



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY**

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON PLANNING, TRANSPORT
AND CITY SERVICES**

(Reference: [Inquiry into Annual and Financial Reports 2022 - 2023](#))

Members:

**MS J CLAY (Chair)
MS S ORR (Deputy Chair)
MR M PARTON**

TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE

CANBERRA

THURSDAY, 16 NOVEMBER 2023

**Secretary to the committee:
Mr J Bunce (Ph: 620 50199)**

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.

APPEARANCES

Transport Canberra and City Services Directorate	32
---	-----------

Privilege statement

The Assembly has authorised the recording, broadcasting and re-broadcasting of these proceedings.

All witnesses making submissions or giving evidence to committees of the Legislative Assembly for the ACT are protected by parliamentary privilege.

“Parliamentary privilege” means the special rights and immunities which belong to the Assembly, its committees and its members. These rights and immunities enable committees to operate effectively, and enable those involved in committee processes to do so without obstruction, or fear of prosecution.

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.

While the committee prefers to hear all evidence in public, it may take evidence in-camera if requested. Confidential evidence will be recorded and kept securely. It is within the power of the committee at a later date to publish or present all or part of that evidence to the Assembly; but any decision to publish or present in-camera evidence will not be taken without consulting with the person who gave the evidence.

Amended 20 May 2013

The committee met at 4.47 pm.

Berry, Ms Yvette, Minister for Sport and Recreation

Transport Canberra and City Services Directorate

Iglesias, Mr Daniel, Executive Branch Manager, City Presentation

THE CHAIR: Good afternoon and welcome to this public hearing of the Standing Committee on Planning, Transport, and City Services. Today we are hearing from the Minister for Sport and Recreation. 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 the city and this region. We would also like to acknowledge and welcome any other Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander People who may be attending today's event.

We are being recorded and transcribed by Hansard and we are being live-broadcasted and streamed. When you take a question on notice, it would be great if you could use the words, "I will take that on notice." That helps our secretariat chase the answers down.

We are hearing from the Minister for Sport and Recreation. Welcome, Ms Yvette Berry, and officials from Transport Canberra and City Services. I remind witnesses of the protections and obligations afforded by the parliamentary 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 Assembly. Could I get a verbal "Yes" from each person to indicate that they have read, understand and agree with that privilege statement?

Witnesses: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Excellent. That is great. We are not inviting opening statements. We will start with the first question. Minister, I would love to start by asking about how we are decarbonising our sportsground maintenance at the moment. What are we doing to reduce climate change emissions in the way that we are maintaining our sportsgrounds?

Mr Iglesias: There are a couple of initiatives that we have taken. They are modest initiatives and maybe they reflect the modest nature of the carbon emissions that are contributed by the activities that we do, when you consider the holus-bolus of the ACT effort. We are looking at everything electric, whether it is fertiliser spreaders or even the trucks that we are using. With some of the hand equipment that the team uses, we are looking at what is being done elsewhere and what might be done. Our latest effort was to replace the old way of marking ovals. It was done with a diesel marker. They dropped some diesel to mark the line. We got rid of that and we have an electric powered machine. You type in the coordinates and off it goes, all on its own, and it marks it up.

THE CHAIR: Great.

Mr Iglesias: Also, in relation to the deployment of water, it is not, strictly speaking, decarbonising but it is a related effort. We are putting a lot of effort into trying to understand how much moisture is in the soil profile. As opposed to relying on our staff who might be eyeballing it, we are relying on a bit more data by using sensors and being able to say, “That one has x percentage. We will give a little bit more water there and a little less water here.” We are basing it on a little bit more data. That is a water saving. We are also looking at the trajectory of our sprinkler systems and focusing on the playing surface. In times like these, when we know we are about to head into a water-stress environment, we start now. We start to deploy the water just where we absolutely need it.

Ms Berry: Mr Iglesias, do you want to talk about how you are training the root system to be even stronger?

