



**Court hockey:** Kings Langley Hockey Club players (from left) Thomas, Neridah and Patrick practise their skills on a tennis court.

Picture: Michael Szabath

## Council one, hockey zero

By Callan Lawrence

BLACKTOWN Council was recently called to determine which should come first — the hockey field or the hockey players.

It opted for the latter.

Citing dwindling player numbers as a reason not to build a new synthetic hockey field — at a cost of up to \$3.1 million — the council resolved there should be hockey players first.

There is no purpose-built hockey field in the Blacktown local government area.

And with only two clubs in the area and 207 residents involved in the sport, councillors decided the investment was too expensive.

Representatives of the two clubs in Blacktown were pragmatic about the decision and agreed the sport's preference for synthetic-grass surfaces created a shortage of fields.

That, they said, had turned many away from the sport.

A spokesman for Rooty Hill RSL Soccer Club said the lack of synthetic fields in Blacktown was "absolutely holding the sport back".

Juniors with the Kings Langley Hockey Club train on tennis courts in Lalor Park and travel to Ryde, Pennant Hills, Ku-ring-gai or Central Sydney for games.

Club president Lyn O'Reilly said the move to synthetic fields meant councils responsible for providing and maintaining grass sport fields could no longer afford to provide hockey fields.

"My personal belief is the issue has arisen from the change to synthetic fields and the cost to support those facilities," she said.

Ms O'Reilly said other sports that use synthetic fields were tennis, gridiron, soccer and lacrosse.