



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE  
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY**

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION  
AND COMMUNITY INCLUSION**

(Reference: [Inquiry into Skateboarding and Skate Parks in the ACT](#))

**Members:**

**MR M PETERSSON (Chair)  
MR J DAVIS (Deputy Chair)  
MS N LAWDER**

**PROOF TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE**

**CANBERRA**

**THURSDAY, 9 NOVEMBER 2023**

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**Secretary to the committee:  
Ms K Langham (Ph: 620 75498)**

**By authority of the Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory**

Submissions, answers to questions on notice and other documents, including requests for clarification of the transcript of evidence, relevant to this inquiry that have been authorised for publication by the committee may be obtained from the Legislative Assembly website.

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## **Privilege statement**

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*Amended 20 May 2013*

**The committee met at 11.02 am.**

**JOHNSTON, DR DANIEL**, Academic Course Adviser, Design, and Lecturer,  
Design, Western Sydney University

**THE CHAIR:** Good morning, and welcome to this public hearing of the education and community inclusion committee inquiry into skateboarding and skate parks in the ACT. The committee today will hear from witnesses across two sessions. During our first session we will hear from Dr Dan Johnston, from Western Sydney University, representatives of Canberra Region Old School Skaters, Mr Tony Caruana and Mr Brenden Wood from the Canberra Skateboarding Association, and Mr Nick Hannan from AusCycling. Later today we will be joined by the Minister for Sport and Recreation, Minister Berry, and officials.

The committee wishes to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land we are meeting on, the Ngunnawal people. The committee wishes to acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of this city and this region. We would also like to acknowledge and welcome other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who may be attending today's event.

The proceedings today are being recorded and transcribed by Hansard and will be published. The proceedings are also being broadcast and webstreamed live. When taking a question on notice, it would be very useful if witnesses used these words: "I will take that question on notice." This will help us as a committee and witnesses to confirm questions taken on notice from the transcript.

We now welcome our first witness, Dr Dan Johnston. Doctor, could you please confirm that you are appearing as an individual?

**Dr Johnston:** Yes, I am.

**THE CHAIR:** I also remind you of the protections and obligations afforded by parliamentary privilege and draw your attention to the privilege statement. Witnesses must tell the truth; giving false or misleading evidence will be treated as a serious matter and may be considered a contempt of the Assembly. Could you please confirm that you understand the implications of the statement and that you agree to comply with it?

**Dr Johnston:** I agree.

**THE CHAIR:** You are not making an opening statement, so we will go straight to questions. I will lead off. In your submission you mention that governments often design and manage skating facilities within a sporting facilities framework rather than an urban design framework. This is particularly pertinent to the ACT, in that we have the minister for sport appearing today to talk about skate parks. Could you explain the differences in these approaches and how this would impact skate parks in Canberra?

**Dr Johnston:** In the research in which I have taken part, my primary focus was to look at or do a geographic review of skate parks—not just in Canberra, although they

were included in my study. I did find that there was a propensity for skate parks to be located in green spaces and sporting precincts. Could you repeat the question?

**THE CHAIR:** What is the difference between a sporting facilities framework and an urban design framework?

**Dr Johnston:** I would see a sporting facilities framework as being a framework that located the skate park within that sporting space, within a sporting precinct, whereas an urban framework might situate a skate park within an urban area, such as within a plaza-type environment—more within the built environment of the cityscape.

**THE CHAIR:** Why does that matter?

**Dr Johnston:** I think it matters because there is a cultural element to skateboarding which is more urban related, and there is a disconnect sometimes between the location of a skate park being in a sporting precinct or in a green space, which are sometimes on the fringes of a township, for example, and that cultural element that occurs there. My study researched the ways that skate parks are used for reasons other than skateboarding, and a lot of those uses pointed towards the cultural element that is not necessarily accounted for when situating the skate park within that green space.

**MS LAWDER:** Can you give us any examples of where skate parks are part of a good urban design, either in Australia or overseas? Are you aware of any examples?

**Dr Johnston:** Yes, I visited a skate park in Singapore. I think it was in Orchard Plaza, although I might have to confirm that, if I am able to. On the same day I visited a skate park that followed more of an Australian development model, which was within a green space area.

The skate park located in Orchard was very thriving, very bustling, with lots of pedestrian comings and goings. It was just to the side of an entry to a subway station. There was great access for skate park users to be able to get to and from the park. Based on my recollection, there would have been 60 or 70 people using the park, compared to the much larger park on the outskirts of town, which had only three or four people using the park, on the same day. That is an example that I have experienced overseas.

In Australia, there is a skate park in Newcastle which has been built on the edge of a green space, which is at Bar Beach, but it also has the advantage of being part of the beach community, so it enjoys both worlds. The council was quite specific about wanting the skate park there, because they had the space available for it and they had an old skate park that they were replacing. The actual skateboarding scene benefits from the skate park being located there because you have direct access to the beach and lots of people walking along the foreshore. It creates quite a spectacle. You could say the same about Bondi as well—the location.

**MS LAWDER:** Is it your view that people want to use skate parks that are in a much more urbanised environment, as opposed to having to go to the green space sports area to use it, or is it much more complex than that?

**Dr Johnston:** I think it is more complex than that, but I do have an interest in studying accessibility and whether skate parks that are designed to be more of the urban tapestry are more accessible for the young people who use the space. For example, in Ulladulla, in New South Wales, the skate park is located about three kilometres out of town, past the sewage treatment works and on the edge of the green space. It is not necessarily the type of space that is very safe for a young child to spend a lot of time at by themselves, which is often the case with skate parks. Especially in a township like Ulladulla, which has a strong surfing culture, it seems a shame to remove skateboarding from that culture when they are quite historically intertwined.

I do think that accessibility for young people especially would be greatly increased if it was closer to the urban environment. Also, they would have more access to shops, drinking water, toilets and all of the things that are often not accessible during days on which sporting events are not actually happening at the space where the skate parks are located.

**MS LAWDER:** My next question is about that urban design element. Do you find a space and use the angles and existing structures to then help to build a skate park, rather than needing to have a blank slate and building a skate park from scratch, or can it be either/or? What is the general approach to the urban design of a skate park?

**Dr Johnston:** Traditionally, people who skate in cities will find architecture that is skateable, and that would be a subversive use of the built environment; so it has been built for reasons other than skateboarding, but skateboarders find a way to utilise it for that purpose. Often, skate parks are contrived spaces where they reflect what a skater might seek out in the built environment—for example, stair sets or handrails, just like a skateboard ramp roughly reflects the shape of a wave, which harks back to the surfing culture.

It can be a mix of built environment; it can be a mix of nature. I would say that creating a new skate park in a built environment would not necessarily utilise the existing architecture, although there are cases like South Bank in London, for example, which was an unofficial skate spot that has only recently been sanctioned by the council as being heritage listed for skateboarding. That is famous for using the architecture of the building where the skateboarders congregated over the decades.

**THE CHAIR:** Traditionally, the government might have seen its role, when it comes to skating, as solely the provision of a physical space for a skate park—either, as you said, the local park, or maybe somewhere a bit closer to the centre of town. Is there a further role for government in supporting skating and skate culture above and beyond just building skate parks?

**Dr Johnston:** I think there is a role for government in thinking about what young people especially need when they are in that space, so that they can spend extended time in the space and be safe—things like access to shelter, access to drinking water, access to a toilet and access to getting help if they need help.

One thing that I have found in my studies is that councils are often very willing to provide a skate space for young people, but they do not necessarily consider the

additional infrastructure that is needed to make that a safe space for the people who often spend many hours in a day, and many days in a week, within that space. It is not like a game of tennis or cricket where you come along, play your sport and then leave again. A young person, especially someone who is on the fringes of society, might spend many hours of their day within that space.

**THE CHAIR:** With these examples you refer to that are scattered around the place, and of governments and local councils not necessarily taking a holistic approach to it, why do you think that is the case? Is there a lack of knowledge and awareness?

**Dr Johnston:** Generally, it is a lack of knowledge and awareness, and perhaps a lack of understanding or a lack of appreciation for how the cultural elements of skateboarding work. Skaters have a relationship to skateboarding that is very different. It is deeper than you would expect. A good example of that is in my submission, where I highlight the fact that people often use skate parks as shrines, for example, and memorials for people who have passed away—even going to the poignant point that funeral services have been held at skate parks, not because someone has died at the skate park but because that is a special space for that young person. Often these young people feel more at home at the skate park than they do in their own home; and, for them, that would be their safe space.

**MS LAWDER:** My question touches on a couple of things that you have already said. You mentioned South Bank in London, which was officially sanctioned more recently.

**Dr Johnston:** Yes.

**MS LAWDER:** I have heard from people wanting to use car parks and other potentially private areas, and who get chased off. Is there a role for private areas to allow skateboarding and those types of things, and why do you think there is a reluctance? Is it insurance? What sort of barriers might there be?

**Dr Johnston:** People who are owners of civil infrastructure or in charge of managing civil infrastructure are not necessarily scared of skateboarders but are worried about potential damage that they may cause, or potential lawsuits that they may incur based on having a collision with someone, for example, or maybe even hurting themselves within a space that this person is in charge of, and initiating some kind of lawsuit. My experience is that skateboarding is a fairly non-litigious activity. Even within a skate park area, if somebody injures themselves, it is quite unusual for that to develop into any kind of lawsuit, for example.

There is also an argument that, if a skate park is provided by a council or a government agency, it can allow provision for that governing body to further distract skaters from populating the urban spaces, because they feel as though they have given the young people an area in which to skate; therefore they have the right to ban skateboarding in public spaces.

To answer your question a bit better, I think there is benefit from welcoming skateboarders into public spaces in urban areas, because they do tend to bring an interesting culture and vibrancy to the space. It is not unusual for groups of skateboarders, once they are populating a space, to not only bring energy to it but

deliver almost a degree of policing. We all know that spaces that have people who are actively engaged there tend to become healthy spaces.

**THE CHAIR:** In your submission, you discuss how people with disabilities are increasingly using skate parks. What are some of the key design features or concepts that could be implemented to make these areas more inclusive?

**Dr Johnston:** General accessibility is key, so the act of getting from their car, if they drive there, or catching public transport to the skate park. I have witnessed a few times people who use wheelchairs using skate parks, and that is now recognised as a form of skating. It is about providing a space for people who use wheelchairs to be able to access bowls, or get out of bowls, if that is the space they choose to skate in.

I have spoken to people who have sight impairments who find that, with skate parks that are a flat colour, like a flat grey concrete, it is difficult for them to be able to read the transitions to see where the obstacles are. Skate parks that have different colours designed into them, for them, are much easier to use, for example.

**THE CHAIR:** I think we are out of time. On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank you for your attendance today, Dr Johnston.

**Dr Johnston:** Thank you.



PROOF

**PANG, MS AYESHA**, Canberra Region Old School Skaters  
**TAYLOR, MR SCOTT**, Canberra Region Old School Skaters  
**RAYMER, MR JAMES**, Canberra Region Old School Skaters  
**McMILLAN, MS IMOGEN**, Canberra Region Old School Skaters  
**PANG, MR DAVID FLOYD**, Canberra Region Old School Skaters

**THE CHAIR:** We now welcome representatives of Canberra Region Old School Skaters.

**Ms Pang:** Hello, everyone. My name is Ayesha Pang. I am 28 years old. I live with my wife and cats. I work as a project officer with Canberra Health Services. I have been in Canberra my whole life. I am also a skateboarder. I have been skateboarding throughout my whole life since I was about five or six. Highlights of my career so far have been making many friends, meeting great people and last year I was able to represent Australia at the World Skate Games via slalom skateboarding.

**Mr Taylor:** Yes. I am Scotty Taylor. I am 50 years old. I have a wife and an adult son. I work for CSIRO in the web area and I have been in Canberra for 23 years. I am also a skateboarder and have been skateboarding for 35-odd years. My highlight is running the National Slalom Championships here in Canberra every year.

**Mr Raymer:** James Raymer. I am age 51. I am married, and father of three daughters aged 11, 13 and 17, who also skate with me. I work at the Australian National University. I am a professor of demography. I have lived in Canberra for 11 years. I am also a skateboarder. I have my skateboard shirt here. I skated as a teenager in the 1980s in California and then rediscovered it about four and a half years ago, thanks to my kids. My highlights have been meeting lots of new friends, meeting people my age who skate and becoming a part of the skate community here in Canberra.

**Ms McMillan:** My name is Imogen McMillan. I am a horticultural apprentice. I also attend university and Canberra Institute of Technology. Similarly to everyone else, I am also a skateboarder.

**THE CHAIR:** Kitted out.

**Ms McMillan:** Yes, thank you. I have been skating for around 20 years now. I have two really wonderful highlights. Just this year I competed in the Slalom World Championships in the United States, and I took home the first gold medal for any slalom skateboarder in Australia. But the biggest highlight for me has been as a participant in slalom skateboarding overall because of the culture that it brings to the communities around it.