Mr Iglesias: Yes. That is a good point. In the last three years, there was lots of rain, so the ovals have grown used to getting all their nutrients in the top few centimetres, which builds a weakish profile in the turf. We want them to go down deep into the soil profile. By squeezing the water that we have been deploying to the ovals, it has meant that they have looked a bit sad initially, but, as the roots have gone down deep, they have improved and they have actually come back stronger than ever. That was an initiative of our staff on the ground who recognised that this was a problem. It saved us water and it has given us healthier sports fields.

THE CHAIR: Great. Thank you. Ms Orr.

MS ORR: I was going to ask about the line-marking robots, but you have probably said as much as you can on that, unless there is more you can add as a supplementary.

Ms Berry: I think there are a couple things on that. I was just reflecting on that. We were thinking about holding a naming competition for the line-marking robots. We thought it might be something that the Canberra Liberals would be interested in, because I remember Steve Doszpot, at every annual report hearing, would ask about the diesel line markings, and it might be that one of those robots could be named after him, in his memory.

MR PARTON: Dozzy.

THE CHAIR: Dozzy Robot.

Ms Berry: Dozzy.

MS ORR: That could be in the committee recommendations.

Ms Berry: Yes. We are overcoming—

MR PARTON: That is extremely gracious, Minister.

Ms Berry: I am saying you could enter the competition. It was definitely something that I looked forward to every annual report hearing—getting that question from

Mr Doszpot.

MS ORR: I am not sure if Mr Iglesias has anything to add to that.

Mr Iglesias: If I may, Minister, the clubs are happy with the change, because our old diesel line markings meant that 100 metres was sometimes marked up at 98 metres or 102 metres and it is now much more specific. We know that 100 metres are 100 metres. Whilst some record holders are disappointed because their records are disappearing, they have the knowledge it is truly 100 metres.

MS ORR: I am glad I asked. Thanks. For my substantive, I have a slightly different question: Minister, can you give us an update on the Gungahlin Leisure Centre and what we can expect in 2024?

Ms Berry: Yes. This might have been with Sport and Rec.

MS ORR: Sorry. I can ask something else that is better. Minister, can you update the committee on the progress of upgrading pavilions to be female-friendly?

Ms Berry: We can talk about that. We have obviously been doing a lot of work over a lot of years in replacing, in some cases, and upgrading and updating our ACT government pavilions. I think we have 69, or is it 59?

Mr Iglesias: We have 56 grounds that are serviced by 35 pavilions.

Ms Berry: Those numbers do not make sense. Tell me again.

Mr Iglesias: Sorry—we have 39 pavilions in total that are servicing 56 sports fields—

Ms Berry: And they have been upgraded already.

Mr Iglesias: Yes. We have a whole bunch of them that have been upgraded, and they have been upgraded over a number of years. This has been an ongoing project since 2017, right the way through to this year where we are upgrading Melba, Hackett and Aranda. We are slowly but surely—well, we have broken the back of it, really.

Ms Berry: Yes—past the halfway point. And all our new facilities have a requirement to have an inclusive and female-friendly focus. It is about replacing and/or upgrading older facilities that just are not suitable anymore.

Mr Iglesias: Just to be clear, Minister: 39 female-friendly upgrades in total.

MS ORR: Servicing 56 ovals.

Mr Iglesias: Yes. There are 39 in total.

MS ORR: You said it has been going since 2017 and it is an ongoing program. Will you be looking, over the next 12 months, at doing another round of pavilions?

Mr Iglesias: Yes; that is right.

Ms Berry: Depending on the pavilion.

Mr Iglesias: We have Melba, Hackett and Aranda on the schedule for this year, and that is an investment of \$225,000.

MS ORR: That is over a financial year or a calendar year?

Mr Iglesias: This financial year, 2023-24.

MS ORR: Thank you.

Ms Berry: I feel like we have 65 in total.

Mr Iglesias: We might have to get back to you and check the number.

Ms Berry: But I think we have done 39 pavilions.

MS ORR: About the halfway mark. That is what we are—

Ms Berry: Yes.

MS ORR: Thanks.

THE CHAIR: Mr Parton.

