

The Auckland Irish Society  
Report to Eden Albert Local Board  
October 2017



President: Bridie Murphy  
Vice President: Raewyn Goodwin  
Past President: Kevin McCaffrey

## Contents

1. Purpose of this report
2. History of The Auckland Irish Society
3. Acquisition of Fowlds Park Lease
4. Current Users and Arrangements
5. Investment by the Irish Society
6. Future Plans
7. An Invitation

## 1. Purpose of this report

Our reason for providing this report is to inform the Local Board of the current arrangements concerning those community groups using our facilities and to dispel some long-standing misunderstandings about our tenants and user groups. We would also welcome the opportunity to meet with the Board to present this information and respond to any questions you may have.

## 2. History of the Auckland Irish Society

The Auckland Irish Society was founded in 1912 as a means for immigrants to socialise and support each other on their arrival to New Zealand. Over the years the society has evolved to become a vital part of the Auckland community and seen as the lead body for “all things Irish” with over 600 members in the region.

Our purpose is stated in our 2017 annual return to Charity Services thus:

Legal Name of Entity:	The Auckland Irish Society Incorporated
Type of Entity and Legal Basis (if any):	Incorporated Society and Registered Charity
Registration Number:	CC37955
Entity's Purpose or Mission:	
The aims of Auckland Irish Society are:	
(a) To foster and develop in all those of Irish descent in New Zealand, and those with an interest in and a love for Ireland, any movement that will convey with accuracy the political, religious and cultural history of Ireland, her ideals and her customs;	
(b) To make known the facts regarding the position of Ireland;	
(c) To link up with kindred organisations at home and in other countries;	
(d) To cater for, to the best of it's ability, the welfare requirements of it's members and create goodwill among the members and the wider community;	
(e) To assist to the best of its ability any of its members who may require help; and	
(f) To provide Sporting, Recreational, Cultural and Educational activities for all members of the Society and the wider Community with an Irish interest.	

For many years we were in our own building on Great North Road which when sold in 2006 saw the club without a home, moving to a number of venues until taking up a temporary place at Rocky Nook Bowls in Fowlds Park. This arrangement was only on a casual hire basis without formal agreements or rents put in place.

## 3. Acquisition of Fowlds Park Lease

In 2009 The Auckland Irish Society (AIS) and Rocky Nook Bowls (RNB) entered into an agreement whereby the AIS would purchase the buildings owned by RNB and jointly approach Auckland City Council (ACC) to request the ground lease be transferred to AIS.

In our submissions to the ACC Community Board we undertook to provide a sub-lease to RNB, upgrade the facilities at our own expense and make our premises available to more community groups.

In 2011 ACC granted the AIS a five-year lease with two renewals; a total of 15 years. As part of the agreement RNB were granted a matching sublease.

The existing tenants; Spark/ Mapura Inc and Aotearoa Martial Arts Inc had their leases continue unchanged until the end of their respective terms. At that time, in agreement with Auckland Council (and at their insistence) the leases were replaced with rental agreements on the same conditions but with differing lengths of terms and notice. At this point in time Mapura remain as tenants on a three-year rental agreement with a right of renewal. Aotearoa Martial Arts Inc absconded in April 2017 with rents, insurance and water monies still owing.

## Lease History

The history of the Rocky Nook Bowls lease and its tenants is long running, convoluted and misinformed. The following is a summary of facts based on documents produced by RNB.

- 1956 The first lease was granted to RNB and renewed for 21 years in 1978
- 1979 Sublease was granted to Mt Albert Bridge Club on “normal commercial terms”
- 1999 Auckland Council grant lease for 5x3 years. Council instructed Simpson Grierson to draft sublease documents for existing tenants Panacea Arts and John Bing Muat Thai Boxing Gym. Council approved rents, terms and conditions.
- 2011 Auckland Council issue lease to AIS who continue tenancy arrangements as described above.
- 2012 Auckland Council approve new rental agreements for tenants.

For the avoidance of doubt, we wish to dispel some misinformation that appear to exist:

- The subleases put in place under RNB were drafted by Simpson Grierson under the instructions of Council; not RNB’s lawyers.
- The rent of \$ 600 per month, insurance and water payments using a formula on space occupied was set by Council; not RNB.
- These were renewed in 2004 at the same rates by RNB.
- These rates were retained in 2012 by AIS in the new tenant rental agreements.
- Mapura operate 7 days per week; effectively less than \$ 150 per week.

This means tenants such as Aotearoa Martial Arts, Panacea Arts, Spark, Mapura have paid the same rent since 1999 with the increases only caused by rising water and insurance costs.

## 4. Current users and arrangements

The following table provides a summary of current users and their arrangements with AIS.