**Mr Pang:** I am David Pang. I am 58. Married, two adult children and gifted two grandchildren. Professional photographer for the defence force, then at the gallery, and now I work for defence. I grew up in Canberra. Being defence, I travelled around and came back home. I am also a skateboarder and have been skateboarding since I was about 12-years-old. Fortunately, being a photographer, I get to press the flesh with some of the top skateboarders in the world and Australia. Highlights of skateboarding are being with the community and also being involved with CROSS. As you can see, even though we say Old School Skaters, it is a fairly diverse bunch of

people. I suppose I am the spokesperson for CROSS at the moment.

**THE CHAIR:** I remind each of you about the protections and obligations afforded by parliamentary privilege and draw your attention to the privilege statement that should be provided to you—the pink one. Witnesses must tell the truth. Giving false or misleading evidence will be treated as a serious matter and may be considered contempt of the Assembly. Could I get each of you to just confirm quickly that you understand the implications of the statement and that you agree to comply with it?

**Ms Pang:** I understand.

**Mr Taylor:** I understand.

**Mr Raymer:** Yes, I understand.

**Ms McMillan:** I understand.

**Mr Pang:** Understand and agree.

**THE CHAIR:** I will lead off with questions, then I will pass to Ms Lawder. Canberra has a very rich skating history. If you could briefly explain to the committee, and to maybe the wider public listening in who might not know a lot about Canberra's skating history, what are some of the key highlights of Canberra's skating history and why Canberrans should be proud of that skating culture?

**Mr Pang:** I think the Canberra government was very innovative in the 1970s and 1980s and saw the need for an alternative sport, so created Kambah halfpipe, Charnwood and Erindale skate parks. Then there was a commercial park, and when that folded, it continued to build leading edge skate parks, so Canberra became iconic across Australia and around the world. It still produces some great skate parks, and that has built a really good culture of skaters that support it; support the sport; try to do the right things; maintain the skate park; and petition for more parks and facilities. I am not sure if anyone else has anything to say?

**Mr Taylor:** I can probably say something about the history of slalom here over the last 15 or so years. We have become the national event. It is probably the last ten years we have been a sanctioned national event. We run that out of Stromlo, which is just the most fantastic facility for running that race. One of the great things about Stromlo is the low cost of it. We have been able to historically run the race and have as low as 15 participants show up for the event, and as high as, say, 35, 40, and it is still not costly, and is a viable thing for us to run out of that venue.

Recently, we have sent our first people to the world championships, which has been something that has developed over the years. We are the capital of slalom skateboarding—I mean, we are one of the capitals of general skateboarding as well, just due to the proliferation of parks here.

I am from Sydney originally. I got back into skateboarding when I moved to Canberra because there was a skate ramp 100 metres from my house out the back park. That just did not exist in Sydney, and that is that innovation that Dave talks about from a

long time ago. Then, of course, there is the Belconnen restoration. Belconnen was probably the most lauded park in the early 1990s, I think when it came about, and it has really revived skateboarding in Canberra and made it grow.

**THE CHAIR:** Anyone else like to take a bite of the cherry? The importance of skating history in the ACT?

**Ms Pang:** I think one of the big things about skate history is community. I think it has brought a lot of people together. I think it still is. I would not say I am probably old school, but you see a lot more young people now—when I say young, I mean under ten—than you might have in the early 2000s and the 1990s. They are actually skating at a really high level and really confidently. Through that and their shared interest, they are able to create connections and meet people they probably otherwise would not meet due to socioeconomic differences. I just want to say that has been a big part for me throughout this.

**Mr Pang:** Maybe just an added point is the older parks—Charnwood, Kambah and Erindale—are innovative designs, but they are also very well made, so they do not have any construction or structural issues. Fortunately they have stayed, and the ACT government has chosen to keep them there, as they are still destination locations, as well as the newer parks.

**MS LAWDER:** You have mentioned some of the older parks. There are a couple of very small skate parks around. I know in my electorate there is one at Fadden Pines playground and one at—where else am I thinking? Another very small one.

**Mr Pang:** Telopea has a couple of small parks.

**MS LAWDER:** Yes. There is another small one somewhere in Tuggeranong which escapes me at the moment. Conder, outside the YWCA in Lanyon, is the other one I am thinking of. Do you think there is demand there to upgrade and improve those smaller ones, or should the focus be on the bigger, destination-style parks?

**Mr Pang:** I see that there is the opportunity now—following on from the first speaker, and I think the Canberra Skate Association will mention it—with the smaller suburban type areas, there is the opportunity to utilise urban design that includes and factors in safe skateable terrain. So it is a recreational facility for more than just skateboarders, for a range of ages and skill levels, but accommodating a skateable terrain. So someone locally can go from their home, can skate that facility, and when they want to get more serious, or on a weekend, then they can go to a larger destination skate park.

**MS LAWDER:** For younger people, I guess that requires, in a way, the family to go there, or a parent or someone to get the child—

**Mr Pang:** To the larger skate parks?

Potentially, or maybe factoring in the skate parks to be near a public transport corridor. We are thankful for the opportunity of submitting our paper, and we have taken the opportunity to submit a supplementary paper which we presented to the Stromlo Forest Park consultation. To summarise some points from there, I see that somewhere

like Stromlo Forest Park is an opportunity to be Canberra and Australia's extreme sports capital and a centre where a family can go. They can go swimming, they can go mountain biking, they can go cross-country running, and then skateboarding as well and other activities, so it is more of a destination point. If there is public transport there as well, then the young people may be able to get there under their own steam.

**Ms Pang:** I could include something too. By updating urban infrastructure, you make skating available as a means of transport for young people and adults. We are trying to make Canberra less car focused, especially in our new suburbs. By making infrastructure available that is suitable for skateboarding it makes it safer and it makes it applicable for people trying to get to the bus, the light rail or to their workplace. Overall, it makes it much more user friendly for any age group and for the longevity of the sport.

**Ms McMillan:** I would like to add something as well. There was a question previously about skateboarding in private spaces and how the interactions go. As someone that did skateboard when I was quite young, I was lucky enough to be within a 20-minute bike ride of Gungahlin Skate Park. If I did not have that opportunity, or when I was in other locations, my friends and I would go to places such as car parks and things to utilise that space. Having those small spaces that people can get to easily on the way home or to school, rather than having to go on a big trip, especially for a young person, is really convenient and really helpful.

**Mr Raymer:** Can I just raise with you a good example of a street space, that is just around the corner on Constitution Avenue by the olympic pool? You always see skateboarders there. It is a hotspot. It was not designed for skateboarding, but it is perfect for skateboarding. It is pretty safe. It has this nice, smooth long promenade that does not get a lot of traffic, except for maybe commuting hours. They have ledges there that they have unfortunately vandalised, but they made it skateable. It is a great spot for skating and for urban skating. That could be an example—

**MS LAWDER:** The design could have been incorporated into that, in a way.

**Mr Raymer:** It could have been incorporated. It was not, but it has been made into a skate spot, and every day you will see skateboarders down there.

**Ms McMillan:** It is safe for the skateboarders. So often, and I have been someone—it was raised before about private spaces—who has been chased out of spaces. I have also been fortunate enough to be a woman, so when people have realised that I am female, they have been much less aggressive. However, skateboarders want to take care of where they are skating, because it is the same as a footballer wanting good turf to play on of a weekend. If you make it safe for people, they will use the space, and when people can take ownership of a space, as was mentioned by Dr Johnston, they take care of it. They also look out for the people that are in it, whether they are the participants or they are pedestrians. It is then a working community.

**MS LAWDER:** Next question: in your follow-up submission of additional information, you have talked about all-seasons and all-weather facilities for Canberra. Is that as simple as a big sail over it, or you are talking about an indoor space? Can you give me a bit more of an idea of what you are talking about? If it is an indoor

space, are there examples where you have seen this successfully done?

**Mr Pang:** Yes, to everything. Maybe not shade sails, because in wet weather the surface will still be wet. I think Albury Skate Park is one of the better examples where some of the facilities have a Stratco-like corrugated iron roof on it, so even if it is raining, people can use at least part of the facility. There is one sanctioned skate park by the Victorian government that was built under a car pass or bridge area, so the bridge itself gives shelter, and then there are a number of indoor, dedicated, commercial or council-run skate parks. The two I can think of are in Melbourne. One is in Geelong, called the Park, and the other one is called the Shed, which is in Cranbourne. It is a big warehouse with a range of skate facilities.

Given Canberra's extremes of weather, being very cold and potentially wet in winter, and quite hot and dry in summer, having some sort of amenity or facility to allow all weather skating would be good. It would also aid the Canberra Skateboarding Association as they could still do their free skate lessons on weekends even in inclement weather, whereas now, in inclement weather they cancel because there are not the suitable facilities.

**Ms Pang:** Speaking of the private spaces, one of the reasons people do that is people want to be active in all environments. A lot of the time you see the car parks used and they will be private spaces. The reason they are used is that they are in places like the city or around a shopping centre; they have multiple layers of cover; and there will often be a part that is not as utilised. So by providing access to some spaces that can be used when it is really hot; or really, really cold—like an indoor one, but that is probably a bit harder—or raining, it is more likely that people would go to that facility versus someone's private property.

**THE CHAIR:** I do not want to touch upon the skating strategy itself because I get the idea of it being comprehensive and covering all elements, but there is one particular element of the infrastructure question that I think you have gone above and beyond anyone else in your submissions and in the conversations, and that is talking about some of the cutting edge, or more extreme, facilities that the ACT does not currently have. Your second recommendation is to:

Construct a new, world-class skateparks in Canberra to modernise the current offerings and cater to the growing population in the area, accounting for both the Olympic Games and the diversity of disciplines across skateboarding.

I was wondering if you could speak to some of those new infrastructure suggestions that have been made in this recommendation and why they are needed.

**Mr Pang:** One facility that Canberra does not have that most other states have is a large bowl that has a shallow end and a deep end and is an enclosed bowl. I am led to believe that the disciplines and the style of terrain will vary over the Olympics, but one of the disciplines is what they call skate park. It is not a bowl, and it is not street; it is like a merge between the two, and Canberra certainly does not have that sort of facility either. I suggest when the time is available or made to build a new skate park, consult with the peak body, Canberra Skateboarding Association, and see what the trends are. Then account for that, so athletes or skaters who want to be competitive

have modern facilities.

I think in the paper as well I mention that although street and park are the main disciplines for skateboarding, there is also slalom, downhill, freestyle and even cruising. I think with the Olympics having skateboarding you will see more pedestrians or people commuting using skateboards as a mode of transport, just because it is front and centre of mind with the Olympic Games and it is an accessible sport or a recreation to undertake.

**MS LAWDER:** When is it going to be included in the Olympics?

**Mr Pang:** It is in the Olympics now.

**Mr Taylor:** It was in the last one.

**Mr Pang:** Yes, and it looks like the Olympics is going more towards alternative sports.

**Mr Taylor:** The courses that you see are very much interlinked. All the elements of the skate park are interlinked, so they can be skated in one run. That is more of a modern thing that I have seen. Belconnen and Woden are kind of close to that, but they are not really. When I have watched those Olympic and big events, they have very much interlinked obstacles that let people skate through the whole park and use everything.

**Ms Pang:** I think a good example of some of these skate parks would be Pizzey Skatepark in Queensland, which is a skate park that I think was done in the last couple of years. You will see larger stair sets, but you will also see ramps on the side of them. Quite big transitions as well, because as Dave said, park is a mixture of both, but a lot of the park one is towards big air, whereas street would be more towards something like grinding on a rail or a ledge.

I also want to mention things like slalom skateboarding. We are very fortunate, Imogen and I, to have somewhere safe that we can practice, which is the centenary circuit at Stromlo. However, if it is booked out a lot it is quite hard to manage. It is quite a common thing for a lot of slalom skateboarders across the world and Australia to be skateboarding on public roads because it is the only option. Footpaths are too narrow; they have cracks in them.

It is the same with downhill skating. We do not really have any gravity sports facilities in Australia that I can think of that have a nice long downhill run. I know it is quite hard to manage that, but it is something to think about. We do have some of the world leaders in downhill skateboarding in Australia. None of them currently reside in Canberra because there is no downhill, but that is another aspect of it.

**THE CHAIR:** Let me just jump to some of the examples in your submission: a foam pit. Does the ACT not have a foam pit?

**Ms Pang:** No.

**THE CHAIR:** Who is a foam pit used by?

**Ms McMillan:** Many different extreme sports will use a foam pit so they can practice and get better at certain jumps, certain skills, how you are going to fall, how you are going to land, because it is a lot softer impact than on concrete.

**Mr Pang:** If anyone has a foam pit, it might be a fairly large gym club, but gymnastics, aerial skiing, extreme—

**Ms Pang:** Trampoline centres.

**Mr Pang:** Yes, trampolinists, BMX bikes, skateboarders, with doing mega ramps and those sorts of things.

**THE CHAIR:** A water landing and jump ramp?

**Mr Pang:** Same: aerial skiers, bikes and skateboarders. So again just learning the manoeuvres in the air and then knowing they can land in the water.

**Ms Pang:** The difference between the two is that with a foam pit, you ideally do not want to land on your head. It is still compressed foam, so there is an impact. However, with a deep enough pool, if you land upside down for example, you are not at risk, or at a very low risk, of hurting your neck or back. A foam pit is more about landing upright and softly. Whereas with the other one, if you go completely skew-whiff, you will likely be fine.