MR PARTON: Thank you, Chair. I am on page 84 of book 1 where it states that the wellbeing of Canberrans through participation in sports will be enhanced. That is pretty cool. But I have been contacted, and I know that my colleague, Mr Milligan, has been contacted by sports clubs in relation to the additional cost they are being charged to rectify playing fields after training sessions with overseas teams. As part of supporting sporting clubs to host international teams or to hold any event, is it normal practice for the government to charge an additional fee on top of ground hire fees to a sporting body that hires a sporting facility to rectify the playing fields once the sporting club has finished with its use?

Ms Berry: I imagine this is with regard to Cavalry?

MR MILLIGAN: Correct.

Ms Berry: Mr Iglesias can provide some information.

Mr Iglesias: The situation with Cavalry is that we are fortunate enough to be welcoming the Kia Tigers sometime in the northern spring, our Autumn, for 18 days. They are going to be using two fields. After two site visits with Cavalry, one of which included representatives from the Kia Tigers, we understood exactly what they wanted to do and what was needed to be done on the oval so that it met their standards. When a professional team uses an oval of this type—let's remember its traditional use is more lower level competition—there is going to be an impact. There is going to be a level of impact over and above what the facility usually experiences. It is unusual

that an international team would use our suburban facilities for practice. We welcome that. We think it is a great opportunity. But we will have to invest time and effort to then bring that surface up to a quality that the local clubs can use straight after the Kia Tigers leave. It is important to note that the finals series for the local clubs happens straight after the Kia Tigers leave. We want to make sure that we invest a little bit of time and effort to bring that surface back to a playable standard.

MR PARTON: Mr Iglesias, you say in your response that we welcome international teams coming to us and undertaking this sort of activity. Of course we do, for a number of reasons, including the associated economic positive impact. I just wonder if the actions of the government in this space really do indicate that you welcome it. My belief is that other nearby jurisdictions would not impose the sorts of fees that are being imposed by the ACT. I do not know whether I should go back to the minister on this. I just do not know that you are genuinely welcoming and embracing.

Ms Berry: The Cavalry group met with the government and sports officials about what we should do and how we could support them in bringing this opportunity to the ACT. Cavalry are a private for-profit organisation, as are the Kia Tigers, using a government facility. We reached an agreement with them and I understood that they were happy—that was the advice that I had—with the agreement that the government and TCCS had reached with them about the kinds of upgrades needed to be made to Narrabundah and the other field out there—

Mr Iglesias: A nearby field.

Ms Berry: to make sure they met the needs for the Kia Tigers to come and do their training here. As far as I am concerned, we have met the needs of that community because it has been agreed, and, as I understand it, everybody has been satisfied with that approach. So, unless the advice is different, I understand that is what the agreement is between TCCS after their conversations and work with Cavalry.

Mr Iglesias: Just to add to that, Minister, it works out at approximately \$2,190 a day. That is what we quoted Cavalry and that compares very favourably with the other two jurisdictions that were in the running, which were around the \$2,000 mark as well.

MR PARTON: That is enough for me, unless there are supplementaries.

MR MILLIGAN: I have a couple if I can, Chair.

THE CHAIR: Yes; certainly.

MR MILLIGAN: You said it is \$2,100 a day to hire the place. However, as I understand it, typically, to hire the same venue, it would cost \$900 a day, so there is an additional \$1,200 a day in ground hire charges. Do you do the same with the Brumbies and the Raiders when they play their games? Do you have to have remedial work done after they play their games?

Mr Iglesias: That \$2,194, just to be clear, incorporates booking fees that any other entity might need to pay. There are two surfaces that have been booked: the main ballpark and also what we call field 3, plus there is a need to floodlight both of those

surfaces, so there is an element of lighting. This is all at cost. The balance of the component is the extra operational works. A significant amount of investment is required to bring those two playing surfaces to a standard that the Kia requested. As I mentioned before, this is not a surface that is typically used by the professionals. There was a short list of stuff for which they said, “We would like you to deal with this, this and this.” We have just reflected the cost of doing those works. There is no margin.