Organisation	Term	Arrangements
Rocky Nook Bowls	Sublease 5x3 under AIS lease	See below
Mapura	3-year rental agreement + renewal Main Pavilion use is free	Exclusive use of Art Studio For other therapies / users
Auckland United Softball	Annual term, year-round usage	No rental paid
AIS Indoor Bowls Inc	Permanent rights free	Separate but related entity
Gaelic Athletic Assn	Free usage: junior sports, meetings	Private Hire for events
Irish Dancing Schools	Set Hire dates through year	Nominal charge to cover costs
Mandolinata Orchestra	Set Hire dates through year	Nominal charge to cover costs
<b>Charity Events e.g.</b>	Includes a range of events	
Pink Ribbon Breakfast		Free hire and staffing
<b>Private Hires – e.g.</b>	Selected events only	e.g. we avoid 18’s and 21 <sup>st</sup> s
Auckland Council	Casual and repeat hires	Private hire rates
Commercial entities	Casual and repeat hires	Private hire rates
Family events	Special events, anniversaries	Private hire rates
Member private events	Special events, anniversaries	Member Rates
<b>Irish Club main events</b>		
St Patricks Day	Annual event	Free to Public
Summer Family day	Annual event	Free to Public
Community Fair Day	Annual event	Free to Public
Summer Bowls Event	Annual event	Open to Public
Children’s Xmas Party	Annual event	Free to members
Senior Citizen’s Party	Annual event	Free to members
Club Sunday	Monthly	Free to members and guests
Friday night drop in	Weekly	Free to members and guests
Cultural events	Concerts, commemorations etc	Guests a door charge

### **Rocky Nook Sublease**

As part of the sale and purchase agreement for the buildings owned by RNB, AIS have agreed to make an annual payment to cover the operating costs of RNB. This was to ensure they remain a financially viable club and to support their growth from a base of some 30 members.

The current payment is \$ 48 788 plus additional payments for water of some \$2000 making the annual payment in excess of \$50 000 plus GST. This a non-reducible amount for the 15-year period of the sublease. In return AIS own the buildings and have the confidence to invest in their redevelopment.

### **Auckland United Softball Association**

AUSA has a long and successful history in Fowlds park as a championship club and producer of many Black Socks. Since 2013 they have made our main pavilion their home clubrooms for children's through to senior games and the hosting of visiting teams. The arrangement has been a major success for both AUSA and the Irish Club and provides a permanent home for a major sport.

### **Gaelic Athletic Association**

The GAA is a rapidly growing sport in the Auckland region with 6 clubs catering for Men's, Women's and Children's teams. Although senior games are not played on Fowlds Park fields, youth and children's training and development sessions are held on the Irish Club green. In addition, the clubrooms are used for all GAA committee meetings.

## **5. Investment by the Irish Society**

Since taking over the lease we have undertaken a major upgrade of the buildings and facilities to bring the building up to code and improve aesthetics both externally and internally. To date this totals some \$1 000 000 and has been funded from members capital reserves and minor grants from the Irish Abroad Cultural Fund provided by the Irish Government. These works have included:

#### **External**

- Painting of main pavilion
- New roof on main pavilion
- Fencing of external areas for children's safety
- New access stairs from carpark
- Improved security and lighting in car park
- Upgraded drainage

#### **Internal**

- New toilets including accessible and family facilities
- New commercial kitchen
- New heating and air conditioning – there was none
- New bar facilities
- Re-carpet and flooring
- Repaint interior
- New tables and chairs
- New audio-visual equipment
- New fire and security systems

#### **Mapura Studio Building**

- Upgrade and level floor
- New accessible toilets
- New kitchen facilities
- New washroom for equipment

### **Playground and play area**

Building of children's playground for members, visitors and neighbourhood use

Upgrade of grassed playing area for members, visitors and neighbourhood use

### **Lower level of Main Pavilion**

The area was formerly for the exclusive of Aotearoa Martial Arts. This meant it was underutilised and other community groups were unable to make use of the space and storage.

Currently we are spending an additional \$ 200 000 on a major upgrade. As we have previously found, each time you upgrade an old building the requirements to bring it up to standard are significant.

This involves:

New toilets, accessible toilet and shower

New kitchen

Heating and ventilating – there is none

Relaying concrete floors with approved damp proofing

New steel beams to reinforce the structure

New fire rating insulation and sound proofing between floors

Rewiring electrical systems

New storage area for multiple community users

New security system

This is the final stage of bringing all the buildings up to standard and the building and earthquake code.

## **6. Future**

The promise made to the Community Board and Council when we received the lease was to:

- Ensure the ongoing support of Rocky Nook Bowls
- Upgrade the facilities with AIS funds
- Make the facilities available to community groups
- Contribute to the wider community of Auckland

We believe we have met all our obligations.

### **Community groups**

We are now actively seeking expressions of interest from community groups for use of our facilities on a casual or long-term basis.

### **Financial position**

Our current financial performance is not sustainable.

The Auckland Irish Society is trading at a significant loss per annum; in the region of \$ 50 000 for year end March 2016 and \$ 30 000 for year ending March 2017. We are currently undertaking a review of operations with a view to increase commercial revenues, increase community group involvement and reduce costs.

As previously noted we do not apply for or receive grants from Community or Gaming trusts. We have received one grant of \$5 000 for our Local Board for an event and applied for no other Council grants.

We understand that the Local Board intends to place the AIS on a Hybrid Lease in 2020. We believe this will only contribute to our current losses and request you consider this carefully in light of our financial circumstances. Our financials are available to Council and are fully disclosed in our annual return to Charitable services.

**An Invitation**

With the completion of the upgrade of the main Pavilion we invite the Local Board to the opening of this facility for community groups in November; and to assist us in publicise expressions of interest as per our previous letter to the Chairman. In addition, it will enable a dialogue between our organisations for the benefit of both.