**THE CHAIR:** The ACT does not have a mega ramp. Who is that used by?

**Mr Pang:** There is only one mega ramp that I know of in Australia and it is privately owned.

**Ms Pang:** Nitro Circus. You might have seen some of the clips online from some of their athletes. It is quite a big launch ramp into a banked landing. It is used by a lot of athletes. I would daresay a lot of the park skaters that go to the Olympics, if they travel to America, will be training on those big ramps because it allows time to get the trick. It is quite a spectacle. That is why it is in a lot of shows that you will see that come to Canberra, like the FMX freestyle shows, Nitro Circus, all these other big events. That is one of the big attractions. It is large and it is high. A lot of the shows also have a padded landing, like a blow-up landing with something on top of it to make it a bit harder, so when people fall, their consequence is not as high as if it was say, something like concrete. But concrete does work fine.

**THE CHAIR:** The uphill and downhill asphalt road without car use?

**Mr Pang:** Again, talking about downhill and even for road cyclists. Road cyclists, if they want to train going uphill and downhill, are either riding up Black Mountain or Mount Ainslie. Whereas, again, looking at if Stromlo was a centre for a range of sports, if there was the option of putting in an asphalt road to go up and down, then all users would have a safe, non-car used road that can be used to go up and to go down.

**Ms McMillan:** It is the equivalent of a gym. It is a training facility. Just speaking on slalom skateboarding, you have to be able to use a range of terrains and gradients. By having a facility that has up and down it allows you to train for a race. For example, I have been at Stromlo and the wind has been so hard that it has blown me back up the hill, and it has been quicker going up than it has been going down. That is not good unless you can train for it in advance.

**THE CHAIR:** The last one, a pump track. Who is utilising a pump track?

**MS LAWDER:** And what is it?

**Mr Taylor:** Stromlo Forest Park has one, but it is built for bikes. It was designed for bikes. The surface is for pushbikes, so it is for soft tyres. We can ride our skateboards on it, but it is quite difficult. It is not ideal. A lot of pump tracks around the country are bitumen and they have really flowy designs so they work for skateboards, scooters, mountain bikes, BMXs. They would be the user groups that would use them. They are becoming really popular and are really attracting a lot of people to these pump tracks in the various places they are.

Jerrabomberra is going into consultation to build one at the moment, so we are all going to try to chip in on that and let them know that what we are really after is a bitumen surface pump track. So something that is as smooth as the skateboarding surface for the Stromlo criterium track, which is where we hold our slalom, but with those humps and bumps and turns. A well-designed pump track usually has a double course, so two people can race each other on each track. That is the whole idea. In mountain bike pump track, it is a discipline where they will race from each end of the track and go around. That is how the one at Stromlo is designed, but it is just not that great.

We have also seen three or four dirt surface pump tracks go in at schools. Even the mountain bike community does not think they are great because they are susceptible to wear, and if they are not maintained well, they do not work. The best surface that we see for pump tracks is bitumen, but of course, it costs a hell of a lot more than the compressed granite that they put onto Stromlo. We were thinking of reserving the pump track to run the first pump track race event in Australia for skateboarding, but it just is not up to snuff. You have to be fairly skilled to get around it.

**Mr Raymer:** Sorry if I interrupt. Is it clear what a pump track is to you?

**MS LAWDER:** Yes, I think you are comparing it to the Stromlo one.

**Mr Taylor:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** I understand that some of these would be nice to have things. Which of them are priorities, do you think?

**Mr Pang:** I would say all-weather, or some facility to allow skateboarding and other activities in inclement weather.

**Ms McMillan:** Looking at future infrastructure and making it more wheel-friendly



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overall. Not necessarily skateboards, but taking into consideration scooters and other objects that use wheels to get around. That would be something to consider in planning overall.

**MS LAWDER:** Would inline skates be the same?

**Ms McMillan:** Yes, very much. The people that want to use that—they may not go from rollerblades or inline skates to skateboards, but having the availability and infrastructure around you would be of a huge benefit to the community.

**Mr Taylor:** For me, of all of the things we have raised, it would be a pump track because of the popularity of them at the moment, their ability to attract a lot of different members of the community, and their suitability for tiny kids up to old men.

**THE CHAIR:** You have provided an additional supplementary submission. Would you like to consider this further, or would you like to move that we receive and publish?

**MS LAWDER:** Yes, receive and publish.

**THE CHAIR:** Moved Ms Lawder. I declare that carried. Now, we are out of time. Thank you, everyone, for appearing. On behalf of the committee, thank you so much for your submission and for being here.

**MS LAWDER:** Lovely you have some women appearing in an otherwise male-dominated kind of—

**Ms Pang:** We are dominating now.

**Mr Pang:** It is changing.

**THE CHAIR:** The committee will now adjourn. Thank you.

**Short suspension.**

**CARUANA, MR ANTHONY**, President and Public Officer, Canberra Skateboarding Association

**WOOD, MR BRENDEN**, Vice President, Canberra Skateboarding Association

**THE CHAIR:** Welcome back, everybody. We now welcome representatives of the Canberra Skateboarding Association. I remind you of the protections and obligations afforded by parliamentary privilege and draw your attention to the privilege statement. Witnesses must tell the truth. Giving false or misleading evidence will be treated as a serious matter and may be considered contempt of the Assembly. Could I get each of you to confirm that you understand the implications of the statement and that you agree to comply with it?

**Mr Wood:** Understand.

**Mr Caruana:** Understand and agree.

**THE CHAIR:** Wonderful, and you have an opening statement for us?

**Mr Caruana:** Firstly we would like to acknowledge that we are meeting on Aboriginal land, to pay our respect to local elders past, present, and emerging, and to thank them for their ongoing contribution to our community and culture. I would like to thank the committee for your interest in conducting this inquiry to improve the accessibility of skateboarding and skate parks, and for accompanying Woody and I on the site visits to some of the main skate parks in the ACT a few weeks ago.

Skateboarding is sometimes seen as just a hobby or a sport for young people, but for skateboarders it is much more. It is a way of life that shapes how you perceive yourself and your abilities, your physical environment, the human condition and the world around you. Skateboarding can connect you with an international community of likeminded souls and provide a number of benefits including improved health and social outcomes.

Skateparks and skate spots are also hubs of activity that provide space for people to connect and pursue their interests and have been shown to promote positive social behaviours and provide significant community and public health benefits. Skateboarders themselves come from all walks of life and the ACT skateboarding community consists of skaters of all ages, gender identifies, cultural backgrounds and abilities.

Canberra Skateboarding Association is a volunteer-run, not-for-profit association that has been delivering free skateboarding lessons and skateboarding competitions and events in the ACT and surrounding area for ten or more years. Our members are grateful for the public facilities that are available, and the broad support of the broader community and across the Legislative Assembly.

As noted in our submission to the committee, the ACT has produced some of Australia's most talented skateboarders and has grown an active and inclusive skateboarding scene. Although skateboarding's popularity continues to grow in the ACT and around the world, particularly following its debut in the 2021 Tokyo

Olympics, the ACT is somewhat failing to keep up.

The ACT is falling behind in provision and management of contemporary skate parks, with some facilities lacking in repair and maintenance and no apparent coordinated infrastructure planning approach to develop new facilities to cater for the ACT's expanding suburbs. So to address these issues, the Canberra Skateboarding Association is advocating for new, more accessible and better maintained skate parks, and skate-friendly public spaces across the ACT. In particular, we call on the ACT government to implement a comprehensive skate strategy to address the current infrastructure and maintenance needs. Thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** I will lead off with questions and we will go back and forth. The ACT has a very proud and rich skating history and culture. I was wondering, for the benefit of the committee, if you could put on the public record some of the iconic moments in Canberra skating history and the importance of skating in the development of Canberra.

**Mr Caruana:** Sure. I am not born in Canberra myself. I have been here for 14 years or so. But growing up outside of Canberra, Canberra was the place to go for skateboarding in my young years. We always heard people talking about the facilities that were in Canberra, and when I was a teenager and got my first opportunity to come down here, going to Belconnen Skate Park was amazing. We did not have anything like that in Wollongong where I grew up.

There were some parks that were built quite early, like Charnwood Bowl, the U-Pipe at Kambah, the Erindale Banks, and facilities like that have attracted big names internationally. We mentioned on the site visit at Erindale that Tony Hawk was there in 1998 when he was a young person.

Since I have been in Canberra and working with Woody at the Canberra Skateboarding Association it has been great seeing the community grow; being able to engage with young people and welcome them on to skate parks; and providing that welcoming environment to families and parents who themselves might not be sure how to approach skateboarding. It has also been really great to be part of that community.

**Mr Wood:** I think there is something to be said for the growth of the Belco Bowl Jam in recent years as well. We, the Canberra skateboarding community, put on one of the biggest skateboarding events in the country every year. It puts Canberra on the map internationally, at least in skateboarding circles, and that is continuing to grow and develop. It started over 20 years ago as a grassroots event. It still is, and it is growing and growing. It is getting Canberra recognition, at least in the skateboarding world, as a place to go.

**Mr Caruana:** We are continuing to build that history, of course, as well. There are two young people at the moment who have been travelling to Rome and to Dubai to compete in the Olympic qualifying events. We are all behind them and hoping that they succeed.

**Mr Wood:** Yes, they are alumni of our learner skateboard sessions too, so we are

pretty excited to see how far they go with that.

**THE CHAIR:** That is great. One of the recurring themes in the submissions to this inquiry is that the ACT needs a comprehensive strategy. Where does this vision and idea for a strategy come from? What is the ACT government getting wrong in how it tries to respond to skateboarding in the community?

**Mr Caruana:** I think we looked at precedents like the Melbourne Skate Plan—Skate Melbourne Plan, sorry—and the way that they identify public spaces that are appropriate for skating; the way that they articulate their support for skateboarding and related sports; and the way that they take a structured approach to planning the maintenance and construction of facilities.

I think there are some really good facilities in Canberra, particularly Belconnen and Woden. My basic understanding is that they came about through opportunities. So there was federal government funding available at the time, partly because of the GFC. So quite often when facilities are being developed, it is the right time and right place, and it is a bit of luck. We are very grateful for the facilities that are available but would like to see a bit more of a structured, forward-looking approach to that planning. We felt that documenting and approaching a skate strategy will help set clear expectations and guidelines about what actions the ACT government would take and how it would engage with the community as well.

**Mr Wood:** I think there is also some opportunity there to have a little more consistency in how public spaces and play spaces in particular incorporate skate elements going forward. It is, again, something Canberra used to be great at but we are seeing less of in recent years. Maybe touch on the use of skateboarding happening in public spaces too. I know that Constitution Avenue was mentioned as a skate spot earlier. That place, for example, is a public space that has been embraced by skateboarders and activated by skateboarders, but when it was built it had skate deterrent devices installed on those public ledges, and it just seems a shame and almost counterintuitive. So, in terms of a skate strategy, it would be really cool to see something like that addressed in it also.

**Mr Caruana:** It creates a more formal mechanism to engage with the community and get that feedback on what is needed. We made some recommendations in our submission about Gungahlin and Tuggeranong skate parks, but deliberately limited any specific recommendations because that can come about through effective community engagement and getting a broad range of views. We do like to think we represent a broad part of the skateboarding community but it is a very diverse community with different disciplines, as you heard earlier, and varying opinions. So consultation and speaking to the community is important and we thought a skate strategy could facilitate that as well.

**MS LAWDER:** Following up about the lack of a coordinated approach to the maintenance and planning of new infrastructure in new suburbs: what makes you say that? Do you know they do not have a maintenance strategy? So for example, I know they are down at Conder, outside the YWCA today, doing some maintenance.

**Mr Caruana:** Yes.

**MS LAWDER:** Is that only in response to complaints or queries? Or is there a planned maintenance strategy?

**Mr Caruana:** To some degree. Obviously, we understand the directorates manage the ACT government assets and that includes annual audits and other things mentioned in the minister's submission. Again, our basic understanding is that the maintenance of skate parks is included with general playground maintenance. So the skate parks and the needs of skate parks are not always necessarily understood or actioned, particularly things like cleaning debris regularly. Graffiti removal is one thing but it is not too much of a concern to skateboarders though.

**Mr Wood:** I think longer term graffiti removal has been a bit of an issue. I would cite Tuggeranong Skate Park as an example. I think the surface of Tuggeranong Skate Park has deteriorate more quickly than it should have because of bad graffiti removal processes over the last 20 years. That could have been avoided if there was some sort of strategy in place to make sure that best practices were followed, in particular to skate parks and keeping the surface in good condition. Sometimes there will be progress made when we are dealing directly with some of the TCCS employees that are taking care of that stuff. But, you know, people move onto new jobs, and we are back to square one again and the same mistakes get repeated.

**Mr Caruana:** Thinking of my experience as a lay person and when I was a younger person than I am now, it is sometimes difficult to engage with government as a young person and not knowing how to do that or where the opportunities are. Even now in the roles that we are in, quite often it is the last minute that we hear about a master plan being developed. We do make an effort to engage in those consultation processes when we can, but often we find out about them a bit late. There is a lot of competing voices there as well. So yes, having an easier way for young people to engage directly on skateboarding related issues would be helpful.

