

Call for field upgrades

By **TUREI MACKEY**
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SPORTS clubs plagued with wet and boggy fields over winter are hoping to get a decent cut of the \$87.5 million funding boost from Auckland Council to upgrade playing grounds.

The addition takes funding for improvements to sports fields over the next 10 years to \$172.8m.

How much has been earmarked for the west is still unclear but

sports teams in the area say moving and cancelling games is frustrating.

New Lynn's Suburbs rugby chairman Stefan Crooks says the community needs more upgraded fields to ensure future players get an opportunity to play and improve.

"Our club has had a large junior intake, about 43 percent, and ground improvements would mean the kids would have fewer cancellations throughout winter which is nothing but a positive," he says.

Glenora Bears rugby league club chairman Paddy Burgoyne says park improvements are needed for more game time across all ages.

He says it's not just the juniors missing out with Glenora's premier team forced to move a home game at Harold Moody Park to Jack Colvin Park this year because of ground restrictions.

Strategy and finance committee chairwoman Penny Webster says there is an increasing demand across Auckland to provide playing

surfaces that can handle regular use.

"The community has told us loud and clear that during winter it is frustrating that our sports fields are often closed because they have become too wet," she says.

"With this significant boost in budget we are going to be able to rectify the supply and demand problems we are facing."

West Auckland councillor Sandra Coney says the original proposal was for extra funding of \$103m,

taking the total pool up to \$188.3m. This would have tagged \$10.3m for the 2012/13 financial year.

Ms Coney says under council's latest proposal the region's sports fields will get just \$2.7m in the first year.

"Some of us are disappointed that the funding starts so slowly. Children who want to play sport are waiting weeks to get on the field and we aren't going to get the benefit of the funding as quickly as I think we should."