MR MILLIGAN: So you are putting all the costs of an ACT government asset onto Calvary to host the Kia Tigers? They bear all the cost on an ACT government asset?

Mr Iglesias: There is the cost of the booking, there is the cost of the use of the lights, and there is the cost of the additional works that we otherwise would not have done. That is it. To your question around whether we quote the same for any other sport, typically speaking, the professional sports do not use our neighbourhood ovals; they have other options.

THE CHAIR: Mr Milligan, do you have a substantive?

MR MILLIGAN: Yes. Thank you, Chair. I have been contacted by a number of local cricket clubs. They were getting ready for the start of their summer season. They went along to an ACT government asset where they store their equipment within an ACT government asset, but, to their surprise, the locks had changed. There was a combination lock applied to it. Apparently, there is a new policy that the government did not even announce. No-one had contacted the cricket clubs to say, “There’s a new policy. You need to come here and get your equipment out.” Can you explain what happened there?

Mr Iglesias: Not knowing the particulars of the situation, where there are pavilions that are available at sportsgrounds, those pavilions are bookable. They have always been bookable.

MR MILLIGAN: They have had that facility for 10 years.

Mr Iglesias: All the pavilions are available to all the clubs on a booked basis. For example, if a cricket club at Kippax wants to use the ovals, they book the oval and they book the pavilion. What we were finding was that, in some instances—and this may be due to a historical arrangement—some clubs were using facilities that were not being booked; they were just being used because they had keys to access facilities. Our approach was that, in the interests of ensuring that clubs have an equal call on any given facility, we invite bookings for the pavilions and we invite bookings for the sportsgrounds on a first come, first served—

MR MILLIGAN: These are storage facilities.

Mr Iglesias: Yes—but it is all part of the booking arrangement. Once that is done, we work cooperatively with each of the clubs. I would be happy to take the details of the particular case and see exactly what the situation was.

MR MILLIGAN: The Redbacks cricket club in Nicholls had the facility for 10 years,

but, the day they went there for training, there was a new lock. They could not access it. No-one had any communication with them and, apparently, according to them, a number of other clubs had the same issue. It is purely a storage facility. If you need to take it on notice—

Mr Iglesias: I will definitely look at getting the detail of exactly what the story is there. We are happy to work with any club. It is not a new policy. It is a longstanding policy of booking the facilities that are needed.

MR MILLIGAN: The policy, according to the ranger that turned up on the day, is a new government policy. He said, “We were instructed to change all the locks on all facilities to combination locks, and you have to get your equipment out now.” But no-one communicated with the club, so I am just wondering if you can provide the reason why.

Ms Berry: That sounds like something we will have to take away and investigate. It is not a new policy. It might have been the case that this particular sports group had been using those facilities on their own, but, if it is booked to somebody else, somebody else needs to be able to access and use those facilities.

MR MILLIGAN: According to them, the booking was still standing.

MS ORR: Mr Iglesias, I have a supplementary to that. If a club does have an issue along these lines, apart from letting my fellow member for Yerrabi know and getting him to raise it in annual reports hearings, what other avenues do they have to raise the issues and reconcile them?

Mr Iglesias: We will always take a cooperative approach. The sportsgrounds team prides itself on building the relationship with the sports clubs, so it is a matter of picking up the phone and saying, “We have this issue. We have this problem.” We will always try to start from a level playing field, because there are other clubs that would love to have facilities and we need to be fair on how we deploy them.

MS ORR: Minister, just confirming: now that this matter has been brought to your attention, you will be looking into it?

Ms Berry: Yes; absolutely.

Mr Iglesias: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Minister, I have been very keen to see the dryland ovals being reconsulted on and repurposed, starting at the Florey one. Can you tell me: are any of the dryland ovals going to be retained for potential future re-use as sportsgrounds?

Ms Berry: Yes.

THE CHAIR: How many of them?

Mr Iglesias: Almost exactly half. We have 31 dryland ovals and I believe there are 15 for which our colleagues in CMTEDD Sport and Rec have said, “No. Strategically,

these could be needed in the future. Let's keep those up our sleeve." That leaves about 16 that could potentially be repurposed. However, before we repurpose those, it is our intention to consult the minister before we make a commitment.