**MS LAWDER:** We started off talking about Canberra's proud history and reputation. You mentioned it was the place to go. Do we still have that reputation? Have we been overtaken by other jurisdictions or are we still—

**Mr Wood:** So in terms of facilities, we used to have a reputation of punching above our weight for skate parks compared to say Sydney or Melbourne, especially around the time that Woden and Belconnen were built. I think, these days, we have fallen behind because we have not had any provisioning of new skate parks for 10 plus years and some of our older parks, like Tuggeranong, are deteriorating. I think on a community level we still have that reputation because of events like the Belco Bowl Jam. It is getting international coverage. I have personally experienced travelling overseas and telling people, other skateboarders, I am from Canberra and them not knowing where Canberra is. Then you mention, "Where the Belco Bowl Jam happens," and they go, "Great. Yes, I know that. Belco with the slider bowl, where the big event happens." So we have this fantastic community around it. The community aspect is there, the facilities just are not quite keeping up.

**Mr Caruana:** Yes, and I think part of the focus of the Canberra Skateboarding Association as an organisation is that community based, grassroots events. So we

particularly want to maintain free events—we have never charged for any of the events we have run—and focus on beginner level skateboarding as well to bring more people into the community. As I said earlier, making it welcoming for people that might have a negative perception about skate parks or skateboarders. I think that has helped build the reputation in Canberra as being a friendly place for skateboarding.

**Mr Wood:** I think there is something to be said too for skateboarding and it appealing to young people who need to engage in physical activity but might not necessarily fit in or feel comfortable doing conventional sports. At least, that is what I have seen a lot of at our learner skateboard sessions. I mean, there are academic studies that show that skateboarding and skate parks are good for public health, and I think it definitely fills in the gaps there.

**MS LAWDER:** I have seen learn to skate sessions advertised on Facebook and platforms, but what is your communication strategy? If you are a kid starting off or a parent with—however old you are, how would you know to go searching for Canberra Skateboarding Association? Or how would you know that you run free sessions?

**Mr Wood:** We mostly put the word out on social media and we mention in the flyers or the event calendars that we put out that they are for all ages and experience levels. We sort of mention that we try and break down the barrier to entry and to make skate parks a more welcoming space for everybody.

**Mr Caruana:** If you Google Canberra skateboarding we are probably the first result in the Google results. As well, we do have a relationship with local businesses that sell skateboards and skateboard products. So often people will go into the local skate shop to buy equipment and then ask them about it and they often refer their customers to us.

**Mr Wood:** I think it is also important to say too that, where this relates to skate parks, we are doing what we can to try and give back and help the community by doing this as volunteers, but skateboarding is a very kind of ad-hoc or incidental activity. There are some people that might go to the skate park, start skateboarding and use facilities frequently but they do not engage with CSA or our lessons, or any kind of competitions, or any sort of structure or formality, like you would in conventional sports. So sometimes it is a little difficult to quantify just how much use a skate park would get, compared to say something like a football field or a basketball court or other facilities.

**Mr Caruana:** I think Dr Johnston mentioned that people will spend—I remember as a kid, spending an eight-hour day in the sun at a skate park—

**Mr Wood:** Yes. I really like what he said about how it is not like a sport where you rock up and play it for an hour or play a game and leave. Instead you spend all day there, and yes, there are not really any kind of rules there.

**MS LAWDER:** Is it that most organisations like yours are run by volunteers who have other day jobs and other commitments as well?

**Mr Caruana:** Yes.

**Mr Wood:** Yes.

**MS LAWDER:** Even I remember Tony Hawke, yes, back in the day, probably before your time. Do you play any role in promoting those sorts of achievements? You talked about a couple of people going to Dubai and somewhere else and we had a gold medal recently, but I have not really heard about that in the media. Is that another one of those ways of promoting the sport?

**Mr Wood:** We have put some stuff on social media about that. Yes, we are volunteers and we work day jobs. So our resources are limited in getting the word out.

**Mr Caruana:** Skateboarding has its own networks as well. Obviously social media is a big one and there are skateboarding magazines and things like that that people will watch and subscribe to. There is an American, almost satirical, skateboarding news channel and things like that. You would not generally hear about Canberra in that, although there has been someone from Canberra featured in it.

**Mr Wood:** I think it is interesting too. Like I said earlier of the Belco Bowl Jam, in the skateboarding media, Belco Bowl Jam got quite a lot of coverage and it is promoted quite heavily in skateboarding circles. There was a video on Thrasher Magazine with tens of thousands of views. When we promote that event, for example, we almost deliberately do not promote it too much locally because we get so many interstate travellers and skateboarders that come to Canberra for that event that we are at capacity. There is hardly any room for people to stand around the bowl when the event is going on. So sometimes with things like that, we will spread the word or promote things heavily in skateboarding circles and skateboarding social media, but the general Canberra crowd might not hear as much about it.

**Mr Caruana:** In terms of lessons though, I think word of mouth gets around. Parent groups talk to each other, and as I said, through the local skate shop and things like that. So we have not found that we need to promote ourselves too much because people find out about us and then come to us.

**THE CHAIR:** I just want to circle back to maintenance. I really want it on the public record. What happens when skating infrastructure is not properly maintained for skaters that use those facilities?

**Mr Wood:** They eventually become unusable. I think one of the biggest issues with some of Canberra's older skate parks, and I am talking Tuggeranong and Gungahlin specifically here, is that some of the rocks in the concrete come up to the surface. They get rougher and rougher and rougher. Eventually you need bigger wheels just to roll across that concrete or you cannot at all. They become only usable by other disciplines like BMX. It becomes unsafe too, because as you can imagine, if you take a fall on those rougher surfaces, you are more likely to injure yourself.

Also, sometimes the design of those skate parks just becomes outdated and less relevant. I would put Tuggeranong into that category. It is 25 years old. When it was built it was fantastic, but skate park design has come a long way since then and the layout and the design of the park has not changed much, or at all really, since it was

built. So it is just this big space; this big skate park that sees very little use because the surface is dilapidated and the design is outdated.

**Mr Caruana:** Yes and that goes to the infrastructure itself. I do not intend to be too critical of the directorate because obviously a lot of effort is put in to maintain facilities and things like that and we do always hear the worst stories. It is the case where the complaints speak the loudest. But often debris at skate parks is quite an issue, and the construction and planning can help address that to some degree. For example, tanbark is a nightmare at a skate park for a skateboarder. Any small bits of debris can get stuck under your wheels and send you flying and cause quite significant injuries. So it is that cleaning of the surface, not just maintaining the structure itself but cleaning what is on top of the surface, to maintain safety.

**THE CHAIR:** I want to bring a couple of those threads together. When skate parks are not maintained properly or are not cleaned properly, skaters hurt themselves?

**Mr Caruana:** Injuries and lack of use as well, yes. If it is not an environment—

**Mr Wood:** So sometimes there will be cracks that occur, that do not get repaired, that might cause rocks to scatter across the park. They can cause your wheels to lock up or they can cause you to fall over. The surface can wear out or deteriorate. It makes it kind of like a sandpaper texture, as I have just mentioned. Those are the two main ones that jump out at me.

**THE CHAIR:** Can you detail for the committee examples of injuries that you are aware of in the skating community that result from this lack of action?

**Mr Wood:** Yes, I broke my arm at Belconnen a few years ago because there was a big hole in the concrete. I had put multiple Fix My Street requests in to have fixed. There was no action on it and eventually the debris started scattering all over the park. I am a pretty experienced skateboarder. I have been doing it for over 20 years. But I did not see a small rock that had spread out from this hole in the concrete: ran over it at speed, locked up, broke my arm. That would not have happened if that issue was addressed a little earlier. It was eventually fixed. Little things like that if they are routinely inspected and looked after can prevent injuries. Skateboarding is inherently dangerous and things like that will happen, but in that particular incidence it was avoidable.

**THE CHAIR:** For the benefit of the committee, any other good stories or examples to point to of people getting hurt?

**Mr Caruana:** Not specifically due to a lack of maintenance. I think falls and things like that come hand-in-hand with the risk in the sport, but if you can maintain the facility to minimise the possibility of that happening, then that is the best outcome.

**THE CHAIR:** What is the role of government in supporting skating? There is this obvious low hanging fruit of providing skate parks, but when it comes to art, music, cultural events: what is the role you would like to see the ACT government taking and are there specific initiatives you would like to see supported?



**Mr Wood:** I think there is a lot of opportunity here to design skate friendly cities. It was touched on a little earlier that skateboarding activates public spaces. If you built somewhere like Constitution Avenue without skate deterrent devices and made those ledges a little bit more robust so that it embraces skateboarding, skateboarders will go there; they will activate the space; there will be eyes on the street. That benefits everybody, not just skateboarders. Yes, that is a big one.

**Mr Caruana:** I think on that community building side as well the events grants rounds that are available, and we have been successful in some rounds, particularly—which round of grants was it? It was the—

**Mr Wood:** The event development.

**Mr Caruana:** The event development grant, sorry I could not remember the name of it. We have a grant for our Belco Bowl Jam competition next year which will help us pay for part of the grandstands that we need because the event is just getting bigger and bigger. So encouraging those community events I think is important, and to some degree, influencing community attitudes in a positive way. Those little signals like skate stoppers on ledges and things like that give a signal that skateboarders are not welcome in particular areas. So I guess just general communication on the topic can help shape community attitudes to some degree.

**Mr Wood:** A brilliant example of it being done properly just recently is at UN Plaza in San Francisco. They built a skate plaza in the middle of a public space—in the middle of a very busy public space—with the idea being that it will drive away anti-social behaviour because skateboarders will be using the space and it is activated. It is also multi-purpose. So on the occasions when skateboarders are not using it, people can still sit on a bench and use it and transit through it.

I also think, and this is just my opinion here, that at a local government level, building community skate parks and local facilities should probably be a higher priority than building these big sports training facilities. That is just my opinion. I think filling in all these gaps and making facilities that young people can access in their neighbourhood, or in their town centre, is going to help the local community. I think there definitely is a need for a larger facility for the people who consider skateboarding more of a sport and want to train at an elite level. But I think in terms of local government, in my opinion, the focus should be on facilities, that being skate parks and also those incidental skate spaces or skate elements in play spaces.

**Mr Caruana:** Yes, that could be point a distinction between the role of federal and territory government. I guess being a small community organisation with a focus on entry level and beginner skateboarders—I think that is where that opinion comes from—the need for those accessible facilities that cater for all skill levels and all abilities.

**MS LAWDER:** Constitution Avenue, is that NCA, rather than ACT government?

**THE CHAIR:** Great question.

**Mr Wood:** It is right out the front of Civic pool.

**MS LAWDER:** Yes, I know where you mean.

**Mr Wood:** I think it might be—

**THE CHAIR:** We see it all the time. Good question.

**MS LAWDER:** I just thought it might have been NCA. Anyway—

**THE CHAIR:** I thought it might be a joint—

**Mr Wood:** It would be right on the border, I think. That was a good question.

**THE CHAIR:** In regard to skate stoppers, I understand that it is not uncommon for them to be removed in good locations for skating. What is the culture like in the ACT of reinstalling skate stoppers once removed?

**Mr Wood:** Do you mean are there any examples that we know of skate stoppers being put back once they have been removed?

**THE CHAIR:** Yes.

**Mr Caruana:** Do you mean by the ACT government or by skateboarders?

**THE CHAIR:** Anyone really. ACT government mainly.

**Mr Wood:** I personally have not seen it. The top of mind is Constitution Avenue where the skate stoppers were removed, the ledges were skated and they were kind of left alone after that. There are still a lot of ledges on that street with skate deterrent devices on them. It was just one ledge that has been converted into a skate spot.

**Mr Caruana:** I am speculating, but it could be a reactive issue. So it might take someone to lodge a Fix My Street request or make a particular complaint. But if people see people using the space in a positive way—

**Mr Wood:** I mean there does appear to be a positive reaction to it because the locals that skate there, they take a lot of pride and ownership in that space. It is like a found space for them. They meet there. They skate there. They pack up their rubbish when they leave. They make sure it is safe and welcoming. It is an important space for them, although to anyone else it is just a footpath they transit through. You could almost argue that the place would be less safe or perhaps messier without those people there using it, taking pride in it and looking after it. So there is a lot of opportunity to activate other public spaces in Canberra and get those same benefits.

**MS LAWDER:** Is this something that you explicitly encourage your members to do, to take pride in those spaces, not leave them messy—

**Mr Wood:** Absolutely.

**Mr Caruana:** Yes, yes. In particular, at our lessons we usually do a bit of an

introduction and speak a little bit about skate park etiquette as well. It is a bit like crossing the road: looking left and right and providing space for people, helping someone if they are injured or assisting someone if they need help for any other reason, that kind of thing. So we do try and build a sense of respect and ownership of the spaces that we skate in.

