

## Nomination for the NZRA Outstanding Award 2011

### **Rolleston Community/Recreation Centre – Outstanding Recreation Facility**



*The hub of our community!*

<b>Category:</b>	<b>Outstanding Recreation Facility</b>
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# Nomination for the NZRA Outstanding Recreation Facility Award 2011

## ROLLESTON COMMUNITY / RECREATION CENTRE - CREATING A “COMMUNITY HEART” IN A SMALL TOWN

### What is the Rolleston Community / Recreation Centre ?

The Rolleston Community / Recreation Centre opened in April 1999. It contains a sports stadium (one basketball court, one volleyball court, one netball court, four badminton courts), a high ropes course suspended from the stadium roof, a stage for performances and presentations, a functions lounge with fully equipped kitchen and bar facilities, a community meeting and activity room with adjacent kitchenette, and a Fitness Centre with a wide range of exercise equipment. It is co-located with the Rolleston Library and a youth park, which offer opportunities for joint activities and programmes. The Centre is open seven days a week (Monday to Friday 8.30am to 10pm, weekends 8.30am to 4.30pm).

The Centre's design and construction was a community initiative, driven and managed by a voluntary committee. The Centre is built on reserve land vested to the Selwyn District Council and leased to the Rolleston Residents Association, which owns the facility. Until 2009 the voluntary committee undertook all aspects of the management of the Centre. There is a huge sense of pride and ownership in Rolleston that the community worked together to envisage and build such a (then) state of the art and progressive facility for their local community.

Since 1990 Selwyn District has had unprecedented population growth and is now the fastest growing territorial authority in New Zealand, with a current population of 38,000. Rolleston township has grown in the last 10 years from a sleepy 1,100 residents to over 7,000 today. People value the lifestyle and feeling of safety and the town currently is a drawcard for families, particularly those with young children, and older people retiring from farms around the district. Canterbury's recent earthquakes have also made the town popular with Christchurch residents seeking to move to more stable land.

Council's Community Services Manager, Lesley Symington, recalls her first visit to the centre in 2008. *“I had thought that something called a “community centre” would be a small facility made up of meeting rooms. Hence my surprise when I discovered a fully fledged recreation centre, complete with a sports stadium, climbing wall and gym! I had observed lots of young mums and tots and older people about the town during the day but the Centre was hardly used until clubs came in after 4pm to run their own activities”.*

The rapid growth in Rolleston, with a number of developers active in different parts of the town creating unconnected developments, has meant that the town has no real centre. There was therefore an opportunity to turn the Rolleston Community/Recreation Centre into the “hub” of the Rolleston community.

The Voluntary Management Committee, looking for a future direction, had commissioned a recreation consultancy to develop a Strategic Plan for the Centre in 2008 and this led to the adoption of the vision “Rolleston Community Centre – the hub of our community!” Council Community Services staff then worked with the committee on what this would mean in reality, resulting on a focus on community recreation programming rather than purely club use and reducing the focus on commercial hires as the means to making the Centre financially viable in the longer term.

In 2009 the Selwyn District Council took over the operational management of the Centre. An elected community committee, the Rolleston Community / Recreation Centre Committee, meets regularly to discuss governance and strategic issues with the Council-employed Community Centre staff.

The Centre rapidly moved from having just three community recreation programmes to fifteen and today (3 years later) offers 25 programmes per week, plus provides a home for 19 clubs and groups, ranging from the Rolleston Football Club, to Probus, the Newcomers Group and the Girl Guides. The Centre is now at capacity. It hums with activity and has truly become the hub of the Rolleston community, a home particularly for families, children, young people and newcomers to the town. And for the first time in its 11 years of operation the Centre made a profit at the end of the 2010/11 financial year.

## **What does the Rolleston Community / Recreation Centre do?**

The Centre serves the community in three broad ways:

### **1 – A venue for local groups / clubs to meet**

In 2010/2011 the Centre was the regular meeting / activity centre for the local Girl Guides, Keas, Pippins, Scouts, Brownies, St John, Bahai Club, Probus, Appetite For Life, Badminton Club, Weight Watchers, Roller Derby Club, Playgroup, Indoor Bowls Club, Ju Jitsu Club, Iconz For Girls, School Of Dance, Youth Group, Day Club, Newcomers Group, Netball Club, Roller Skating Group, Scrabble Club, Indoor Soccer Group, Grace Baptist Church, Apostolic Community Church, Kiwi Mums, Women's Issues Group, Residents Association and the Wellspring Café.

### **2 – A provider of recreation programmes for the community**

In 2010/2011 the Centre offered programmes specifically for pre-schoolers (Baby Gym, Mini Gym, Sing n Jive for Under 5s), school children after school (Basketball, ZumbAtomic and Roller Skating), seniors (Active Seniors and Move It To Music) and people with disabilities (a range of specialist and integrated sports). This was in addition to a general programme that included Zumba, Pump Fitness, Circuit, Step, Table Tennis, Mind and Body, Tai Chi, Wine Tastings and Golf.