MS ORR: There has not been a decision by government.

THE CHAIR: Suzanne, do you mind if I—

MS ORR: No. Sorry for answering the question.

THE CHAIR: That is all right. Can you tell me which sites are going to be retained? Do you have a list of those?

Ms Berry: I might have to take that on detail on notice.

THE CHAIR: That would be great. I am assuming that, with the intention to consult with the minister, there would also be an intention to consult with the community on individual works, which was the original—

Mr Iglesias: Absolutely. Our Urban Open Space Land Management Plan acknowledges that dryland ovals are of interest to the community in the broader scheme of things. We have said that we are more than happy to engage in a collaborative approach, having regard to that strategic need for future ovals.

Ms Berry: All those decisions come down to budget and government decisions, and probably election promises, I guess, and they come with a significant initial cost for whatever the purpose is—and there is also an ongoing cost—and whether they are suitable as a sports facility or could be utilised as something else. Those are the things that we need to consider before any of them are progressed to another stage in their life cycle, beyond being a dryland open space, for people to use or for a more formalised sports setting.

MS ORR: I have a supplementary to that. I have already asked it, but I will repeat it. Would I be right in understanding that these are all future policy decisions to be made, as to which ovals and what happens with them—

Ms Berry: Yes. They would be decisions that are made on the area and whether it suits the needs of particular sports or groups of sports.

Mr Iglesias: That is right.

MS ORR: If I understand correctly, there has been a bit of work done on which ones could be beneficial as sporting ovals and which ones would be less beneficial as sporting ovals, but that is as far as it has gone. No more finite decisions have been made.

Ms Berry: No.

THE CHAIR: A substantive, Ms Orr?

MS ORR: I am actually going to do something solid for my mate, Mr Parton, and let him have the last three minutes of the hearing. He is probably going to pass it to Mr Milligan, by the looks of it.

MR PARTON: I have a funny feeling that Mr Milligan is going to pass it straight back to the Chair, but let's see.

MS ORR: Or we could just have a three-minute early mark.

MR MILLIGAN: I can make something up. Does the topsoil program still operate? Is that still in place today? What has been the uptake of that program?

Mr Iglesias: By "topsoil program" are you talking about—

MR MILLIGAN: For local clubs to apply to have topsoil brought and—

Mr Iglesias: I believe there are some ovals where we do make soil available on site, but I would have to check. I would have to take that on notice.

Ms Berry: If they ask for it, it is easy enough to dump a load of soil. They prefer to be able to do the small repairs themselves before they become big problems where TCCS have to roll in with other equipment.

MR MILLIGAN: What is the process for sporting clubs to apply for that? Is that marketed to all the sporting groups and clubs in the community? How does the government make them aware that they can participate in this program?

Ms Berry: I think most of them would know, and I know that a lot use it.

Mr Iglesias: Yes. It is a longstanding practice.

Ms Berry: It literally takes just a phone call. It is not a big deal to dump some soil for somebody to use.

MR MILLIGAN: The only reason I ask is that I have found numerous clubs are unaware.

Ms Berry: Then we will make them aware.

MR MILLIGAN: Do you reach out to the—

Ms Berry: We will make sure.

MR MILLIGAN: sporting associations and say, "Can you distribute and put this through to all your clubs?"

Ms Berry: Sport and Rec have regular catch-ups with the CEO of sports clubs—quarterly, I think—so we can make sure that is a message put out through them. TCCS, through their connections, can also do the same.

MR MILLIGAN: Excellent. Thank you, Chair.

THE CHAIR: That brings us to a close. Thank you very much, Ms Berry and officials, for your time this afternoon. I thank broadcasting and Hansard staff for their work. A couple of questions were taken on notice. If we can get those back within five business days, that will assist our report. If anyone wants to lodge a question on notice, upload them to the portal as soon as possible and no later than five business days from now.

The committee adjourned at 5.14 pm.