**Mr Wood:** As I said earlier, there are not really any rules or structure in skateboarding, but there are definitely things like that that are part of the culture that we try and pass on and maintain. Things around looking after what you skate, respecting what you skate and the people around you and showing good skate park etiquette. Yes, we are big advocates for that kind of thing.

**THE CHAIR:** We have talked about a range of things: skate park strategy, maintenance, skate parks in general, and we touched on with the previous witnesses some of the nice to have things, and at least from my perspective, the more out-there things like mega-ramps. What would you classify as not the “nice to have, maybe one day if we are lucky,” but more in the priorities? If the ACT government was to pick the low hanging fruit, we can make skating better in the ACT if we invest in x, y, z project?

**Mr Wood:** In my opinion, it would be upgrading or replacing some of the older, larger skate parks like Tuggeranong and Gungahlin. I think they are past their use-by date. There is maybe a small cohort of BMXers that still really like the place, but the place is not as usable as it once was. It is not going to be usable at all, even with some repairs that are happening. It is just very dated. So a big priority, in my opinion, would be upgrading or replacing those facilities.

Another nice to have, I think, would be maybe a skate park or a skate plaza that incorporates some street style elements because there is a bit of a gap there. A lot of Canberra skate parks have ramps for transition but not too many street elements and street skateboarding is really popular.

**Mr Caruana:** I think that is probably the key things. It is a question for the community as well. Broader consultation with different user groups would help and inform an answer to that one.

I think the southside as well. There are a few parks, like at Lanyon Marketplace, Richardson, and I see a couple of ramps in a basketball court somewhere as well, Fadden and things like that. They are probably the lesser used facilities. There are lots more as well. So southside, I think, it is—

**Mr Wood:** There are opportunities to upgrade and replace some of those smaller facilities too. At Fadden Pines, for example, the playground there has been knocked down and rebuilt I think two or three times in the last 20 years, but the skate facility there has remained unchanged and it is not the best. In play spaces they cater to a very narrow age demographic. Kids will grow out of a playground quite quickly. If you build a decent skate park or skate elements in a play space, people will start using them at ages four or five and continue using them until they cannot anymore. It appeals to a larger demographic. So there is some opportunity there to do some things in play spaces that make them more usable by a larger group in the community.

**Mr Caruana:** I will echo Dr Johnston's comments about location of skate parks as well and being close to accessible facilities. So Fadden is a little bit out of the way and there is not really much transport there. There are no shops within walking distance and things like that. Whereas in contrast, Belconnen Skate Park is right on the lake and visible to everyone. I think Belconnen is a kind of hub of the skateboarding community—

**Mr Wood:** I was actually thinking during Dr Johnston's comments that we have some examples in Canberra that speak to what he was talking about. Like Tony just said, Belconnen is a good example of a skate park that is in a busy area, so there is passive surveillance and activation going both ways. I think you have parks like Weston Creek and Tuggeranong, for example, that were sort of pushed out in the greenspaces and on the fringes where they do not receive as much passive surveillance, and that is an example of a bad location for a skate park. Southbank in London was mentioned as a place that was converted into a skate park. Erindale Skate Park was initially a public space, a part of the college, and was later converted into a skate park. So we have an example of that in Canberra as well.

**THE CHAIR:** Some of the other items that were suggested were a pump track and a skate park that is usable in inclement weather. What would be the uses of those facilities and would they be popular?

**Mr Wood:** Pump tracks are pretty appealing to, not just skateboarders, but anything with wheels really. I think the big thing with pump tracks is making sure they are sealed; making sure they have asphalt over them. It is pretty easy to throw together a dirt pump track and call it a day, but if you seal it or put asphalt over it then all of a sudden skateboarders, roller skaters, scooters—anything that is not a bicycle—can also use it.

In terms of something you use in inclement weather: I am all for the idea. I think one of the things to consider is the examples that were given earlier of The Shed and The Park in Geelong. They are privately owned facilities; they are not public facilities. So I am not sure what that would look like in terms of a public skate park with shelter. I know there are examples in Australia and America of public skate parks that do have shade structures over them, like Dave mentioned. It would be pretty awesome to have something like that. I know that most of the larger skate parks in Canberra have quite an issue with shade. There is not a lot of shade at Belconnen, Tuggeranong, Weston or Woden. Another thing to consider with shade is that sometimes trees are used as shade over the skate parks but then you have the factor of debris to consider as well. So there needs to be a holistic approach taken when these things are designed or thought about.

**Mr Caruana:** I think as well, pump tracks can be used by a variety of different user groups. It is a different type of skateboarding. You are not doing tricks on a pump track as such. It is probably good for one a little bit older, and good for the cardio and things like that. It is definitely something that Canberra does not have so we would definitely welcome a pump track in Canberra.

Likewise, we engaged with the consultants that were looking at the Tuggeranong

Foreshore plan. They mentioned there was some space under a bridge down near Tuggeranong that I think they were intending on putting in—well the suggestion was to put in an undercover dog area. When we heard that we thought an undercover space like that would be great for a skate park as well. There are plenty of examples internationally where they—

**Mr Wood:** I was going to say, the best examples I have seen of undercover public skate parks are underneath freeway and highway overpasses because they are empty unused spaces, just sitting there, not really doing anything. If you build a skate park underneath one of those structures you have the benefit of shelter over it, and you do not really have to put any additional infrastructure to provide that shelter. There are a lot of good examples in America. In Australia there is the one in Victoria. I cannot remember the name of it right now, but it was mentioned earlier.

**MS LAWDER:** I wanted to ask about the relationship with scooter riders. Is there tension? Do you share the skate parks? How does that work?

**Mr Caruana:** Yes, to some degree. Going back a few years, there was a bit of tension with inline skaters. That has waned over the years. I think this is partly because of the declining popularity of inline skates and the aging of people that still skate. So quite often now inline skaters are older, with higher ability and therefore interact in a skate park in a way that causes less conflict.

I think sometimes with skateboarding and scooter riders—scooter riders often tend to be quite young, because it is something that you can pick up and go straight away. Whereas most people, the first time they stand on a skateboard they fall straight off, which is what our lessons try and help with. Each user group uses different skate parks in different ways. So the way that a BMX rider compared to a skateboarder, compared to someone on a scooter, interacts with the skate park, they will take different lines and approach it in different ways.

Skateboards are loud as well, so you can hear them coming from behind you. Whereas BMX bikes and scooters are quite quiet, so often you cannot hear them coming. When that combines with someone who might be quite young, who may not have fully developed peripheral vision, quite often lines at a skate park can cross and people can bump into each other.

The fact that scooters are so accessible and easy to ride means that it is quite popular for parents to take young children down to a skate park as well, but it can present a little bit of danger to everyone. That said, the scooter scene has developed over the years as well and quite often people cross disciplines. Like they might ride their BMX to the skate park while carrying their skateboard or come with a scooter and a skateboard. So there is a lot of cross over between the cultures as well. At times there potentially can be conflict, but I do not think it is a major concern.

**Mr Wood:** I do not have really much to add to that. There has been a couple of times we have received messages on social media from scooter riders that want their opinion represented by us. But we are the Canberra Skateboarding Association, we represent skateboarders. If they want to organise and do their thing, they are welcome to. I think skateboarding has a larger community and industry around it, and a lot of

the people involved in that community stay involved long term. This is just anecdotal, but I have seen that a lot of the time with kids who ride scooters, they will do it for a little while when they are young and move onto skateboarding or BMX riding. I guess maybe they are not as organised as say the skateboarding or BMX communities for that reason. That is just speculation though.

**Mr Caruana:** There are skateboarders from two, three years old even. We have had some very young people come to our lessons, all the way up to people in their fifties. Whereas you do not often see people in their late 20s and above still riding scooters. So, it tends to be a younger group that moves in and out, whereas skateboarders and BMX riders tend to do it for life.

**Mr Wood:** Just to touch on BMX riders as well, there are a lot of places where we have mutual interests, particularly around skate parks. Both groups want to see skate parks built and developed and more of them. So we have a good relationship with them.

**THE CHAIR:** Anything further? All right. On behalf of the committee, thank you both for your attendance today. We will now adjourn for a short break.

**Short suspension.**

**HANNAN, MR NICK**, Executive General Manager, Government Strategy,  
AusCycling

**THE CHAIR:** Welcome back, everybody. We now welcome Mr Nick Hannan, representing AusCycling. I remind you of the protections and obligations afforded by parliamentary privilege and draw your attention to the pink privilege statement. Witnesses must tell the truth. Giving false or misleading evidence will be treated as a serious matter and may be considered contempt of the Assembly. May I please get you to confirm that you understand the implications of the statement and that you agree to comply with it?

**Mr Hannan:** I do.

**THE CHAIR:** Wonderful. We will go to your opening statement. Take it away.

**Mr Hannan:** Excellent. Thank you, committee, for the opportunity to appear today. If you are not familiar with AusCycling, we are a relatively new organisation. We are the national sporting body for all forms of cycling and bike riding in Australia. We cover road and track cycling, all forms of mountain biking, BMX racing and, pertinent to today's hearing, BMX freestyle. I have to confess at the outset that I am not an expert in BMX freestyle. I know a little, but I am sure you have heard from people who live and breathe their love of skating, skateboarding and BMX. I am not one of those people, but I did think it was important that we are represented today.

Your terms of reference refer to skateboarders and skate parks. I certainly do not want to diminish the importance of skateboarders to skate parks, but the amazing thing about skate parks is that they are multi-use venues. People use roller skates, scooters, as we have just heard, skateboards and BMX freestyle. I would encourage you to think broadly about the role of skate parks in the community.

In forums like this one, I am often talking about high performance facilities and what we need to develop athletes. We certainly have an exciting role now that BMX freestyle is in the Olympics. What is more important today is that we talk about grassroots participation—less about sport and more about play—because we have a problem in this country with inactivity. Most Australian kids do not get enough physical activity and they do not meet the recommended daily guidelines. That has huge flow-on impacts for obesity, for non-communicable disease and for the health and wellbeing of our communities, which I am sure you are very familiar with.

One of the challenges around inactivity is our urban environment—the fact that we have made it very difficult to partake in active transport and active recreation. We have put obstacles in the way, particularly for kids. When we are talking about places like skate parks, the focus is the important local opportunity they provide for kids to get out of the house, be active and play. Having great local places to play is essential if we are going to address the challenge with inactivity.

I would be happy to answer your questions in a moment. There are a few factors that I think are really important to keep in mind when we are talking about skate parks: the fact that they are local; they are accessible for kids, preferably under their own steam—they do not need to get mum and dad to drive them somewhere; they can just

access them and play—they need to be integrated into the local community with supporting facilities; they need to be available when and where kids want to use them. We do not want kids feeling they need to go through organised activity to access them. There are certainly some types of facilities that are only available through organised activity and that is not conducive to just getting kids out and being active. Finally, they need to be inclusive and provide a welcoming and safe environment for everyone. One of the great things about skate parks is that they provide a really welcoming environment. We have a lot of kids who are not really interested in joining the footy team; they do not find a home in traditional sport. Skate parks and the communities that have been built around them often provide a really inclusive opportunity for these kids to come along, find a community and participate in physical activity.

If you are interested in learning more about the BMX freestyle community, this weekend we have a major event on in Canberra, out at Stromlo Forest Park. It is ACT Jam at the new facility that the government has built out there. You will see elite riders doing really amazing things. More importantly, you will see the supportive community that exists around BMX freestyle. We would certainly welcome you to come out and have a look if you have the opportunity.

I am happy to answer any questions you have.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you. It is a very generous invitation. Send it through. I am sure we will both consider whether we can make it out there. I will lead with questions and I will then pass to Ms Lawder. In your submission, you talk a lot about Stromlo Forest. What are the facilities that are there currently and what would you like to see?

**Mr Hannan:** Stromlo Forest Park does not have skate facilities per say. It has a pump track, which I know you were talking about earlier, and most recently the government has invested in some dirt jumps, which is a BMX freestyle as well as a mountain bike facility. As a little bit of background, in the BMX freestyle discipline, there are about five subdisciplines. The major focus, now that it is an Olympic event, is park, which is the tie-in to skate parks, but we also have dirt jumps, street flat land, which is essentially doing tricks on a flat piece of land, and I am missing the fifth one. Apologies. I will take it on notice.

**MS LAWDER:** It will come to you later.

**Mr Hannan:** Stromlo Forest Park is a really fantastic facility for all sorts of users in Canberra. It has a master plan which has been the subject of a lot of development over the years. We would like to see, not just for BMX freestyle but for all users, that master plan continuing to be developed and invested in. There are some really exciting things going on at Stromlo, not least of which is the sponsorship and the partnership with University of Canberra, which is opening a lot of doors as to what we might be able to achieve out there.

I do not think there are specific skate facilities in the master plan. That might be something that could be considered. I think the question would be: what do you place at Stromlo Forest Park compared with some of the more central locations where we already have skate facilities? We want these things to be accessible to people as easily as possible. There is a limit to how close to town you can build mountain bike trails,



but skate parks have the great opportunity of being right in the middle of town. They are very accessible to everyone all the time and that will drive usage.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you.

