

Matter Arising from the Sports Advisory Meeting Minutes - 8 April 2026

Proposed Renaming of the Bill Ashley Grandstand.

Background

William “Bill” Ashley was born near Hay, where he received his early education. He and his brother enlisted in the Australian Army and served in South Africa during the Boer War. Upon returning to Australia, Ashley commenced work with the Sydney tramways and later became an official of the Tramways Union. He subsequently moved to Lithgow, where he operated a hairdressing and tobacconist business and held a billiard licence.

Ashley entered local government in 1911 as an alderman of Lithgow Council, serving almost continuously until his election to federal Parliament. He was elected Mayor of Lithgow in 1929 and again in 1935. His contribution to the community was recognised with the naming of the Ashley Grandstand in 1937 and Ashley Park in 1958.

Ashley joined the Australian Labor Party in Lithgow and served as campaign manager for J. B. Chifley’s first federal campaign in 1925. In 1937 he was selected by the NSW Labor Party as a Senate candidate, subsequently winning election and filling a casual vacancy to take his seat at the next sitting of the Senate.

Barry Rushworth, a proud product of Lithgow, rose through the ranks of his local rugby league club before joining the Parramatta Eels at age 21. Within a year he was selected for the NSW state side and later earned international honours as part of the 1964 Kangaroo Tour. He played eight seasons in Parramatta’s top grade between 1964 and 1971 before returning briefly to country football.

In 1974, Rushworth was part of the Western Division team that famously defeated Penrith 6–2 to win the Amco Cup—one of rugby league’s most celebrated underdog victories. Following his playing career, Rushworth remained deeply connected to the Lithgow community, coaching local teams, operating hotels in Lithgow and Wallerawang, and quietly supporting local sporting organisations for decades until his retirement in 2022.

Given his lifelong association with Lithgow, his national sporting achievements, and his enduring contribution to the local community, it is proposed that the Bill Ashley Grandstand be renamed in honour of Barry Rushworth. This proposal is not intended to diminish the legacy of William “Bill” Ashley. Rather, it recognises that the grandstand may now appropriately honour a contemporary local sporting figure whose career was forged on the very ground the structure overlooks.

MOTION

That Council:

1. Proceed to rename the Bill Ashley Grandstand as the Barry Rushworth Grandstand, subject to community comment consistent with Policy 10.3 Naming of Council Facilities.
2. Place the proposal on public exhibition for a period of 28 days prior to the matter returning to Council to consider community comments at the next available Council meeting.
3. Undertake efforts to contact any living relatives of William "Bill" Ashley to inform them of the proposal and provide an opportunity for comment.
4. Upon approval of the renaming of the grandstand, install an appropriate plaque or information board at an agreed location near the grandstand acknowledging the life and achievements of William "Bill" Ashley, including reference to the grandstand's original name.