League star tackles big health issue

FORMER rugby league hardman Mark Geyer returned to his old stomping ground on Thursday to put Western Sydney primary school students through their paces.

The Fair Go For The West ambassador is passionate about lowering obesity rates, using footy to promote health, fitness and sport.

Around 38 Whalan Public School students beat the heat to kick a footy with Geyer at Whalan Reserve.

"I love the fact that this campaign is giving us an opportunity to show how good the west is," he said.

A 2013 health study revealed that 27 per cent of Western Sydney residents were obese and 33 per cent overweight.

Assistant principal Lee Mackenzie said personalities such as Geyer motivated the kids to get more active.

"First (they want) to see Mark Geyer and play lots of sport and have some fun," she said.

Geyer and Amart donated 10 footballs and all the training gear to the school for their own use.

Tonight our Fair Go for the West campaign culminates in a gala dinner in Liverpool.

Legend calls for upgrade

Danielle Jarvis

WHALAN Reserve is long overdue for an upgrade, according to former NRL star Mark "MG" Geyer.

The former Penrith Panther returned to the reserve last week and said he was surprised the grounds hadn't changed at all since he played junior sport 40 years ago.

"This is the oval I played my first ever rugby league game on in 1974, so that's 41 years ago," Mr Geyer said. "I was five and basically it hasn't changed one bit. I'd love something to be done with these ovals to make them more attractive."

"There are thousands and thousands of parents and kids who use them every year."

Mr Geyer said if the grounds were to receive an upgrade it would encourage sports clubs and event organisers to use them.

A Blacktown Council spokeswoman said there was an $11 million master plan to upgrade the grounds, however a date had not yet been set for works.

Mr Geyer said the grounds needed shade and the amenities needed upgrading.

"If you look around me now there's not much respite from the sun, there's no shaded areas," he said. "The amenity blocks are the same as the ones I used when I was a kid."

The reserve is also the home ground of the Cougars Cricket Club.

President David Smith said the team would not let their wives or girlfriends use the toilets.

"They're filthy," Mr Smith said. "I think it would be nice to have a decent amenities block."

Mr Geyer said the grounds had potential if they were upgraded.

"I just think that this could be one of the ovals that, with a bit of sprucing up, could be one of the main hubs for kids' sport in the western suburbs of Sydney," Mr Geyer said.

The spokesman said the masterplan included a new regional-scale amenities building, two additional change rooms, storage area for turf cricket fields and turf practice cricket wickets, with $2.5 million set aside for these works.

The remaining $8.5 million had not yet been allocated.

What does Whalan Reserve need? #theshredout