**MS LAWDER:** On Stromlo Forest Park, you have mountain bikers, BMXers, runners and—

**Mr Hannan:** Equestrian and—

**MS LAWDER:** Is there tension between the different types of usage?

**Mr Hannan:** At the margins, there is always a little bit of tension, but, for the most part, most user groups are really happy to share and get along. Most people are well behaved and respect the other users of the park. Overarchingly, I would say it is a very friendly place to go. There are occasional issues that are raised and worked through, but, for the most part, everyone is just very grateful to have such a fantastic facility.

**MS LAWDER:** For BMX riding, in terms of equipment, basically what you need is a bike, a helmet and maybe a few guards. Do you feel that in some cases cost is still a barrier, especially for young people, to participate?

**Mr Hannan:** It can be. BMX is one of the more accessible sports in terms of cycling. Certainly, if you look at mountain biking and road and track cycling, the costs can be prohibitive. That is a challenge for us. We do not want to see obstacles to people being active. A BMX bike is a fairly affordable bike that you can get. In fact, most kids, when they get a bike, will get either a BMX or a mountain bike. I certainly grew up with a BMX when I was a young tacker. It is something we are conscious of. BMX is in a good position in terms of a BMX bike not being a particularly expensive bike to get.

**MS LAWDER:** Do you think that some people might start with a second-hand bike to make it a little more accessible?

**Mr Hannan:** Absolutely. There are certainly plenty of places you can go to find a more affordable bike. We have just launched our new national participation program, AusBike. One of the challenges we recognised in that was that schools particularly were not going to run a bike ed program or a participation program if not all kids had access to a bike—they did not want anyone to be excluded—so we have been running a Bikes for Schools program for the last year and a half which is about finding second-hand bikes and bikes that are sitting in people's garages not being used. We work with a few commercial partners to bring them back up to spec and then we can provide them as part of a bike library to a school that students can then access. Clubs are also really well placed to provide that sort of bike library option as well. That might be something that we could look at in Canberra.

**THE CHAIR:** Adding to that line of questioning, often this conversation boils down to the government spending money on infrastructure. Is there anything the government can do to support the culture around BMX here in the ACT above and

beyond the conversation about the physical built environment?

**Mr Hannan:** It is an interesting question because BMX freestyle, by its nature, is a very informal recreation, which is why it is so attractive to so many people. There is a risk. We have a club in the ACT, Freestyle ACT. The club is great for putting on events. The club has a small membership of predominantly elite riders that go away to compete in major events. We would not want to try and impose formality to BMX freestyle that does not exist. That is not why it has thrived to date. That is a challenge we are currently working through. We obviously have an Olympic program now, which is relatively new, and we are trying to match up what might be a traditional talent identification and development program with what is an alternative sport—a sport that most people are very passionate about, but it is informal recreation.

There has been a lot of discussion about the role of BMX freestyle and broader arts and cultural activities, and I think that is important. I would suggest that, at the event this weekend, we will see some of that as well. You will see some of the tie-ins between different parts of the community. That is always welcome to be supported. The goal with the event this weekend will be to progressively grow it over the years. ACT government support for things like that would be fantastic.

**THE CHAIR:** Great.

**MS LAWDER:** We have seen, at least recently—maybe for longer than I really know—a few bike tracks put in at schools. Caroline Chisholm School is a more recent example. Are they useful? Are they fulfilling the purpose that they are built for? You might not know, but is the school responsible for the maintenance of them?

**Mr Hannan:** If they are on school property, it typically is the school that is responsible. This is all about meeting kids with what they want to do. I think they are successful on the basis that you see them being heavily used—sometimes heavily used during school time as well as outside of school time. Fundamentally, what we are trying to do is give kids active recreation opportunities.

Our organisational interests are largely aligned to sport. We would love to see kids playing the sport of cycling more—competing and being involved in a formal sport. But, fundamentally, we just want to see more kids on bikes more often. They can ride bikes however they want. Adventure trails are a really great introduction for kids who have just learnt to ride. They can ride in a safe environment.

One of the big obstacles we have is that, unlike in generations past, parents tend to not be keen on kids riding around on the streets anymore. Track volumes have gone up. There is a perception, if not a reality, of it being a riskier environment, and the off-road, safe places to ride your bike are really critical if we are going to keep kids on bikes and give them those healthy habits.

**MS LAWDER:** Good. Thanks.

**THE CHAIR:** One of the challenges that has been identified in some of the other sports has been getting to and from different places of activity. Often, younger Canberrans are using public transport. It kind of works if you can take your equipment

with you. For a BMX rider, are there challenges in utilising public transport in the ACT?

**Mr Hannan:** That is probably beyond any anecdote, let alone data, that I have. Certainly, I would agree that the critical thing, in terms of getting kids active, is giving them the opportunity to go to the place themselves. If they have to ask mum or dad for a lift, that is an extra obstacle and it is going to cut down on the number of hours of the week that they are able to actually go and use a facility. Even though the facility at Stromlo is fantastic, it is—

**MS LAWDER:** A destination.

**Mr Hannan:** It is a destination. It is a fairly high-level facility for fairly good riders. I would not want that sort of investment to take away from the local investment in suburbs, where kids can go down their local bike path to the local park where the skate park, the pump track or the adventure trail is and be active, independent and use that facility. I do not know the answer to the public transport question, but I certainly agree that having kids being independent and getting access to these facilities is critical.

One of the other interesting dynamics at play is that we are often talking about BMX racing. There are two types of BMX tracks around. There are tracks that are publicly available 24-7 and there are tracks that are big enough and fast enough that they have put a fence up and you have to be a member of the club to use the track. That is great for risk management, but it really cuts down on the amount of usage the track gets. What we find is that, if you look back through the history of elite athletes, the thing that stands out is that most elite riders rode their bike as much as possible. They did not wait for club training nights and they did not wait for club races; they were at the local BMX track or the local skate park riding their bike every chance they got. Even though the facility might have been a lower level facility, a community-level facility as opposed to an elite-level facility, the repetition and the amount of time they got to spend on it was far more valuable than having access to a fancy, high-level facility. That is one of the interesting things that we have found in the last couple of years.

**MS LAWDER:** Ms Caroline Buchanan is a good example of that.

**Mr Hannan:** Absolutely.

**MS LAWDER:** A local success story.

**Mr Hannan:** Zoe Cuthbert as well. I wrote a piece on LinkedIn a while back about Majura Pines and how it has played an incredible role as being a local place to play for kids. It is close to the suburbs and they can get there under their own steam and develop a love for the outdoors and a love for riding. That is what makes the difference.

**THE CHAIR:** We talked a little bit about skateboarding and scooters. There is the etiquette of BMX riding. If you are not becoming a formal member of a club, how might you learn what the etiquette and courtesy of BMXing and riding would generally be?

**Mr Hannan:** It is a really good question. We are coming at this from the perspective of having traditional disciplines, where there is a really well-established way to learn a sport and there is traditional coaching and a structure to it, and then we come to something like BMX freestyle where we do not have those things. What is really strong in BMX freestyle but also in the use of skate parks broadly is a community that is very welcoming. There is a lot of peer-to-peer learning. You can turn up at a skate park, even if you are a fairly new rider or a fairly new skater, and there will be more experienced people who quite often say, “Let us show you how to do this.” That is something that we should embrace. This is how the sport has developed, and we are certainly not going to change that any time soon. That is the way that people learn, understand the etiquette and become a functioning part of that community.

**MS LAWDER:** Thanks. I am done.

**THE CHAIR:** With that, we are finished for the morning. Thank you for your appearance today, Mr Hannan.

**Mr Hannan:** Thanks, committee.

**Hearing suspended from 12.52 to 4 pm.**

**BERRY, MS YVETTE**, Deputy Chief Minister, Minister for Early Childhood Development, Minister for Education and Youth Affairs, Minister for Housing and Suburban Development, Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence, Minister for Sport and Recreation and Minister for Women

**MARSHALL, MR KEN**, Executive Group Manager, City Operations, Transport Canberra and City Services

**CLEMENT, MS SOPHIE**, Executive Branch Manager, Infrastructure Delivery, Transport Canberra and City Services

**MS BERRY** (Ginninderra—) ():

**THE CHAIR:** Welcome back to the public hearings for the committee's inquiry into skateboarding and skate parks in the ACT. The proceedings today are being recorded and transcribed by Hansard and will be published. The proceedings are also being broadcast and webstreamed live. When taking a question on notice, it would be useful if witnesses use the words, "I will take that question on notice."

We now welcome the Minister for Sport and Recreation, Ms Yvette Berry MLA, and representatives of Transport Canberra and City Services. May I remind each of you of the protections and obligations afforded by parliamentary privilege and draw your attention to the pink privilege statement. Witnesses must tell the truth. Giving false or misleading evidence will be treated as a serious matter and may be considered contempt of the Assembly. Could each of you confirm that you understand the implications of the statement and that you agree to comply with it?

**Ms Clement:** Yes; I understand the statement.

**Ms Berry:** Yes; I do.

**Mr Marshall:** Yes; I do.

**THE CHAIR:** Wonderful. There is no opening statement. We will go to questions. Minister, throughout the inquiry we have had a lot of feedback about the maintenance of skate park infrastructure in the ACT. Could you talk the committee through those processes?

**Ms Berry:** Mr Marshall.

**Mr Marshall:** Thanks for the question. The process is essentially directed by our asset management planning process. Specifically, in this case and typically in similar infrastructure classes, that involves a regime of inspections which are of decreasing frequency and increasing level of scrutiny. There are quite regular inspections undertaken by TCCS staff at a largely superficial level to identify any obvious defects that are relatively quickly and simply addressed, such as littering and minor damage. At the other end of the spectrum is an annual detailed inspection undertaken by externally engaged expert resources who do a systematic rigorous inspection and produce a report that feeds into the development of our maintenance programs. Between those two, there is an intermediate inspection, which is a combination of contract resources and in-house resources. Those inspections are collated and recorded. That information feeds into the asset management process which generates maintenance works programs and the scope of any asset rehabilitation and the

maintenance contracts.

**THE CHAIR:** How does something like Fix My Street feed into that?

**Mr Marshall:** There is an avenue for concerns to be reported via Fix My Street. Those matters will be either referred to one of those inspections or assessed independently, depending on the level of urgency—the level of potential for safety concern—and those findings are fed, similarly, into the development of the maintenance program.

**Ms Berry:** I would have to say, regarding part of the maintenance or the cleaning of the skate parks, a fair bit of work is done by the Canberra Skateboarding Association and other users that come in with blowers, brooms and things like that to do the everyday cleaning and maintenance, painting before events and things like that. There is some real care and responsibility that goes into maintenance as far as general and surface-level care for the facilities is concerned, which is really appreciated by the government. That shows how important those facilities are for those user groups.

**THE CHAIR:** I understand there is a range of time lines for the different issues that pop up. Let's say I came across an ACT skate ramp that had a huge hole in it, the size of a foot or more, and it was covered in masking tape that does not do anything—

**MS LAWDER:** Is this a hypothetical?

**Ms Berry:** You might have to be more specific.

**THE CHAIR:** For something of that nature, which is a clear safety risk for people who are still using that facility, would it be reasonable to expect a very timely and urgent response or does that require a larger and more considered response to repair?

**Mr Marshall:** It would be completely reasonable to expect an urgent and timely response if there were a pressing safety concern. Whether the underlying issue could be fully rectified in that sort of time frame is another question. In circumstances where it cannot be comprehensively rectified, then there would be some sort of make-safe measure. That might mean some sort of interim repair or it might mean isolating the hazard—that is, taking it out of service and isolating it until a full assessment can be done and, if necessary, have design work undertaken for a repair. If it is a major piece of work, then there would possibly even be a procurement process to include it in a contract for maintenance. Certainly, if there were an apparent and immediate risk to safety, then there would be an intervention in an appropriate timescale.

**THE CHAIR:** Are there any supplementaries?

**MS LAWDER:** I have a very similar question, as you have already taken some of my questions—

**THE CHAIR:** Sorry. Great minds think alike!

**MS LAWDER:** What you have said is there is a frequent superficial inspection, an annual inspection and one or some between those.

**Mr Marshall:** There are essentially three levels of inspections.

**MS LAWDER:** How frequent is the usual superficial one?

**Mr Marshall:** Essentially, whenever our staff are present. To my knowledge, there is not a routine roster for those. As staff are present to undertake routine works in the area, they will do a visual inspection and record any immediate hazards or issues that need to be resolved.

**MS LAWDER:** Are you able to provide to the committee, please, a list of all the inspections of every skate park for the past, say, five years—the dates of the frequent, annual and in-between inspections—so we can get a feel for when those inspections have taken place?

**Ms Berry:** We might have to take that one on notice and see what information is available and if we can provide some detail on those. It might not be—

**MS LAWDER:** I am sure there would be records of that kind of thing.

**Ms Berry:** It might not be possible to provide the level of detail that you are after, but we will see what is available.

**MS LAWDER:** I am wondering how frequent is frequent. It is an interesting question. We have talked about the link between Fix My Street already. Also, there is the safety concern. We had another example today about a hole and little rocks. Of course, you would all understand that tiny stones can easily lock up the wheels of a skateboard. We had heard that it had been reported a few times through Fix My Street. Someone eventually broke their arm when they went over one of those rocks. Why would it have taken some time for such an obvious safety concern to be addressed?