### **3 – A venue for casual or individual recreation**

Individual members of the community purchase Fitness Centre memberships that enable them to have access to the Fitness Equipment at the times that best suit them. Individuals also book the Centre facilities for birthday parties (children and adults), wedding receptions and services, funerals and other important occasions. When the stadium is not in use by either a club or a Centre programme then small groups or young people can drop in to shoot hoops or play other indoor activities.

### **4 – In addition to these roles the Centre also has two additional and important functions:**

- a) The function venue side of the Centre is supplemented by some commercial hire to external organisations. These contribute to the Centre's financial performance but remain secondary to the hub of the community role.
- b) During the recent pandemic and earthquake emergencies the Centre served as the local Emergency Response and Welfare Centre.



## AREAS OF ACHIEVEMENT

The Rolleston Community / Recreation Centre makes this application based on its success in **turning an under-utilised community facility into the vibrant heart of Rolleston in just 3 years, resulting in innovative programming, business performance and high levels of engagement with its local community.**

### 1 – Innovation

When the District Council took on the operational management of the Centre there was little in the way of community recreation. Council staff initiated a recreation programme from scratch, liaising with the community about recreation needs and seeking tutors from the local community. The programme started with fitness classes and later expanded into specific activities for different groups (pre-schoolers, seniors etc). The programme now also incorporates lifestyle classes and classes held at other venues as outreach programmes. The Centre offers a huge variety of activities which reflect the ages and stages of its local community.

### 2 – Community Engagement

The Rolleston Community / Recreation Centre aims to be the hub of its community. In order to achieve this Centre staff need to be responsive to, and pro-actively engage with, the local community.

The initial programming at the Centre was based on the community feedback gathered during the consultation for the Strategic Plan and since then regular feedback is gathered from programme participants and people coming through the Centre (eg library users).

The Centre actively supports local clubs by ensuring that space is made available for them to conduct their meetings and activities in the facility. The Centre also charges local clubs a venue hire rate that is on average less than 40% of the standard rate for other users.

Wherever possible the Centre hires local businesses and individuals to teach the recreation programme. Some recent examples of this have included the wine tastings (run in conjunction with six local wineries), roller skating (in conjunction with a local business), golf and table tennis (both with local clubs).

There are three tenants based in the Centre whose use of the facility is heavily subsidised. They are the local officer from the Canterbury Youth Transition Service (assisting students to move on from school to either employment or higher education), a Green Prescription consultant (assisting people to get back into exercise) and the local Community Radio station (initiated by the local Youth Group with the support of the Council Youth Advisor).

The elected Centre Committee meets formally six times a year with the Centre Manager and other relevant Council staff. This group provides useful guidance and feedback from the community on Centre activities, future initiatives and developments and on the vision and long term direction of the facility.

Centre staff, including the Manager, are highly visible and accessible at the front desk of the building. They maintain frequent and informal dialogue with all of the Centre's many users which is the most useful engagement of all.

With the past year's damage to many recreation venues in Christchurch and the closure of the Christchurch CBD which was a workplace for thousands from the Selwyn District, many residents have been turning to the Centre for activities to relieve stress and to feel part of their local community.

### **3 – Excellence**

At the end of each term participants in the recreation programme are surveyed to find out what they thought of the activity, the tutor and the venue.

<b>The average rating for our tutors was</b>	<b>9.3</b>
<b>The average rating value for money was</b>	<b>9.2</b>
<b>The average rating for informative was</b>	<b>9.0</b>
<b>The average rating for enjoyability was</b>	<b>9.1</b>
<b>The average rating for the venue was</b>	<b>9.5</b>

Staff are highly qualified in recreation and fitness and receive in-house training in health and safety and customer service.

The Centre has become the model for Selwyn District programming and the learnings from this have been used in establishing the recreation programme at the new Lincoln Event Centre which opened in May 2011.

### **4 – Achievement**

While dealing with a background of staff and users struggling with the effects of the Canterbury earthquakes, the performance of the Centre in the last 12 months has been outstanding as the following usage statistics demonstrate:

- 8,388 people participated in programmes
- 5,979 hours worth of room occupancy (this with only three rooms – stadium, lounge and community room – for hire)
- 29 consecutive weekends where the Centre hosted one (or more) one-off private, community or corporate event
- 20 – 25 programmes (on average) offered each term
- 30 different club bookings (on average) each week

The Centre has truly become the heart of the Rolleston community.

### **5 – Efficiency and Effectiveness**

The Centre is funded by a targeted rate of \$203,000 per annum, plus revenue from programmes, hires and fitness centre memberships. Total revenue for the 2010/11 financial year was \$351,383 and expenditure \$302,353.

For the first time last financial year the Centre made a profit after 11 years of operation. Highlights were:

- Programme revenue exceeded budget by \$22,000 (56%)
- Fitness Centre Memberships exceeded budget by \$4,000 (16%)
- Facility hire revenue exceeded budget by \$14,000 (35%)

### **6 – Sustainability**

The 2011/2012 budget for the Centre is the first to actually forecast a surplus and given current levels of usage and participation this is now a realistic prospect.

Given the importance of the facility in the local community, within the context of the fastest growing district in the country, the Council is now planning for a replacement Centre within 5-10 years.