

Pickleball on the grow

If you haven't heard of pickleball... where have you been? The fastest-growing sport in Australia, there are 1800 members of Northern Beaches Pickleball with 11 official venues, including Narrabeen, Warriewood and Oxford Falls. Courts are also available in Mona Vale and Avalon, and a huge development to create a pickleball 'arena' is underway in Cromer.

Invented in the 1960s, the sport has grown dramatically in recent years - and not just in Australia. Played on a smaller tennis court with a 'paddle' rather than a racquet, it allows for more rallies than tennis for the average player.

Latest to offer the sport is Pittwater RSL, with 'Sip & Pickle' - the Northern Beaches' first purpose-built pickleball destination. Featuring five outdoor courts, it aims to blend sport with premium club hospitality.

Inspired by Miami's 'Sip & Pickle' culture, the courts showcase vibrant, colourful designs with striking street artwork by local artist Harley Stevenson along the surrounding walls and walkway.

The courts open Sunday 2 November from 12pm, and the Club hopes to provide a new social experience that goes



way beyond the game itself.

"We've built something unique. Our courts are the only ones of their kind on the Beaches, combined with direct access to premium food and beverage, undercover seating and full Club facilities," says Pittwater RSL CEO Jason Manning.

"You can make an afternoon of it with a group of friends or workmates. That's the difference."

While competitive players are welcome, Pittwater's focus is really about the social pickleball experience that the broader community can enjoy. Think barefoot bowls vibe with enough exer-

cise to work up a thirst.

"We're targeting the players who are here for fun, fitness, and connection," Mr Manning explains. "It's social sport done properly."

Equipment is also available for hire and bookings aren't yet necessary, so turn up and enjoy the fun without needing to bring loads of kit. Although if you love it, then private event bookings and bookings for Christmas parties are available.

Courts are open from 10am until late seven days a week and are just part of the redevelopment project Pittwater RSL is undertaking.

"This is about setting new standards for what a community club can be," Mr Manning says. "We're creating spaces that honour our RSL heritage while delivering world-class hospitality and recreation."

A special launch day on Sunday 2 November (from 12pm) features free pickleball clinics hosted by the Northern Beaches Pickleball Association for all skill levels, live music, kids' entertainment, a family BBQ and a chance to play Australia's fastest-growing sport.

- Rob Pegley



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