**Ms Berry:** It might be helpful if you could say where this one was.

**THE CHAIR:** Belconnen Skate Park, I think.

**Mr Marshall:** I do not have specific details, so—

**MS LAWDER:** Perhaps you could take that on notice too: how long did it take between the first Fix My Street request and when it was addressed? And how many Fix My Street requests were there? Just to follow on from that: is that the only way or the best way for users to get these safety issues addressed?

**Ms Berry:** One of the ways is that individuals or the Canberra Skateboarding Association in particular will contact local members, which is entirely appropriate—that is what we are here for—and we could follow it up with TCCS once we are made aware of those concerns. But—

**Mr Marshall:** Fix My Street is the primary and appropriate channel.

**MS LAWDER:** That is the right way. Okay.

**THE CHAIR:** Still on maintenance, you have identified an issue and you are going about trying to schedule the repair work and ascertain how much is within government capability. It is not just about capability, but do you have the skills required to repair skate parks as opposed to relying on external contractors?

**Mr Marshall:** A little, in terms of specialisation with skate parks, but City Presentation has significant staff capability for general maintenance of public facilities and public open space. The sorts of activities that apply generally to play spaces, public open spaces and the facilities that are typically in those spaces—horticultural, graffiti removal, cleaning and all those sorts of generic activities—are well-catered for by our in-house staff. But, in terms of the more specialised capabilities—particularly specialised in relation to skate park facilities—they are not something that we keep in our own staff, so they are largely subject to maintenance contracts.

**Ms Berry:** It is a specialised field. I do not know whether you have yet talked about the election commitment for the half pipe at Belconnen, but there are issues with having a contractor who can do that specialised building and construction. Actually, just this morning when I was driving to work, there was a specialist skate park person from Victoria with their trailer and their van who had come to do repairs. I think they went out to Lanyon to do repairs out there.

**Ms Clement:** Yes. There have been repairs done.

**Ms Berry:** I was going to follow them—

**MS LAWDER:** Not all that way!

**Ms Berry:** Not all that way, because I did have to come into Civic first. It is a specialised area, so it is difficult to get a contractor to do new builds in that space, and then there is the maintenance program. Some of the older skate parks were not built by those more knowledgeable. They used techniques that are old, out of date and not suitable compared to the new techniques that are used. So it is a challenge. Of course, people being people, you can block off things and try and discourage use if there are incidents at a skate park or whatever, but, if there are things blocking off an area, often users will just use the facility even if it is not safe. Other than having a human out there and stopping people from going on equipment, people are going to take risks, which we do not encourage.

**THE CHAIR:** The City Presentation team mainly deals with things like graffiti and litter. They would not be dealing with any of the structural elements, like cracks in the concrete or holes?

**Mr Marshall:** No. Those types of issues would generally be packaged into a maintenance contract.

**Ms Berry:** We acknowledge that there has been a case in the past where some of the contracts that have been used to do some major repairs have not been successful because they used the wrong equipment to repair the concrete, and then it has failed



and it has caused more damage and had to be repaired again. That is something that has been brought to my attention. Maintenance of the facilities is something that the government needs to address going forward, and also how we work with getting that sort of specialist knowledge into our own building and maintenance programs now that we have a growing population.

**THE CHAIR:** How frequent are these maintenance projects or packages? Are they once an appropriation or once a month?

**Ms Clement:** I can answer that. We do, through our capital program, an annual safety order, but it looks at the service level as well. That is the annual audit that happens. Through that annual audit, we identify low through to high priority items that might need to be rectified and repair work. Out of that audit, we will then package it together, starting with the high priority works. Once funding is allocated, we will deliver that package. That is generally how those sorts of larger packages work. We have been generally having an annual program of that work. There might be a package every one or two years that we deliver.

A couple of years ago, we did a fairly significant piece of work at Eddison Park in Woden and at Belconnen State Park, and at the moment we are in the process of getting a contractor to do similar works at Tuggeranong as well. That is the larger package that looks at more significant repairs.

**MS LAWDER:** Was that at Tuggeranong or Lanyon?

**Ms Clement:** At Tuggeranong. The one for Lanyon is a smaller package that I think is responding to some immediate works that are required. That is not being done through the Capital team. The Tuggeranong one has works that are upcoming. That is another one where we did a lot of work to try and open the field up, in terms of the contractors that could tender for that. The contractor that was successful is now not available to start until the new year. That is another part of the challenge in terms of industry specialists and their ability to come to Canberra to do that work.

**THE CHAIR:** I just want to try to bring together a few of the different things I have heard. What I have just heard is that there is seemingly a once-a-year process where you determine high priority, medium priority and low priority and you engage external contractors to provide that work.

**Ms Clement:** Yes. That is the more significant works.

**THE CHAIR:** Structural elements where you need a—

**Ms Clement:** It could be—yes.

**THE CHAIR:** Let's say I report an issue at my local skate park. The concrete has cracked and it is now a trip impediment for anyone going over it on a skateboard, but I have just missed the annual audit. Am I theoretically waiting nearly a year until it is picked up in the next annual audit?

**Ms Clement:** I guess it would depend on the risk level associated with that issue, in

terms of the decision that is made by the operational team as to whether they actually need to get someone to fix it immediately or, as Ken has mentioned, whether it is an issue for which we need to control access from a safety perspective or whether it is one that can be captured in the bigger package.

**THE CHAIR:** I do not hang out at skate parks that often. Are there any recent examples of where we have controlled access to a skate park for safety reasons?

**Ms Clement:** I do not know any off the top of my head, but I imagine it has happened. We manage skate parks in a similar way to how we manage our playgrounds, and that is—

**MS LAWDER:** Perhaps you could take that on notice.

**Ms Clement:** Sure. I can take that on notice.

**THE CHAIR:** An observation I would make is that I have looked at a range of skate parks and have seen what to me, as a lay person, look like clear safety risks, and then I have not seen them fenced off or closed off, for example. I took from what I was seeing that the status quo was “Ride the skate park at your own risk”—fair enough—“Just make sure to dodge the holes and cracks.”

**Mr Marshall:** Those major inspections are undertaken by people with expertise in the risk assessments. Those risk assessments, no doubt, use a set of established criteria that are specific to the application of skate facilities. The result of that risk assessment might be different to what you would apply to a footpath, for example. The point is that those inspections are undertaken by people who have specialised expertise in that specific field and we take their advice about that risk assessment.

**MS LAWDER:** Could I make sure I understand what you are saying. In Mr Pettersson’s example, you were saying it might have just missed the annual inspection and now there is a crack that is perhaps letting little pebbles and bigger stones out. If someone reports it as a safety hazard, is it going to wait until the next annual inspection?

**Mr Marshall:** No. My apologies. In that circumstance, our own staff would respond to that report and would make a fair assessment. Then they would, depending on their own assessment, either engage further expert advice or schedule a repair themselves. Similarly, our own staff have some knowledge and expertise, so they are in a position to make that judgement call. If they are in doubt about whether they are confident to make the call about the degree of risk that is posed, then they would seek further advice on that.

**THE CHAIR:** City Services, like the City Presentation team, can make structural repairs, like concrete—

**Ms Berry:** They would be temporary, I would imagine.

**Mr Marshall:** If it were done by our own staff, it would not be a permanent restoration. There may be some sort of interim repair put in place until the next round

of major inspections and contracted repair work, depending entirely on the set of circumstances, of course.

**MS LAWDER:** In that example, where it has just missed one annual inspection, you are saying it might get some temporary thing done until the next annual inspection, and then it might be scheduled. So it could be well over a year before that is actually addressed. Is that what you are saying?

**Mr Marshall:** Depending on the assessment of the risk. For a risk that was assessed as low or one that could be mitigated, that might be the case. A risk that was assessed as being more immediate would get a more immediate response.

**THE CHAIR:** I guess where I struggle with this is that I am unsure what “acceptable risk” is. Skate parks are inherently dangerous to use. Theoretically, any crack is very dangerous. If you are moving very fast and you are at a great height and you fall, that is your fault and that is on you. I get that. But, if it is not on you, because the skate park has this crack in it that has not been—

**MS LAWDER:** Which has been reported.

**THE CHAIR:** Yes. I kind of struggle to understand what the idea of a low risk is, because I think any risk in that space is magnified.

**Mr Marshall:** There is an element, of course, of knowledge and experience that is brought to bear by the officers and the contractors who do these assessments. They will bring to bear their own expert knowledge and experience and assess the risk.

**Ms Berry:** If you have particular circumstances that TCCS may not be aware of or have not made their way through Fix My Street, it would help if we could be notified of those. If you have had some given to you in evidence, that would be helpful.

**MS LAWDER:** We have just been told that Fix My Street is the correct way to go about it.

**Ms Berry:** Yes; but you have been given evidence. So, if you have evidence, we can pass that on and get it done, rather than wait until the next question comes around. Do you know what I mean?

**THE CHAIR:** I think that is very helpful. I think the committee will consider the best way to provide those. But I think Ms Lawder question is very pertinent. It is probably going to be a while until the next inquiry into skate parks.

**Ms Berry:** Well, you never know.

**MS LAWDER:** Previously, I asked whether, on notice, you could provide the report schedule for small and large skate parks. The minister mentioned a contractor going down to Mura Lanyon, the YWCA small skate park there. If that has been having—

**Ms Berry:** That was my secret special detective skills, yes.

**MS LAWDER:** They posted about it on their Facebook as well.

**Ms Berry:** Did they? Well, there you go.

**MS LAWDER:** So, from that, if they are having frequent visual inspections, annual inspections and in between, from their Facebooking, it appears as though this was a direct request to the minister for intervention—and thanks, Minister Steel, for making it happen. So why was that required if there are these three different levels of inspections?

**Ms Berry:** I think that would just happen as a matter of course for anything across the ACT where a member of the public might get in touch with a member of the Assembly and seek support or raise an issue. That is not unusual.

**MS LAWDER:** Sure; we all love that.

**Ms Berry:** That is right. It is not unusual anywhere. I think that that can happen any time.

**MS LAWDER:** But not everything seems to be subject to that same level of inspection as we are saying the skate parks are.

**Ms Berry:** As you have been saying today, Fix My Street is one of the ways, I guess, that people can identify these issues—the same way they would with footpaths and any other kinds of issues around the place. For issues that require more immediate attention, like a sports field, which is a different team again, it has been raised with my office as to whether a Fix My Street process for skate parks or those sorts of recreational facilities is the best way going forward. Given some of the issues that have been raised with my office particularly but also what I am hearing from you today, perhaps a way forward is to consider some kind of an audit around the maintenance of the skate parks.

Also, I know that the Canberra Skateboarding Association have been around. I did not hear their evidence earlier today, but I imagine there would have been evidence provided around a strategy for skateboard maintenance but also, more into the future, the need for an assessment of how many skate parks a city needs or should have and where they should be and where the gaps are. They certainly provided information to my office of the Melbourne City Skate Strategy, which I have had a look at. I think we need to get a little bit more information, and perhaps this committee is the best way, or one of the ways, that we can get that information about what an audit would look like of the current facilities that then could, in the future, feed into the development of a strategy, which could be like a system similar to the way we manage and maintain sports fields. I think that might be a better way forward for these kinds of facilities. Those are the sorts of things that the government could consider with—

**MS LAWDER:** At skate parks themselves, is there signage saying, for example, “If there is any issue with this skate park, contact Fix My Street” or, you know—

**Ms Berry:** I do not think so.

**Mr Marshall:** Not to my knowledge.

**MS LAWDER:** Thanks.

**THE CHAIR:** We have also heard evidence that, when the repairs do come through—and the minister referenced this as well—sometimes the repairs are not as effective as people would hope. Is there any sort of review or analysis of the efficacy of the contractors that provide these maintenance services?

**Ms Clement:** Through our delivery framework, when we engage a contractor, there are obviously contractual requirements that they have. We do not have specific standards for skate parks. That is what we would normally use with our other assets to kind of assess against. But we do have an understanding of what is expected, and we have certain requirements and specifications that are in the contractor's engagement. Through that process, we would generally have a superintendent or other sort of checkpoint that we engage on our behalf to monitor and check the works and make sure that it is handed over to the specifications and requirements that we provided in the contract. So there are certainly those mechanisms in the contract to ensure that the works are being done as requested and in line with the specifications and requirements that were tendered.

In terms of the longevity of the works, depending on the contract type, contracts will have either a defects liability period or some other sort of arrangement so that we can hold the contractor to account in terms of longevity, and that we would expect that those works would be lasting. We also have some performance review frameworks through our delivery processes where we look at how the contractor performed, and we can feed that back into any future procurement processes as well.

**THE CHAIR:** Something that has been highlighted to us through this inquiry and has been referenced here today already is the very small selection of contractors that provide these services and the often long wait times to utilise their services. We are experiencing delays already for certain projects. How competitive are these tenders? Like do we have a long list of people applying to fix our skate parks or are we getting one entity tendering?

