track, new skate track and freeform dirt jumping track.

The Centennial Park oval was officially opened in 1927 and is one of the Great Southern's most used and central sporting grounds.

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