**Ms Clement:** That varies depending on the job and depending on the market's capacity at the time and the value for them if they have to travel from out of Canberra to come here and do work. So there are a few factors that come into that. We do run competitive processes and we do do tenders to make sure that we are getting the market to respond in a competitive environment.

The other element in there is we are aware that it is a small market. Canberra has some provisions in terms of either pre-qualification or secure local jobs that are a little bit different to other jurisdictions. So we do look at opportunities to make sure that we are casting that net widely in terms of making that opportunity for tendering available to providers from outside of the ACT that even might need some help in meeting our requirements or looking at ways that we can make the process available to them and then help them to make sure they can meet some of our requirements, like secure local jobs. It is a smaller market and a lot of the providers are from outside of Canberra. We

have been taking steps to try and open that up, and we are running competitive processes as well.

**THE CHAIR:** I fully appreciate that they are competitive processes. I guess the crux of the question is that it may be competitive but how many competitors do we actually have?

**Ms Clement:** I could not say across Canberra who all the competitors are. I know that there are at least three that I could think of off the top of my head. They are not based in Canberra. There would be another couple in addition to that that I am not fully across. They do not all tender when we do a procurement, but we would hope to get more than one in a tender process.

**THE CHAIR:** Are there instances where we only get one?

**Ms Clement:** Potentially. I am not sure if I can speak to that. I guess the procurement processes are finished. Sometimes that does happen in procurements, yes. We generally do not tell the tenderers. The tenderers are unaware that there has only been one. So, from their understanding, they would be in a competitive market. So we are not doing single selects; we are going out to either select or public tender.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you.

**MS LAWDER:** You talked about an inspection. Mr Pettersson had asked whether it is done to a certain standard, and you said there is an inspection. Did you say that every single instance is inspected, or is it a random unannounced? How is that done?

**Ms Clement:** We have a handover process for completion of works. So all of our works are inspected at a handover point.

**MS LAWDER:** On the site?

**Ms Clement:** On site, yes. It is a site inspection.

**MS LAWDER:** Including clearing up any construction debris?

**Ms Clement:** That is right. There are a few handover points in the completion of construction, and certainly part of those handover points is making sure that the works are complete and that we can accept them as an asset to manage and also, once demobilisation has happened and the contractor is off site, that they have left the site in an appropriate and tidy manner.

**MS LAWDER:** So every single one? It is not a desktop handover; it is an on-site inspection?

**Ms Clement:** With the larger packages of works, definitely.

**MS LAWDER:** Every single one?

**Ms Clement:** Yes; they should all be inspected.

**MS LAWDER:** They should all be or are?

**Ms Clement:** They are, yes—sorry.

**MS LAWDER:** Thanks.

**Ms Berry:** It might be helpful, if you talk about the most recent contract that Ms Lawder and I are aware of and the process for that contract—for example, how long it took for the procurement to be done to get the Lanyon one.

**Ms Clement:** The Lanyon one?

**Ms Berry:** Yes.

**Ms Clement:** The Lanyon one does not actually sit with my team. It was done by the operational area. It is a smaller piece of work that has been done through the operational team. That team, though, would run a tender process, I imagine, for the value of those works. I can take that question on notice. It is probably better because otherwise I am making assumptions.

**MS LAWDER:** Thanks.

**THE CHAIR:** It has been a while since the ACT has opened up a brand new skate park. As it stands right now, how would the government go about considering and making a possible decision about a new skate park?

**Ms Berry:** A decision has been made for a new smaller skate park in West Belconnen as part of the development process out there. So that decision has been made and the commitment has been made. The design and all of that process is yet to come. That is a future conversation. The government has learnt that, in the development of skate parks, having somebody who has a specialised knowledge of developing and putting a skate park together is ideal, and that maybe you and I, Michael, do not have the best ideas for the different kinds of skate parks and what a skate park should provide.

**MS LAWDER:** Me either. You can put me in that.

**Ms Berry:** Skate parks have a number of user groups, and engaging with those different user groups is important. That does not mean that they are always all experts, but it is more of a multi-use facility now. So, definitely for that newer smaller one, when the time comes, that engagement will be important because lots of people will have ideas about what it should provide on whatever the piece of land ends up being and the user groups that it is providing for.

**THE CHAIR:** For the new West Belconnen proposed skate park, where is the genesis of that idea within government? Are the Suburban Land Agency or the suburban plan the birthplaces of this idea or is it somewhere within Sport or City Services? Where does the idea for a skate park first take legs within government?

**Ms Berry:** For this particular one, given it is a fairly niche and specialised area,

I would have to say that it came through the lobbying, agitation and advocacy of the Canberra Skateboarding Association to include a skate park in the new development at Holt and Kippax Fair. They advocated to both the government and the shopping centre owners that, as part of the new development and the half pipe that is there—I am not sure whether you have visited that.

**THE CHAIR:** I have not.

**Ms Berry:** You did not get out to West Belconnen. Shame.

**THE CHAIR:** It is a long way.

**Ms Berry:** It has the best memories. There you go. There is some skin on that one! That advocacy starts and then the commitment by the government is made through that advocacy, through the Suburban Land Agency, because they will be responsible for selling the land, but also Kippax Fair, or whoever purchases the facility, I should say, as part of the Kippax Fair development. They would make a commitment to replace the half pipe and the government and TCCS are responsible for the maintenance of that as well. I am not sure which team. Not just that but something better and more appropriate would be replaced when that is redeveloped.

**THE CHAIR:** Just to confirm that I have this right: through advocacy from community groups, the Suburban Land Agency had initial carriage to progress this idea?

**Ms Berry:** Yes, but the government, more generally, has committed to replace or make better another facility there, because that half pipe will be demolished as part of the new development.

**MS LAWDER:** In terms of the new skate parks, is there a metric such as a number of skate parks per thousand or so people?

**Ms Berry:** I do not know if there is. Minister Steel and I could commit to doing some kind of audit around whether there is one. Whether there is one is a measure, but it is not the only measure, and so—

**MS LAWDER:** Or by age group or whatever.

**Ms Berry:** Or user group or participation at parks—all that kind of thing. That kind of audit would be a useful way for the government to then see what we have, what is available and what the patronage is. That it is growing. You only have to talk to the user groups to see that, or, if you get to one of the skate parks at the busier times of the day, you will see it can be quite congested, and that can lead to some of the safety issues that you were talking about. You need to be quite skilled to duck and weave. That would be a process going forward. Our city is growing. We are building even more densification in the city. Are we providing the services in those kinds of areas that our city needs as it grows? I do not know if there is a number. Do you know if there is a number?

**Mr Marshall:** I do not know that there is an accepted benchmark that gives the right



number.

**Ms Clement:** In terms of our recreation standards that playgrounds fit under as well, skate parks are generally provided at the district level. We generally have one in each district and then there are some at the group centre level—Weston Creek is that kind of level. The Kippax one would be at the group centre level.

**MS LAWDER:** Erindale maybe.

**Ms Clement:** Erindale—yes. There is that sort of distinction. We generally have a district-level skate park and some group-centre-level ones. That is a general principle that sits within the standard. That is probably as close to a measurable that we have in terms of one being attached to the population in an area.

**Ms Berry:** We are now seeing the growth in the utilisation of those facilities, particularly given skateboarding is an Olympic sport. BMX is becoming more popular again. That kind of audit of user groups would be really helpful to feed into the sorts of standards that already exist and where we go from there.

**MS LAWDER:** Could I ask about associated works. We heard some evidence this morning about children and exercise. It is almost incidental exercise if there is a skate park and playgrounds nearby and they walk to their local park or skate park. When your staff inspect skate parks or do work, would they also look at the footpath on the way there and say, “You would never be able to skateboard from the street to the skate park because the footpath is so lumpy”? Do they look at, report and fix those sorts of issues as well or is that a completely different area?

**Mr Marshall:** They do. It is true that responsibility for elements of public open space sits in different areas within the directorate. For paths specifically, there is a division of responsibility between Roads ACT and City Presentation. City Presentation will undertake works around vegetation clearing, mowing obviously, edging and removal of overhanging vegetation. The physical concrete or asphalt path surface itself is the responsibility of Roads ACT. Having said that, it would be my expectation that those teams would collaborate with each other. Indeed, we are actively working towards fostering a more place based approach to the maintenance of those sorts of elements of public open space. Whereas perhaps in the past it would have been a legitimate criticism that teams tended to have a focus on their own asset group and maintaining their asset, we are now actively fostering a view of the space more holistically—its utility to the public and communication between the teams that have various responsibilities within that space.

**THE CHAIR:** We have spent a lot of this session talking about the physical infrastructure of skate parks. Minister, I am wondering whether you have any comments on what the role of government is in supporting skating and skating culture outside of just the physical infrastructure—that is, culture, art, music or events.

**Ms Berry:** That is a good question. Using our current facilities that we have around the skate parks to hold competitions and to invite people into the ACT has been something that the skateboarding volunteers and people who love the sport have put together themselves over a number of years. It has been with the support of TCCS

around garbage removal and things like that, but more recently around providing more facilities to support those events. Jam at Belconnen this year was quite big. It was the biggest I have ever seen it, and TCCS provided some seating for that program. Do you know about that?

**Mr Marshall:** I do not have details.

**Ms Clement:** I do not have detail on that either.

**Ms Berry:** I know about it because I asked for it. It was a little grandstand kind of thing. Mobile grandstands were put in place to support spectators. I have never seen an event so big at that skate park. I am pretty sure it was the biggest one, and I know that the skateboarders would like to see more events like that, particularly with the new ramp, once it is completed. I do not know if we have an update on the time frame.

**Ms Clement:** I can update on that.

**Ms Berry:** Okay. Just before we get to that, given that it is growing and it is becoming much more significant, crowd management is now becoming an issue. There are so many people coming from not just nationally but also internationally. As it grows and becomes more sophisticated, you do not want to lose the vibe, but it will need support from government to manage it, do crowd management and provide facilities that are more fit for purpose. Again, that might be something that could form an audit that TCCS, through Minister Steel, and Sport and Rec could do together—looking at what that looks like going forward. Do you have an update on the ramp? It would be exciting if you have something to tell us.

**Ms Clement:** Yes. I think people are aware that we had some issues with our head contractor for the Belconnen skate ramp. They went into liquidation. We have gone into a contract with an alternative head contractor. They have been liaising with a specialist contractor that will come and actually do the main delivery of the ramp structure. Part of the challenge was that contractor being able to program it into their existing commitments. They will start works on site very early in the new year. We anticipate it will take about six months, so we should be operational just after the middle of the year with that new skate ramp. In the design process there was discussion, with the skateboard community as well, around how we could accommodate crowds, so that has been considered in the design.

**MS LAWDER:** I did have another question related to Fix My Street which has just escaped my mind for a moment. Did you want to ask another question?

**THE CHAIR:** I do not want to put you on the spot, but I almost have to call it there. I can ask something to buy you some time if you want.

**MS LAWDER:** I can put it on notice if it comes back to mind.

**THE CHAIR:** Let me give it one more round. How is the determination made that skating facilities might be at end of life and require replacement?

**Mr Marshall:** Via that regime of inspections. If, over a period of time, those

inspections are identifying deterioration that is progressing at a rate that is clearly not going to be reversed by the maintenance regime that we discussed earlier, then the assessment would turn to replacement of that asset or an assessment of its remaining useful life, and then that information would feed into the infrastructure program to contemplate the replacement.

**THE CHAIR:** I understand that we do not have a huge number of skating facilities. Are there any examples of skating facilities being determined to be at end of life?

**Ms Clement:** The Belconnen State Park is probably an example of that. It was refurbished and rebuilt back in 2010 or 2011.

**MS LAWDER:** How old was that at the time? Do you recall?

**Ms Clement:** I think it was built in the early 90s—in 1991 or 1992. That is 20 years. I might not have those dates exact.

**MS LAWDER:** I have remembered my question. It is about Fix My Street, in terms of encouraging people to report an issue on the spot at a skate park, at the time instead of having to go home and remembering to do it another time. Do you think that, because people have to register to use Fix My Street and put in their home address et cetera, that is a deterrent to some people who would otherwise be happy to put in a—

**Ms Berry:** That is for Minister Steel. I am not sure that is something that we can—

**Mr Marshall:** I do not really think it is a—

**Ms Berry:** It is not our area.

**MS LAWDER:** I used to use it a lot—for example, under the old system—but now it requires you to put in your home address. If I am using it for work purposes, why would I need to put my home address in? It will not accept my work address, so I do not use Fix My Street anymore. I write copious min reps to the minister instead.

**Mr Marshall:** That front end of Fix My Street is not something that is managed by TCCS, so it is not really a—

**MS LAWDER:** I just thought a young person, for example, may be quite reluctant to fill in a form and register rather than just put it in, like you used to under the old system. I will perhaps put that on notice to TCCS.

**THE CHAIR:** With that, we will call it. On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank all our witnesses today, particularly those who are the lucky last, for sharing their experience and knowledge. We also thank Broadcasting and Hansard for their support. If any member wishes to ask questions on notice, please upload them to the parliament portal as soon as practicable and no later than five business days after the hearing.

**The committee adjourned at 4.53 pm.**

PROOF